

# Network for Research into Chinese Education Mobilities

## 中国教育流动研究网络

### Newsletter

Issue 7 February 2019

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Dear NRCEM colleagues,  
Greetings. In this issue we have brought to you fascinating research highlights, capacity building and conference information as follows.

#### Research Highlights

[Dr Adam Poole](#) (University of Nottingham, Ningbo, China) showcases his newly-minted [doctoral](#) research into [how internationalised school teachers construct cross-cultural identities in an internationalised school in Shanghai, China](#). He also discusses future research directions and introduces his other cutting-edge work in international teacher mobilities in China.

#### Capacity Building

1. [Mr Wayne Furlong](#) reflects on '[The sameness of difference](#)' by drawing on his extensive teaching experiences working with Chinese students across Australia, Inner Mongolia, Hong Kong and Shenzhen.
2. [Dr Sin Yee Koh](#) is seeking contacts and participants for a project on a Chinese international branch campus in Malaysia. Check the details [here](#).

#### Conference Information

[Dr Maggi Leung](#) (Utrecht University) is organising a panel on Education and Research Mobility between Europe and China in the [ISSCO conference](#) in November 2019, Jinan University, Guangzhou, China. Stay tuned and check it out here for more details.

#### Communication

Are you looking for research collaborators? Are you looking for hosting institutions in China to conduct your fieldwork? Get in touch with us ([chineseedmobilities@outlook.com](mailto:chineseedmobilities@outlook.com)) and we will advertise your requests.

For updates on our events, please click [here](#).

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Yours sincerely,

**Network for Research into Chinese Education Mobilities (NRCEM)**

If you do not wish to receive updates from the NRCCEM, please reply to this email and you will be removed from the mailing list.

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## ***Research Highlights***

### **How internationalised school teachers construct cross-cultural identities in an internationalised school in Shanghai, China**

Poole, A. (2019). [How internationalised school teachers construct cross-cultural identities in an internationalised school in Shanghai, China](#). Unpublished thesis: University of Nottingham, Ningbo.



[Dr Adam Poole](#), University of Nottingham, Ningbo

### **Abstract**

My doctoral thesis (Poole, 2019) explored how four internationalised school teachers constructed cross-cultural teacher identities in an internationalised school in Shanghai, China. The topic of international teacher identity is of significance to practitioners, researchers and school leaders alike as there is growing consensus that teacher identity and its construction is not only a vital part of developing a professional self, but is a complex, open-ended life-long project, involving cognitive, affective and, increasingly in a globalising world, intercultural dimensions. However, the international education literature continues to position the international teacher as certified (qualified) and Anglo-Western in nature. However, whilst most of the participants in my study were from the 'West', they were generally not certified teachers, nor was English their first language. Yet they identified themselves as international educators. One of the aims of the study, therefore, was to problematise the typologies of international schools and international teachers as types by offering a reconceptualisation of both in the form of the 'internationalised school' and the 'internationalised school teacher' respectively. A number of papers of mine, such as [Interpreting and implementing the IB Learner Profile in an internationalised school in China](#) (2018), [I am a mercenary now](#) (2018), and [I am an internationalising teacher](#) (2019) elaborate on these constructs in more detail.

In order to address the issue above and to bring into focus the complexity of internationalised teachers' lives, the concept of teacher identity was explored from postmodern, modernist, and cross-cultural traditions, leading to an integrative framework that conceptualised identity construction as experiential and discursive in nature, arising out of personal, professional and cross-cultural domains of experience, and articulated in the form of Gee's (2014) notion of Discourse (narratives) and discourse (language features). Commensurate with identity as discursive in nature, narrative inquiry was employed as a guiding methodology, with semi-structured interviews utilised as the main instrument for data collection. Data for the study were collected over a two-year period, with interview data being collected in the first year, and follow-up interviews and supplemental data collected in the second year. An enhanced form of member-checking was employed that ensured that data collection, transcription, analysis, and the writing up of findings proceeded in a semi-grounded and recursive manner, with participants being given opportunities to expand or excise data or interpretations that did not resonate with their lived experiences.

My findings showed that the participants tended to draw upon similar narratives and discursive features in order to construct their identities as international teachers, yet they also mobilised narrative and discourse in an idiosyncratic manner, based on personal, professional and cross-cultural experiences. Another significant finding was that cross-cultural experiences did not necessarily lead to increased intercultural understanding as might be expected after an extended sojourn abroad. Rather, the participants mobilised cross-cultural experiences in order to reinforce existing beliefs that were western-centric in nature or to bid for recognition as 'western' teachers in a Chinese school.

Of most relevance to the notion of international teacher (im)mobilities was how the participants narrated their cross-cultural experiences in terms of the accumulation of a range of capitals, including linguistic, cultural and social. Recently, researchers have started to explore international teachers' experiences as part of the Global Middle Class, a burgeoning construct that is taken to refer to a well-educated, economically and culturally resourced segment of the middle-class population (Yemini, Maxwell & Mizrahi, 2018) who due to operating on a global scale (Ball & Nakita, 2014) have accumulated a range of cosmopolitan sensibilities and, more critically, cultural and social capital (Weenink, 2008). For example, my own research found that international school teachers' ability to speak English fluently was a flexible form of linguistic capital that facilitated teacher mobility and also increased in value both inside and outside of non-English speaking countries, such as China, where English related programmes such as the International Baccalaureate Programme have become popular (Poole, 2019). However, as my thesis found, the dynamic nature of capital conversation is by no means universal. Whilst certain groups of the GMC (such as Anglo-Western international teachers) may possess such dynamic capital, others, such as non-Anglophone, non-Western international school teachers, possess different forms of capital that are less dynamic, thereby resulting in a paradoxical situation of advantage and precarity. Despite being a part of the global precariat, the participants' identities as international teachers became a form of cultural capital that increased in value in the cultural, symbolic and physical movement from Global North to the Global South, but not the other way. Within the context of internationalised schools in the Global South,

teachers' identity-capital, which can be depleted or have limited exchange value in the Global North, increases substantially in value.

## **Future directions**

Having completed my doctoral research and successfully defended my thesis, I plan to develop the findings above in the form of two research trajectories.

### *International school focus*

The first, and more specific, strand will continue to develop my research into the lives and experiences of teachers in international schools, with a focus on what I term 'internationalised' schools', but utilise the findings for other educational contexts, such as intercultural schools and local/national schools. Given the effects of globalisation (the spread of culture via the internet, increased employer precarity, increased migration and mobility), the line between national and international is becoming increasingly blurry. Therefore, the experiences of teachers in internationalised schools are not only generalisable to the international school context, but have implications for schools the world over, including intercultural schools and local schools. Within my research focus, these implications are centred on teacher development, particularly in terms of professional development that utilises the construct of teacher professional identity in order to foster greater criticality and interculturality (that is, critical interculturality).

I am currently working on two papers that challenge and develop the concepts currently used in the field of international education. The first seeks to add to the typology of international school teachers by drawing upon data from my doctoral research in order to propose a type of international school teacher who sits somewhere between international teachers as traditionally defined (qualified, native, and Anglophone) and so-called 'backpacker' teachers who are taken to be unqualified and are often non-native speakers. This research can be read in the form of a working paper, entitled [International Education Teachers' experiences as an educational precariat in China](#) which explores the ambivalent nature of internationalised school teachers as simultaneously part of the GMC and also in a state of precarity. It can also be heard in the form of a presentation, entitled [I am a mercenary now](#) which was delivered as part of the Asian Conference on Education, 2018.

The second paper offers a new construct in the form of the 'internationalised' school. The notion of the internationalised school in the Chinese context is similar to what Hayden (2006) calls Type C non-traditional international schools, in that they cater to 'aspirant indigenous elites' (Lauder, 2007), but differs in respect to asymmetries of power which, in contrast to local schools and more traditional international schools, are typified by organisational narratives that are hierarchical and local in nature, thereby problematising and marginalising 'western' expatriate teachers' professional identities. This internationalised school construct will then be used to inform the second strand of research.

## *Intercultural school focus*

The second broader strand of research seeks to take the findings from the first research strand, and apply it to contexts beyond China and the international education sector. My main focus is to problematise and develop the teacher professional identity concept by showing how cross-cultural mobility is an essential modality of experience for individuals in the twenty-first century that should be analysed in addition to personal and professional experiences, which continues to form the basis of the teacher identity construct (Schutz et al., 2018). My aim is to construct an intercultural teacher identity framework that could be used as the basis for developing greater interculturality in teachers and educational actors broadly conceived. A working paper, entitled [Interculturality as a component of teacher professional identity: Implications from the international school context](#) sets out these ideas in more detail.

This research is significant because to date, teacher professional identity continues to be understood in somewhat parochial terms, reflecting an assumption that educational contexts are defined in terms of place rather than space. As researchers have pointed out, increasingly in a globalised world, classrooms are becoming 'contact zones' (Pratt, 1991) or 'transnational spaces' (Hayden, 2011), in which students and teachers from different nationalities meet and often clash. Therefore, teachers need to develop a sense of (critical) interculturality in relation to their professional identities in order to accommodate the realities of globalisation and, in relation to a social justice agenda, develop sensibilities and strategies for inclusivity.

## **Selected reading**

### **Author's work**

Poole, A. (2019). [I am an internationalising teacher: A Chinese English teacher's experiences of becoming an international teacher](#). *International Journal of Comparative Education and Development*, 21(1), 31-45.

Poole, A., & Huang, J. (2018). [Resituating funds of identity within contemporary interpretations of perezhivanie](#). *Mind, Culture, and Activity*, 25(2), 125-137.

Poole, A. (2017). [Interpreting and implementing the IB Learner Profile in an internationalised school in China: A shift of focus from the 'Profile as text' to the 'lived Profile'](#). *Journal of Research in International Education*, 16(3), 248-264.

## **International teachers' experiences in international schools**

Bunnell T (2016) Teachers in international schools: a global educational 'precariat'? *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 14(4), 543-559.

Savva M (2017) The personal struggles of 'national' educators working in 'international' schools: an intercultural perspective. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 15(5), 576-589.

Tarc, P., Mishra Tarc, A., & Wu, X. (2019). Anglo-Western international school teachers as global middle class: portraits of three families. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 1-16.

### **Author's short bio:**

[Dr Adam Poole](#) (Ed. D, University of Nottingham, China) is a practitioner-researcher currently based in Shanghai, China. He teaches IBDP (International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme) English A and B at an international school in Shanghai, and has just completed and successfully defended his doctoral thesis which was undertaken with the University of Nottingham, Ningbo. Adam has published a number of articles on international education and the funds of knowledge/identity approach in international peer-reviewed journals, including *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction*, *Mind, Culture and Activity*, *Research Journal of International Education*, *Frontiers of Education in China*, and *International Journal of Comparative Education and Development*. His research interests include international teachers' experiences in international schools, teacher professional identity, and developing the funds of identity concept. Adam can be reached at [zx17826@nottingham.edu.cn](mailto:zx17826@nottingham.edu.cn).

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### **Capacity Building**

#### **GUANGDONG RULES: The sameness of difference**



[Wayne Furlong](#), former teacher, education consultant, author

The ball rolled out of play and Ying blew her whistle. The players took their positions and waited to restart. Ying's mother, Mei, watched from her car. She did not understand her daughter's love of this strange game, Australian Rules Football. However, she was proud to see her umpiring, proud that grown men obeyed when she blew her whistle.

There was a knock at the car window.

“Hello,” said a rotund middle aged man.

“Oh...hello.”

“Are you Ying’s mother?”

“Yes.”

“I’m Paul. I see you here every week. Would you like to earn some money while you’re here?”

“Sorry. I don’t understand.”

“Umpire. Like your daughter.”

“No. I cannot run.”

“Goal umpire.....just watch and see if it’s a goal or not. No worries.”

So began Mei’s immersion in Australian culture, via a game she had no idea existed six months earlier. The players loved that the goal umpire couldn’t speak English very well. They loved that she took her job seriously.

They loved that she wanted to be part of their game.

Language and culture were no barrier to Mei’s belonging. Her life was more interesting *because* of the fact that she danced between and together with two cultures. It made the footballers’ lives more interesting as well.

In Melbourne, over a twenty five year career, I taught secondary students from over 80 nationalities. Then I went to Hong Kong and taught for twelve years in a vastly different culture.

That very difference taught me the same lesson that teaching all those nationalities in Melbourne had taught me. We all want to belong, to be helpful, to be valued members of a community. It is this fundamental human urge that attaches us to a culture in the first place. The cause of our differences is our sameness.

Early in my book “Buddha is a Punk Skater” I tell a simple story, set in Shenzhen:

*A group of seven-year-old girls runs up to me, very excited.*

*"Mr Furlong.....we are very happy today."*

*"That's nice. Why?"*

*"We have ten minute more lunch time."*

*"Why?"*

*"Two student miss the test yesterday so have to do it now. We are so happy. Bye bye!"*

Those children are no different to Australian, Ethiopian or Fijian children. They love to belong through play, they love a sudden gift of ten minutes, and they love to share their joy. They are not, as I was led to believe in my childhood, "inscrutable Chinese." They are completely scrutable.

The teacher's job is essentially to help each fun loving, sharing student find a way to belong through learning. This means helping them to find their place within the culture they live in.

Easy, right?

Not always. For students moving to a new culture there are barriers, both external and internal, to belonging. In my book I tell the story of Sahra, a Somali refugee, who had to study the novel "Night". The book touched her and in doing so challenged cultural beliefs instilled in her as a child.

Sahra was torn. Family and religion were her strongest points of belonging yet she also wanted to belong to the world of her teacher and classmates.

All cultures sometimes cultivate beliefs and norms that can be problematic in a new setting. Australian culture, for example, often values independent thought and "speaking your mind" but these things do not always sit well in the Confucian cultures of Hong Kong and China. What is intended as a helpful suggestion may be felt as criticism.

In contrast, Hong Kong students may follow a cultural norm of not making eye contact when being chastised, believing this to be respectful. To the western teacher- "look at me when I am talking to you"- this behaviour can have the appearance of insolence.

Such differences are fluid. Not every Hong Kong person is reserved and not every Australian is outgoing. It is often said that the Chinese ethos is collective while the Australian one is individualistic. Yet Chinese have a saying about "shoveling the snow onto your neighbour's



roof” and Australians idealise “mateship” and “lending a hand.” Everything human is in every culture. Even as individuals we are sometimes this and sometimes that.

This and that aside, cultural beliefs and norms of behaviour *do* differ and they do sometimes clash. I have noticed a general (*not* universal) tendency in Chinese students in Australia toward reticence and wariness of the new.

The beginning for the teacher, however, is not the student’s reticence and wariness. The beginning is the student’s urge to belong. This urge can take them past wariness but they will need to be brave. Bravery is much easier when we feel safe. Here is a short list of ways the teacher can help provide a safe place for such a student:

1. **Respect the student’s need to belong in their own culture first.** Respect their family, their name and their story. Ying and Mei did not make their way into the football community *despite* being Chinese. Their Chineseness was integral to how they came to belong.
2. **Watch for uncertainty.** Maybe what you are asking is culturally confusing. (Shared laughter is powerfully safe and misunderstandings are often funny).
3. **Assume the student wants to belong.** If they do something that seems rude or unco-operative check with them. Ask why. Find out.
4. **Support them in reaching out to others.** Aziz, a seventeen-year-old student from Eritrea, wanted to share something of his culture with the class. He brought home cooked Eritrean food for the class to enjoy.

The Vietnamese, Timorese and Iranian students all took a plate of food. The six Chinese students refused to do so. I could see the hurt in Aziz’s face. To Aziz it looked like something worse than wariness of the new to Aziz.

We had a class meeting and all aired their views about how the action of the Chinese students made them feel. The class then agreed that each group would put on a lunch, that all would eat, and that Chinese would be next. The Chinese students then ate the food but I don’t think they liked it. Maybe a door opened and they do now. I hope so.

5. **Support them against bullying.** I tell the story in my book of a Vietnamese boy who was assaulted by an Australian -born student. There are in all societies those who are unwelcoming of the newcomer. There is every chance the Chinese student coming to a new culture may be vilified, dehumanized, bullied. Be in no doubt of the effect of this on his or her learning. This is a traumatic event and, like most trauma, will isolate, demoralize and depress. It will lead to hypervigilance and a subsequent fall off in learning.

The teacher cannot eradicate xenophobia or intolerance in a society. He or she can, however, make a classroom that is an antidote to this, a place of acceptance and belonging, a place of safety where we always see the sameness that our differences reflect.

From this place is born the courage to take the risk of welcoming and joining.

Good on you Mei.

Hen bang Paul.

### ***Author bio***

Wayne Furlong taught for 25 years in state secondary schools in Melbourne, Australia, where he held positions of responsibility for English, ESL, Curriculum, and Discipline and Welfare. He then taught for eight years in the public school system in Hong Kong before working as an Educational Consultant for four years. He knows what it is like to help the newcomer adjust to a new culture and he knows what it is to be the newcomer himself.

His first book, "[Buddha is a Punk Skater](#)", is a collection of short stories, about the people he met in his teaching career and what they taught him. It is an honest and thoughtful book, but it is also a playful book.

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### **Seeking contacts and participants—Chinese International Branch Campus in ASEAN**

Dr. Koh Sin Yee (School of Arts and Social Sciences, Monash University Malaysia) is seeking interview participants for her current research project on Xiamen University Malaysia as a case study of a Chinese international branch campus in ASEAN. This project aims to understand: (1) the objectives, processes and challenges of setting up such a branch campus; (2) the connections and interactions between the 'home' and 'branch' campuses; and (3) the perspectives, experiences and future plans of staff and students. This project has been approved by the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee.

Dr. Koh is seeking to recruit three groups of interview participants for this project.

1. **Faculty members and university administrators/managers who are based at Xiamen University (XMU).** This includes staff who travel regularly between the two campuses, or staff who have taught/worked at XMUM for a short period of time (e.g. on secondment, on temporary visit or exchange).
2. **Faculty members and university administrators/managers who are based at Xiamen University Malaysia (XMUM).** This includes local and international staff who were recruited directly to XMUM or seconded from XMU.
3. **Students at Xiamen University Malaysia (XMUM).** This includes local and international students enrolled in Foundation or Degree programmes.

Please contact Dr. Koh at [koh.sinyee@monash.edu](mailto:koh.sinyee@monash.edu) for further details. Any suggestions, contacts and leads would be most welcome!

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### ***Conference Information***

#### **CfP: ISSCO conference – Nov 2019 – Jinan Uni. – Panel on education and research mobility between China and Europe**

Dear colleagues,

I am organising a panel on education and research mobility between China and Europe for the upcoming 10th International Society for the Study of Chinese Overseas (ISSCO) conference (see attached for the CFP). Depending on the paper abstracts, I may have it focus on one of the following themes:

1. Chinese student and/or academic mobility to Europe – papers can focus on issues during the study/research period, or afterwards
2. The role of the Chinese state, institutions and people (staff and students) in the development of Chinese transnational education in Europe – examples including the establishment of Chinese university branch campuses, Confucius Institutes, other Chinese language schools)

If there is sufficient interest, it might also be possible to organise a panel on each of the above.

I hope that some of you would be interested in joining me. Please send me ([w.h.m.leung@uu.nl](mailto:w.h.m.leung@uu.nl)) a short description of your paper topic by end of next week (15.02.) if you do.

Feel free to forward my call to colleagues you know who might be interested. If you have suggestions regarding whom I can approach, please let me know. Thank you in advance!

There will be no registration fee, but all conference participants will pay for their own transportation and accommodation. More information on the conference can be found here: <http://issco.info/>

Hoping to hear from some of you soon!

Best new year wishes,

Maggi Leung

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