

‘We are a Chinese school’: Constructing school identity from the lived experiences of expatriate and Chinese teaching faculty in a Type C international school in Shanghai, China.

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Abstract

This study explores school identity by analysing the perceptions of Chinese and expatriate teachers in a Type C, non-traditional international school in Shanghai, China. The purpose of this study was to build on Hayden’s (2016) work by offering a detailed description of this type of school which continues to be under researched. A mixed-methods approach was adopted that explored the school’s identity on three levels: the *rhetorical*, the *curricula*, and the *lived*. The data revealed considerable discontinuity between these levels, particularly from the perspective of the international teachers. The findings are discussed in relation to cultural scripts for teaching and learning and institutional logics and implications are drawn for creating a more interculturally inclusive school ethos.

Keywords: school identity, mixed methods, curricula, international schools

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Introduction

The number of international schools continues to increase at a staggering rate with 4.2 million children currently attending international schools worldwide (Bunnell, Fertig, & James, 2016). While once the preserve of the children of an elite transnational class, international schools now cater to a diverse range of students. The proliferation of schools calling themselves international has led to considerable confusion as to what constitutes an international school which has been labelled ‘the big terminology debate’ (Marshall, 2007). The need to define these terms has become so complex that many researchers have given up trying to settle on a specific definition of international education and its related aspects (Hayden, 2006). The rapid spread of international education and international schools, which can in part be attributed to the effects of globalisation (Hayden, 2011), has led to new hybrid form of school that caters to the children of affluent national parents. These schools have generally been labelled Type C non-traditional international schools (Hayden, 2006), but in the Chinese context these schools have also been referred to as *internationalised* (Poole, 2016), bilingual or experimental (Robinson & Guan, 2012). Their emergence in the international market, however, is by no means unproblematic with Bunnell et al. (2016) observing that ‘the emerging presence of the Type C International School substantially further complicates an already complex International School landscape’ (p. 10). The fact that these new schools are primarily aimed at national children also raises the question: how international does a school need to be in order to qualify as an international school? Researchers have offered a number of criteria by which to measure international legitimacy (Bunnell et al., 2016) – that is, the extent to which a school can truly be said to be international. The ISC, for example, define a school as international if it ‘delivers a curriculum [...] wholly or partly in English outside of an English-speaking country’ (ISC, 2015, p. 1). Some researchers (Gellar, 2002; Walker, 2016) go further and argue that an international school must be committed to universal values which find their root in an internationally minded curriculum committed to making the world a better place. According to this definition, even IBO World schools which are often perceived to be the gold-standard of international education fall short of this lofty ideal (Gellar, 2002).

This study

Against this backdrop of rapid internationalisation, this study focuses on a Type C non-traditional school in Shanghai, China called East China Normal University Affiliated Bilingual School (ECNUAS for the rest of this article). This types of schools have increased rapidly in China (Robinson & Guan, 2012) and therefore deserve to be explored in more detail. However, little critical research has been done on them (Pearce, 2013). Within the context of this study, an *internationalised* school is defined as a ‘Chinese’ local school which follows the Chinese National Curriculum and observes symbolic routines such as flag raising ceremonies but also offers some form of international curriculum (e.g. IGCSE or IBDP) which is often taught by both Chinese and expatriate staff. This study aims to add to the literature by offering a detailed description of a Type C school in Shanghai that is informed by Mary Hayden’s work on international schools, particularly her classification of international schools according to a tripartite typology (2006, 2011, 2016). While the work of Hayden and others (Bunnell & Fertig, 2016; Bunnell et al, 2016) is both timely and illuminating, its focus on the macro-level has resulted in the voices of grass roots actors, specifically international teachers being absent from the literature. As an insider practitioner-researcher based in a Type C school in China, I am thus in an advantageous position to offer a qualitative perspective to a complicated, emerging phenomenon. This study, then, builds on that work by offering a qualitatively driven case study of an internationalised school in Shanghai. As such, it answers Bunnell, et al.’s (2016) call for a ‘sharper and more comprehensive analysis of the nature of schools referring to themselves or being referred to as international schools’ (p. 25) – in the context of this study, Type C schools. Taking a pragmatic approach, the nomenclature of ‘school type’ is deemed unsuitable for this endeavour. Therefore, in its place, I offer ‘school identity’ as a conceptual approach that is more congruent with the lived experience of grass roots actors. While I explored the school’s curriculum as an aspect of school identity, I nevertheless privileged the voices of the teachers and their perceptions of the school. This

combining of deductive and inductive reasoning is reflected in the three research questions that guided this study:

1. What is the school's rhetorical identity?
2. How is this identity reinforced by the curriculum?
3. How do stakeholders perceive the school's identity?

Data for questions 1 and 2 were collected through analysis of school documents, such as brochures, and reflecting on my own experience as a teacher in the school. Data for the final question were collected through interviews with both Chinese and expatriate teaching faculty about the school's flag raising ceremony which provide an insight into the teachers' perceptions of the school's identity.

Road map

This study begins by offering a more detailed over-view of Hayden's typology and related studies that have appropriated her typology. As will be shown, there is still a paucity of studies on Type C schools, particularly in the Chinese context, and what does exist is predominantly *macro* in nature. I next offer a review of two interconnected concepts from the field of organisational studies, namely institutional logics and institutional identity which I then use to analyse the case study school's identity on three ontological levels. The first level, the *rhetorical*, explores the school's identity as it is articulated in school publicity material. The second level, the *curricula*, makes inferences about the school's identity by critically analysing the school's curriculum and related institutional logics. The third level, the *lived*, explores the school's identity from the perspective of the expatriate and Chinese teachers. While I expected there to be some incongruence between these three levels, I was surprised to discover that there was in fact considerable discontinuity between them, particularly from the perspective of the international teachers. The results are discussed in relation to the concepts of institutional logics and cultural scripts for teaching learning, and implications are drawn for creating a more inclusive school ethos.

Review of Literature

Typology of International schools

Type A Traditional international schools can be traced as far back as the late 19th century (Hayden, 2016), but really only started to gain traction in the early twentieth-century with the establishment of the International School of Geneva and Yokohama International in 1924 (Hayden & Thompson, 2013). These international schools were designed to cater for the children of globally mobile expatriates and, until late into the twentieth-century, represented the majority of international schools (Hayden and Thompson, 2013). Generally speaking, Type A schools exist in response to a pragmatic market demand. In contrast to the Type A schools, there are international schools that are not created specifically to satisfy market demand, but serve an ideological purpose (Hayden & Thompson, 2013). These schools are exemplified by the United World Colleges (UWC) and are based largely on the vision of Kurt Hahn who sought to promote international understanding and peace through education (Hayden, 2006). These schools have been created to bring young people together which, according to Hayden and Thompson (2013), is based on an underpinning ideology that many of the problems faced by this world – such as misunderstanding, violence and hatred – can be overcome if young people from different parts of the world study together in order to develop greater empathy and intercultural awareness. Finally, the most recent type of international school, Type C, has emerged in part due to the effects of globalisation which has led to a growing international focus in some national school systems (Hayden, 2016). For the affluent middle class of these countries, an international education is considered to be both superior to that available in their own national system

(Hayden and Thompson, 2013) and a means to securing a competitive edge for their children (Hayden, 2016).

Educational and policy context of Type C schools in China

In China, growing dissatisfaction with exam-orientated education has resulted in sustained educational reform designed to help China move away from knowledge transmission and towards the perceived gold-standard of education, student-centred learning (Poole, 2016). Some of the practices promulgated by policy documents (for example, see the MoE's Outline of China's National Plan for Medium- and long-term Education Reform and reform Development, 2010–2020 (2010)) include borrowing assessment practices from the Anglophone West, such as formative assessment (Gu, 2014; Yin & Buck, 2015), the flipped classroom (Liu & Feng, 2015) and inquiry learning (MoE, 2010). Although the 2012 round of PISA (the Program for International Student Assessment) has been invoked by some as confirmation of the reform's efficacy (such as Tan, 2013), recent PISA results show China slipping down the league-tables, this time eclipsed by Singapore which looks set to become the new "poster boy" of PISA (Sellar & Lingard, 2013). Whether or not the reforms have achieved their intended purpose, the appropriation of international curriculum, such as the IBDP and Cambridge Examinations, appears to be the product of market forces and a growing demand from affluent Chinese parents who are dissatisfied with the quality of national education (Robinson & Guan, 2012). Therefore, education reform and the growth of international education in China are inextricably linked, the product of globalizing forces that find their articulation and response from two seemingly contradictory positions: namely, from the perspective of the state in the form of top-down policy reforms that promote *pedagogical and assessment change* and from the bottom-up, from the demand of affluent parents who seek a 'superior' form of education in the form of *international curricula* for their children that functions as a passport to a top-quality overseas university (Yang, 2015). While the state views reform as China's 'main *human capital* development strategy for coping with the challenges of the 21st century' (Law, 2014, my italics), Chinese parents take advantage of Type C international schools as a way to gain more *symbolic capital* for their children (Lowe, 2000) despite the intimidating costs of doing so and the less than inspiring job market that awaits students on their return (Yang, 2015). The notion of universal values and international-mindedness – defining characteristics of any international education for Walker (2016) – appear to be of little significance in the Chinese context where international education continues to be valued as a means to a pragmatic end rather than an ethical end in itself.

Research on Type C schools

Research on Type C schools is still somewhat limited and conceptual in nature (Pearce, 2013). This may be because these types of school are a relatively recent phenomenon, the product of 21st century globalisation. Although there is a dearth of empirical studies on Type C schools, there are nevertheless a few studies that resonate with my own teaching and research context, such as Bunnell et al. (2016) and Bunnell and Furtig (2016). These conceptual studies develop a framework grounded in institutional theory in order to analyse the legitimacy of international schools. The framework, as the author's acknowledge, is undergirded by a normative analysis based on characteristics of Type A and Type B schools. Therefore, in order for Type C schools to be gain international legitimacy they need to embody aspects from these previous two types. Even though the authors' intention is not to dismiss Type C schools but to highlight the challenges they may face in attempting to gain legitimacy, the normative framework they propose may preclude the exploration of Type C schools from a phenomenological perspective as it is normative – that is, prescriptive – in nature. While the framework they propose prescribes what a school should be or aim to be in order to gain international legitimacy, it may not be able to offer the researcher a detailed picture of what is actually going on in these types of schools. This points to the need to develop a methodology that is inductively grounded.

There is an even greater paucity of studies in the Chinese context from an international perspective. While recent edited volumes (Gu, 2014; Ryan, 2013) have explored the

internationalisation of Chinese local schools, they do so from the Chinese perspective, privileging the voices of Chinese teachers while marginalising the voices of international teachers who still make up a significant number of teachers of international curricula in the Chinese context. However, one study that does draw on the definitions that comprise Hayden's typology is Robinson and Guan's (2012) comparison of two international schools in China. Although they do not use Hayden's nomenclature, their descriptions nonetheless correspond to her definitions of Type A and Type C schools. In their study, the researchers adopted a comparative framework which identified two types of international school in China. The first are described as independent international schools that cater to foreign passport holders (Type A) while the second are described as international programmes in the public system that cater for Chinese nationals (Type C). However, their methodology - the use of *a priori* categories for categorisation, such as school history, mission and curriculum - only gives a snap shot of what these schools are like on the *meso* level and is therefore unable to capture the ambivalence that typifies stakeholders' lived experience of organisations such as schools.

Taking inspiration from Bunnell et al. (2016), this study appropriates two concepts from the field of organisational studies, namely institutional identity and institutional logics. Rather than conceptualising international schools as types (which assumes a fixed set of characteristics or attributes) this study adopts a constructivist ontological perspective from which organisations like schools are seen to be in a continual process of becoming. The conceptual lenses of institutional identity and institutional logics bring into focus (thereby making sharper and more comprehensive) the relationship between national and international curriculum in a Type C school in Shanghai. This conceptual approach also foregrounds the voices of institutional actors. By juxtaposing a *meso* perspective (the curriculum) with a *micro* perspective (teachers' lived experience) it is possible to get a more detailed picture of the living and evolving identity of an internationalised school in China.

Institutional Identity and institutional logics

Institutions and organisations were once understood to be stable, taken-for-granted 'beings' (Bierregaard and Jonasson, 2014) but recent research in the field of organisation studies views institutions as socially constructed – that is, formed by the actions of individuals and organisations (Thornton and Ocasio, 2008). Within this 'social ontology of continuous becoming', institutions and their identities are not fixed but are part of a process of perpetual coming into being that is reflected in a constructivist view of society as something that 'happens' rather than something that 'is' (Bjerregaard & Jonasson, 2014). When viewed through this lens of *becoming*, institutional identity is subsequently characterised by change, contradiction and indeterminateness. To borrow a phrase from Ball (2010) which I have adapted: 'the ontological status of [identity] is not "ready-made in reality" [...] but is routinely taken to do so' (p. 69). Such an open-ended interpretation of identity has consequences for the way stakeholders perceive a Type C school. Institutional logics, meanwhile, have been understood as 'socially constructed, historical patterns of material practices, assumptions, values, beliefs and rules' (Thornton & Ocasio, 1999, p. 804) that prescribe appropriate behaviour and provide guidelines on how to interpret and operate in social situations (Greenwood, Raynard, Kodeih, Micelotta & Lounsbury, 2011).

The notion of institutional identity and institutional logics are essential to my study as they foreground organisations as complex and contested spaces, made up of competing institutional logics, and populated by stakeholders who reflect and challenge these logics in various ways. This study identifies two main institutional logics. The first one is labelled a *Chinese institutional logic* which is a synthesis of Confucian and socialist values. Confucian values here are taken to refer to respect for tradition and authority (Tan, 2013) while socialist values are defined as the development of 'patriotism, collectivism, and love of socialism' (Nanzhou, Muju, Baohua, Xia, & Wenjing, 2007, p. 23). In terms of teaching practice, a Chinese institutional logic emphasises teacher-centred instruction and memorisation of knowledge points. Even though China has initiated vigorous and sustained reform to promote student-centred learning, my experience of teaching in a number of internationalised schools indicates that in practice Chinese teachers still favour a traditional approach to teaching. The second logic is labelled an *International institutional logic* and is characterised by a

commitment to perceived universal values as identified in the IB Learner Profile such as risk-taking and international-mindedness. An international institutional logic is also characterised by the teacher as facilitator and student-centred learning. Expatriate teaching staff were observed to embody and enact this institutional logic during the school's weekly flag raising ceremony. It must be stressed, however, that in practice either Chinese or expatriate teachers could mobilise both of these logics in hybrid form, and future research could explore this in more detail. However, for the purposes of this study I make something of a crude distinction, cognisant all the while that in practice institutional logics are inherently complex and hybrid in nature (Mair, Mayer & Lutz, 2015).

Methodology

As the research questions explored school identity on the *meso* and *micro* levels it was decided to utilise a pragmatic research design that mixed both quantitative and qualitative paradigms. Although qualitative and quantitative approaches have been shown to be incommensurate (Kuhn, 1996), others (Ivankova, Creswell & Stick, 2006; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2006; Morgan, 2007) consider both as having something valuable to add to the study of individuals and society. Moreover, as social phenomena are inherently complex, in practice it is arguably unrealistic to choose between different positions (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). This is also true of individual identity and institutional identity which is simultaneously something which exists 'out there' as an *a priori* given and also shaped by individual stakeholders' perceptions. This 'institutional complexity' (Bjerregaard and Jonasson, 2014) cannot be captured by just one paradigm, but requires both. This is also reflected in the choice of methods for data collection.

Methods

Data about ECNUAS' curriculum were collected from the school's website, publicity brochure, and a UNESCO commissioned analysis of the Chinese experiences in curriculum change (Nanzhao, et al., 2007). Information about the IGCSE and the IBDP was collected from publicly available documents on Cambridge Examinations and IBO and are supplemented with my own experience of teaching both of these curricula in ECNUAS. The turn to the micro-level reveals that actors are able to challenge, change and subvert taken-for-granted structures (Battilana, Leca & Boxenbaum, 2009). This suggested the use of interviews as an appropriate method for capturing the complex and contradictory nature of identity as constituted by the participants' lived experienced which can be characterised as 'complicated, confused, impure, uncertain' (Bourdieu, Chamboredon and Passeron, 1991, p. 259). Semi-structured, purposeful interviewing focused on the school's flag raising ceremony as a vehicle for gaining insight into the way the teachers perceived and articulated the school's identity. Four participants from the Chinese teaching faculty and four from the expatriate faculty were chosen based on their English language skills and willingness to be interviewed. All interviews were conducted in English, recorded and then transcribed. Analysis of interview data involved a semi-grounded approach that drew upon themes that emerged in the first stages of analysis while remaining open to new and unexpected patterns that emerged as data analysis progressed. These were coded and then condensed into categories. Teachers are referred to by code: CT1, CT2 for Chinese teachers and ET1, ET2 for expatriate teachers. While this does homogenise and dehumanise these groups, it preserves their anonymity, an ethical imperative given the school's identity could be established as I quote directly from the publicly available school brochure.

Validity

In order to enhance validity, the study focused on a small number of Chinese and expatriate participants in some depth which allowed for the creation of 'thick description' (Denzin, 1989). The study also draws upon data from the school's brochure, school routines, like the flag raising ceremony, and the author's experience of teaching in the school. Finally, the study also employs deductive and inductive approaches to data analysis in order to distinguish between the different levels of ontology across which school identity is dispersed. When integrated, these different data sources, and analytic

approaches, allowed for triangulation through contrast and comparison. Although I draw upon both qualitative and quantitative paradigms, I privilege the former as the notion of identity is inherently complex and is the product of social forces and individuals' beliefs. As such, qualitative approaches have been shown to be more effective at capturing the ambivalence of lived experience and is commensurate with the notion of identity as socially constructed.

Findings

Background

ECNUAS is a recently opened private boarding school in Shanghai that offers an 'internationalised' curriculum that combines aspects of 'Chinese' and 'Western' approaches to learning, such as the IGCSE (International General Certificate of Secondary Education) and IBDP (International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme) and employing international teachers to deliver these courses. It also emphasises subjects such as music, art and dance, which are typically considered to be of less significance within the curriculum. This appears to be in response to the general trend towards quality-orientated education (*su zhi jiao yu*) in China which aims to take a more holistic approach to learning which places the student at the centre of the learning process (Tan, 2013). In addition to an international focus, the school also emphasises the Chinese national curriculum. For example, primary and middle school students follow the local curriculum until grade 9, after which they sit the *Zhong Kao* exam (high school entrance examination) and transition to an internationalised stream from grade 9 onwards.

The Rhetorical

The school brochure contains information about the school's history, mission, educational objectives, management team, and school orientation. As such, it is a useful artefact to establish the school's *intended* or *rhetorical* institutional identity. Chinese and international education are repeatedly joined by the verb 'integrate' thereby suggesting that these two educational philosophies are commensurate. This is illustrated in the following example: 'Internationalised education is *tailored* to the needs of the students who seek an *integrated* learning environment drawing on the best of Chinese and Western education' (ECNUAS, 2015, p. 3). 'Tailored' is an interesting choice of verb, and suggests that both Chinese and Western education is something tangible that, to follow the metaphor through, can be 'cut' and 'fitted' to the needs of the students who 'seek' a synthesis of both Chinese and Western education. The brochure continues to make repeated use of the word 'integrated' as shown in the following two examples: 'International section (1-9 grades) implementing school-based Chinese curriculum *integrated* with quality international curriculum' (p. 7) and [The school will use] its resources and strengths in international schooling *integrated* with the best of Chinese education Philosophy to establish the highest standard of international education' (p. 12). The verb 'integrated' in these examples conveys a sense of effortless and harmonious combining. From the brochure, the existence of such a hybrid curriculum suggests the school is truly internationalised in nature.

The Curricula

While the school's rhetorical internationalised identity presents a hybrid curriculum that is drawn from Western models but with 'Chinese characteristics' (Ryan, 2013), the actual curriculum reveals that Chinese and international education are in fact firmly compartmented. This can be illustrated using Lan's (2014) term, *segmented incorporation*. Lan's (2014) critical examination of *hukou* reform in Shanghai revealed that while city-born migrant students were technically part of the case-study school, they nevertheless remained segregated by visible and invisible barriers such as different playgrounds and deeply entrenched prejudice (see Poole, 2016 for further analysis of the *hukou*). Similarly, while the IBDP is incorporated into the overall curriculum, there is a caesura

between the compulsory nine-year education from primary to middle school and the international curriculum in the high school which creates a disconnect. Table 1 provides an over-view of the school's curriculum. By comparing the two, it can be seen there is pedagogical and ideological discontinuity between Chinese and international curricula.

Table 1: ECNUAS' curriculum

Grade	Curriculum	Subjects	Assessment	Objectives and aims of curriculum
1-9: Primary and Junior Secondary	Chinese National Curriculum	Maths, Chinese, English, Art, Music, ICT, Geography, Citizenship education, P.E., Sciences. Chinese traditional culture, STEM.	Zhong Kao examination: External examination Internal examinations: two per term (mid-term and end of term)	Development of patriotism, collectivism, love of socialism, and preservation of fine national cultural traditions; development of healthy world outlook, life outlook and values; development of sense of social responsibility and obligation to serve the people (Nanzhou et al, 2007, p. 23).
10: High School	Pre-Diploma school-based programme using IGCSE	English Language, Maths, Chinese, Chemistry, Biology, Economics, Global Perspectives, P.E., Art, Music.	External examinations with option for course work Internal school-based examinations: two per term (mid-term and end of term)	To produce students who are 1. Confident 2. Responsible 3. Reflective 4. Innovative 5. Engaged students
11-12: High School	IBDP	Chinese A, English B, Economics, Chemistry, Physics, Biology, Maths, Theory of Knowledge, Community Activity Service	Internal assessment Written assessment Extended essay (4000 words) External assessment Internal examinations: two per term (mid-term and end of term)	To develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect' To instantiate International-mindedness through the IB Learner Profile.

In terms of pedagogical discontinuity, the nine-year compulsory curriculum culminates in the *Zhong Kao* examination, an externally assessed examination that decides students' eligibility to attend high school. Given the high stakes nature of this examination, there is a considerable wash-back effect that **pushes** teachers to employ teaching approaches that are commensurate with an examination-orientated culture. As a practitioner researcher, I was in a position to observe many instances of rote learning and memorisation, both of which are aspects of a Confucian culture of learning (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006). This is not to denigrate this approach to learning – in fact, as a strategy for promoting examination success it is very effective – but to underscore the fact that due to examination pressure, a great deal of middle school teaching is focused on what could be called knowledge points or facts, thereby leaving little space for the cultivation of intercultural or global perspectives, both of which are foundational to the IBDP.

In terms of ideological discontinuity, the aims of the compulsory nine-year curriculum are nationally focused with an emphasis on citizenship education through the development of 'patriotism, collectivism, [and] love of socialism (Nanzhou et. al., 2007, p. 23). In ECNUAS, the inculcation of patriotism is reinforced by symbolic routines, such as the flag raising ceremony, the singing of the National anthem, and the school's motto: Originate from China; impact the World. It is interesting to note that a global perspective is not encouraged in the National Curriculum until high school and then it is expressed as 'understanding of cultural diversity, and open-mindedness to the *outside* world.' Although this does resonate with some aspects of the Learner Profile (such as intercultural awareness), the phrase 'outside world' implies that China is the centre with the rest of the world on the periphery. This is echoed in the school's motto which is to 'originate from China; impact the world.' In contrast, the IBDP is underpinned by an ideology to 'make the world a better place' through international mindedness, intercultural awareness, and instantiation of the Learner profile. These two curricula cannot be integrated because on an ideological level they are incommensurate. Overall, the school's emphasis on the compulsory nine-year curriculum mobilises Chinese institutional logics which suggests that the school is fundamentally 'Chinese' despite promoting itself as an internationalised (hybrid) school.

The lived

However, when the school's identity is explored from the point of view of grass roots actors a different picture emerges. While Chinese teachers' perception of the school as 'Chinese was congruent with the segmented curriculum discussed above, the expatriate teachers perceived the school as international. The interviews focused on the teachers' experience of the school's flag raising ceremony. Flag raising ceremonies have been described as symbolic routines designed to create positive attachments to the state (Fairbrother, 2003). Rather than simply existing as isolated expressions of patriotic pride, these symbolic events have been absorbed into the education system, working in tandem with subjects such as citizenship education (Chen & Reid, 2002) to foster a feeling of patriotism.

'We are a Chinese school': Chinese teachers' perceptions of school identity

The majority of Chinese teachers interviewed explicitly or implicitly identified the school as Chinese. For example, one teacher when asked why the school had a flag raising ceremony answered in a matter of fact way that 'we are a Chinese school, that's why we are doing all this' (CT1). For these teachers, the reason for holding the flag raising ceremony was self-evident as illustrated by another teacher who explained that 'because every school no matter it is public school or private school, must have a flag raising ceremony on Monday morning' (CT2). This is echoed by another teacher who explained that from the school's perspective, 'the middle school and the primary school follow the national curriculum and they have support from the local government. So, they need to raise the flag every Monday morning' (CT4). However, none of the Chinese teachers expressed any significant emotional attachment to the flag or the singing of the anthem. A sense of apathy or a lost emotional attachment to the flag was evident their responses which is illustrated in the following two

examples: ‘honestly, I feel nothing. When I was young I actually feel something when singing the anthem. But when I grow older the anthem is not that meaningful to me (CT1) and ‘to be honest, when I was a student I felt a lot [...] I really feel a lot about my country when I was a student. But now, I think the feeling is going less and less (CT2). The repetition of honest is quite revealing, suggesting that the teachers believe they should feel some deep attachment to the flag, and by extension the party, yet have a rather perfunctory attitude towards the ceremony. And when emotional attachment was expressed, as in the case of ‘sometimes I feel I should love my country (CT3), the use of the modal ‘should’ suggests that love for the country is a duty, something of an obligation. The interview data suggests that, despite the rhetoric of an integrated curriculum, from the perspective of the Chinese teachers, the school is essentially a local school.

‘I don’t really see the point for an international school’: Expatriate teachers’ perceptions of school identity

In contrast, the majority of expatriate teachers interviewed identified the school as international or emphasised an international institutional logic in their criticism of the flag raising ceremony. Overall, the majority of teachers considered the flag raising ceremony to be redundant. This sentiment was articulated by one of teacher who succinctly described the ceremony as a ‘total waste of time’ (ET1). The reason for the expatriate teachers’ resistance to the flag raising ceremony appears to lie in the way they perceived the school’s identity which is revealed in two similar, yet subtly different, responses. The first example is ‘I don’t really see the point for an *international* school’ (ET2) and the second is ‘I know we should be respectful of the local culture, of course, and I respect that. But at the same time, it is an *internationalised* school and it should be quite *democratic*’ (ET4). Although both teachers explicitly identify the school as international in nature, ET2 refers to it as ‘international’ while ET4 calls it ‘internationalised.’ The former term implies that the teacher perceives the school’s identity in terms of a Type A traditional international school in which students are typically non-local residents. ET4’s perception of the school as ‘internationalised’, however, corresponds more to a Type C school in that the school contains aspects of international education but ultimately is national in nature. Moreover, he also draws on aspects from Type B ideological schools by stating that an international education should be democratic - that is, students should be free to choose whether or not they attend symbolic routines like the flag raising ceremony. Although ET4 did not explicitly refer to the school as international or internationalised, his firm rejection of the ceremony suggests that his perception of the school is mediated by an international institutional logic. However, in contrast to the three teachers above, ET3 held the opposite view. In response to being asked why the school had a flag raising ceremony, she replied that ‘maybe it’s because we are a local school so we have to raise the flag each Monday’ (ET3). This echoes the responses of the Chinese teachers who also stressed the school’s connection to a local or national context. The fact that she uses the collective ‘we’ to refer to both Chinese and expatriate faculty suggests that this teacher embraces the school’s identity as a local school.

Overall, despite ample evidence to the contrary, the expatriate teachers interviewed still perceived the school as ‘international.’ What this seems to suggest is that the teachers’ perception of the school’s identity is the product of deeply held beliefs about international education. The logic here is that because the school has an international curriculum, the IBDP, it follows that the school is ‘international.’ The school’s identity, then, is inextricably linked to its curriculum which supports the definition given by the ISC (2015). Moreover, it also suggests that teachers’ lived experience of the school is instrumental in the way they construct the school’s identity. Significantly, all of the teachers at the time of being interviewed were part of the high school. Therefore, their assumptions and beliefs about teaching an international curriculum in the school function as lenses which bring into focus certain international aspects of the school – the IB curriculum – while blurring other more overt Chinese aspects.

Resistance to the flag raising ceremony

The interview data also identified a number of strategies that the expatriate teachers deployed in order to challenge the school's Chinese identity. The first strategy involved remaining emotionally passive during the ceremony. One teacher stated that 'I do not concentrate at all on anything to do with the flag raising ceremony itself. But I try to show a little bit of respect in a way of just standing still. But I don't, like, look up to the flag and go 'wow' (ET1). This is reinforced by another teacher who explained that 'I have to come, I have to show face. And just don't care' (ET2). The use of simple sentences and the repetition of 'I have to' conveys the perfunctory nature of attending the ceremony: the teachers recognise that the ceremony is not aimed at them, but nevertheless still 'go through the motions' (ET4) in order to show face. The notion of 'face' (*mianzi*) is an important concept in China and has been defined as the need to be respected by others and to avoid embarrassment in social interactions (Hwang et al., 2002). This implies that the expatriate teachers exhibit a degree of intercultural understanding and adjust their behaviour accordingly, suggesting the existence of hybrid institutional logics. However, ET2 stated he 'has' to show face which implies that, from his perspective, he is not only forced to attend the ceremony, but also forced to 'appear' to agree with the ceremony by giving face. In contrast to the previous two teachers, ET3 showed more of a conciliatory approach to the ceremony. She stated that 'I don't want to judge too much [...] I'm not here in my country so I don't want to judge. If they asked me to join the flag raising ceremony every Monday I would do it because I am here and I don't want to be too rebellious' (ET3).

Another strategy for challenging the school's Chinese identity highlighted by the interview data was through physical action and gesture. In contrast to the conciliatory approach of the other three expatriate teachers, ET4 defined himself as 'rebellious.' ET4 emphatically expressed his disapproval of the ceremony by stating that 'we're made to stand there, and then the flag goes up, the music starts, and I just stare at my feet. In fact, I intentionally don't look at the flag, I intentionally look away. So, I go through the motions, but I don't really agree with it at all (ET4). There are a number of interesting points to mention here. Firstly, the teacher feels coerced into attending the ceremony. This is corroborated by ET2 who states that 'I have to come.' Secondly, the repetition of the word 'intentionally' emphasises the teacher's act of resistance, perhaps in an attempt to further cement his reputation as himself the 'rebel' of the group. The act of staring at his feet and looking away from the flag is also a way for the teacher to not only distance himself from the ceremony – as if to show that the purpose of the ceremony is not relevant – but also a way to assert agency. Finally, the interview data is supplemented with this author's own participation in, and observation of, the flag raising ceremony on numerous occasions. In addition to the forms of resistance outlined above, teachers were seen to talk and joke during the raising of the flag and the playing of the anthem. Some also refused to line up in rows, choosing to stand outside of the designated teachers' line. This author was even asked to stand back in line by another Chinese teacher on one occasion. One expatriate teacher even sporadically boycotted the ceremony altogether. These strategies – or international institutional logics – appear to be a way for teachers to contest what they perceive to be a dominant Chinese identity and to reassert their own international identity.

Discussion

Overall, this study found that school identity is dispersed across a number of ontological levels. The first is what I called the *rhetorical*. This is the identity of the school as articulated through publicity material, such as the school brochure, and as such embodies the intended identity of the school. The brochure presents a harmonious hybrid school identity, what could be described as 'western education with Chinese education'. The second level of analysis is what I called the *curricula*. On this level, it is possible to infer school identity by exploring the curriculum, its aims and assessment strategies. This study found that the school's curriculum appeared to be integrated, thereby enacting the intention stated in the brochure, but on closer analysis it was found that the Chinese national curriculum and the international curriculum were segregated by a process of segmented incorporation, a term appropriated from Lan's (2014) study of migrant children in Shanghai. Finally,

school identity becomes more complex and contested when explored from the perspective of the *lived*. This is shown in my study by the way the Chinese and expatriate teachers perceived the school's flag raising ceremony. While the Chinese teachers' acceptance of the ceremony shows congruence with the school's dominant 'Chinese' institutional logic, the expatriate teachers resistance to the ceremony suggests that they perceive the school as international or internationalised. Their response to the ceremony – such as standing out of line, talking and remaining emotionally detached - are examples of what could be called international institutional logics that are not only incongruent with the school's expressed Chinese identity and curriculum, but also appear to be deployed as a way to reaffirm an international identity.

To a large extent, these findings reinforce Hayden's definition of a Type C school which is worth quoting at length in order to make the connections between her definition and my study explicit:

'Type A' schools in, very often, *employing expatriate teaching staff* and offering an *international curriculum*, 'Type C' schools are arguably *national rather than international* in that, as private, fee-paying schools, they recruit students largely if not exclusively from the affluent non-native-English speaking socio-economically advantaged middle classes from whom an English medium education through an international curriculum recognised by universities worldwide provides a competitive edge for their children, compared with compatriots, in accessing university education in prestigious institutions worldwide' (Hayden, 2016, p. v).

However, this work builds on her definition in a number of ways. Firstly, while international schools have been categorised according to type (Hayden, 2006, 2016; Robinson and Guan, 2012) or curriculum (Gellar, 2002; Walker, 2016) this study compared the curriculum and the perceptions of both local and expatriate teachers. A *meso* analysis of school identity, however, may give the false impression that the school as an organisation is a stable entity. This is reflected in the choice of nomenclature for describing international schools in Hayden's typology – they are types, thereby implying that they are defined in terms of a set of fixed characteristics. However, the literature on organisational studies (Bjerregaard and Jonasson, 2014; Thornton and Ocasio, 2008) emphasises the socially constructed nature of organisational identity, particularly in relation to grass roots stakeholders' perception of the organisation and deployment of institutional logics. As this study shows, in practice, Type C school are more like living organisms, embodying aspects from all three parts of Hayden's typology. This is because the organisation of the school is made up of individuals whose lived experience of the school is characterised by change, contradiction and contestation. Therefore, the definition of a Type C school or any international school is inextricably linked to grassroots stakeholders. Secondly, this study builds on Hayden's typology by showing that teachers' lived experience is significant aspect in defining school identity, although school type (or identity) and curriculum need to be triangulated with the teachers lived experience of teaching and negotiating the discursive spaces of the school. Identity, as conceptualised here, is not *a priori*, but rather something that comes into existence in response to teacher belief and institutional logics.

These findings also problematise the notion of a normative framework for assessing international legitimacy in Type C schools as the findings highlight the essentially contested nature of the term 'international'. Depending on an individual's positionality, they will interpret, embody and enact international education in different ways. However, is this enough to make a national school international? According to the ISC's definition it is, as a Type C schools is international if it offers an international curriculum that is in English. However, the school would not qualify as international if judged according to Walker (2016)'s ethical curriculum or a normative framework of legitimacy. Clearly, ECNUAS has a great deal of work to do in order to qualify as 'truly' international according to a normative framework of international legitimacy. However, the interesting aspect here is not why the school fails to embody a truly 'international' ethos, but the fact that the expatriate teachers still identified the school as international or internationalised, despite ample amounts of evidence to the contrary. To reiterate my point above: from the perspective of lived experience, a national school is international as a result of stakeholders' perceptions of school identity which constitute their

institutional logics. However, the relationship between identity and logics is not linear, but dialectical and reciprocal. Stakeholders' perceptions of school identity are a significant aspect in defining a school's identity; therefore, they should be incorporated into a normative framework.

To return to the point mentioned above, why despite so much evidence to the contrary, did the expatriate teachers still perceive the school as international? This question can be explained by considering the role that cultural scripts for teaching and learning and institutional logics play in shaping teachers' beliefs and determining behaviour. Stigler and Hiebert (1998) define a cultural script as a generalised piece of knowledge that resides in the heads of both teachers and students. Therefore, cultural scripts are based on "a small and tacit set of core beliefs about the nature of a particular subject, how students learn, and the role that a teacher should play in the classroom" (1998, p. 2). Tan (2013) develops the notion of cultural scripts by defining them as a "coherent and evolving set of shared beliefs and assumptions located within a particular tradition that undergird the vision and purposes of society" (Tan, 2013, p. 8). Related to the notion of cultural scripts are institutional logics which have been understood as 'socially constructed, historical patterns of material practices, assumptions, values, beliefs and rules' (Thornton & Ocasio, 1999, p. 804). The expatriate teachers perceived the school as international because they shared a cultural script that emphasises certain values and beliefs about education. Although it is beyond the scope of this present study to identify these values and beliefs, the IB Learner Profile may offer a way to more fully describe international cultural scripts. The act of standing out of line during the flag raising ceremony embodies the trait of 'risk-takers' while the stated need to give face demonstrates intercultural awareness. Another explanation might be that the expatriate teachers considered an international curriculum to be a defining aspect of international education. Because ECNUAS offered the IBDP it therefore followed that the school must or should be international. However, this does not adequately explain why one of the teachers (ET3) perceived the school as Chinese. Ongoing data collection with this teacher suggests that her knowledge and understanding of Chinese culture, born out of 'a dream' to come to China when she was ten, may help to explain this incongruity. It points to the existence of hybrid cultural scripts/institutional logics that need to be explored further. This also highlights a limitation of this study which was its primary focus on expatriate teachers; therefore, future research could focus on Chinese teachers in more detail in order to explore their perceptions of the school's identity. Their beliefs about teaching and learning also need to be taken into consideration, as they are a significant aspect of institutional logics. Again, this is another limitation of this study that needs to be addressed in future research.

Conclusion

These findings have relevance to other Type C schools in China and other developing countries, particularly in relation to creating a unified and inclusive school culture that draws on all stakeholders' cultural backgrounds. Even though the case-study school is technically a Type C 'Chinese' school, the existence of expatriate teaching faculty and international curricula create many potential spaces for hybridity. Therefore, national schools should emphasise an intercultural ethos that is created from the bottom up, incorporating aspects of local and expatriate cultures. A top-down approach to school ethos and culture is likely to exclude expatriate teaching staff as it privileges the lived experience of Chinese faculty – that is, the lived experience of being a Chinese teacher in a Chinese school is taken as the *de facto* norm which informs school routines and policies and mechanisms that privilege Chinese institutional logics. This is certainly reflected by the interview data which showed the expatriate teachers felt alienated by the flag raising ceremony – a symbolic routine clearly meant for Chinese students and staff but at which attendance was nevertheless compulsory. In order to create a more cohesive and intercultural school culture, Type C schools need to consider the expectations and beliefs of expatriate teaching staff. While expatriate staff should aim to develop intercultural competence, national schools offering international curricula must also respect and reflect the beliefs of its expatriate teaching staff. This study suggests that national schools should aim to be more 'international' not to satisfy a normative discourse of international legitimacy, but to create a more intercultural school ethos. After all, the international teacher, along with the school and the

curriculum constitute the ambiguous umbrella term 'international education.' Any school employing international teachers and offers an international curriculum, regardless of its place in the overall curriculum, is (un)wittingly committing itself to offering an international education to its students, one that is undergirded by certain values and beliefs about learning. The precise identification and definition of these values and beliefs is open to debate as they should be situated in nature and therefore need to be negotiated through inclusive intercultural dialogue between local and expatriate teachers as well as and senior and middle management. However, I consider the IB Learner Profile to be a good framework as a starting point for constructing an internationally orientated school ethos that also remains faithful to the local context. Senior management and leaders of Type C schools in China have two choices: they can choose between a democratic school ethos that embraces plurality and difference or an authoritarian one that emphasises the needs of the country over the needs of the global.

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