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The Portrayal and Branding of British Columbia Offshore Schools on Provincial Government Websites La représentation et l'image de marque des écoles extraterritoriales de la Colombie-Britannique sur les sites Web du gouvernement provincial

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Article abstract

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The Portrayal and Branding of British Columbia Offshore Schools on Provincial Government Websites

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**The Portrayal and Branding of British Columbia Offshore Schools on Provincial
Government Websites**
**La représentation et l'image de marque des écoles extraterritoriales de la Colombie-
Britannique sur les sites Web du gouvernement provincial**

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Abstract

This article examines how British Columbia (BC) portrays its offshore school program on its government websites. BC offshore schools currently operate in 11 countries, teaching the provincial curriculum to students from the local host country. Our critical discourse analysis of BC provincial government websites and videos shows that the curriculum is portrayed as a brand and the program's rationales and goals are inconsistent. BC portrays its curriculum as a global brand that is more progressive, modern, and worldly than the countries that host offshore schools. However recent BC curriculum initiatives, such as Indigenous perspectives and knowledge, core competencies, and place-based learning are mostly absent from the discourses on the websites and videos. Based on these findings, we propose that BC revisit the rationalization for the offshore school program and how it is officially portrayed because the portrayal of curriculum as a branded product blurs the lines between public and private spaces.

Résumé

Cet article examine la manière dont la Colombie-Britannique (C.-B.) représente son programme d'écoles extraterritoriales (*offshore schools* en anglais) sur les sites Internet de son gouvernement. Les écoles extraterritoriales de la C.-B. sont présentement actives dans 11 pays où elles enseignent le programme d'études provincial aux étudiants du pays d'accueil. Notre analyse du discours critique des sites Web et des vidéos du gouvernement provincial de la C.-B. démontre que le programme scolaire y est représenté comme s'il s'agissait d'une marque commerciale et que les justifications et les objectifs du programme ne sont pas cohérents. La C.-B. représente son programme scolaire comme une marque mondiale qui serait plus progressiste, plus moderne et plus sophistiquée que les pays qui accueillent les écoles extraterritoriales. Cependant, les initiatives récentes du programme de la C.-B., telles que les perspectives et les connaissances autochtones, les compétences de base et l'apprentissage axé sur le territoire sont pour la plupart absentes du discours que l'on trouve sur ses sites Web et ses vidéos. À partir de ces résultats, nous proposons que la C.-B. réexamine sa rationalisation des écoles extraterritoriales et la manière dont elles sont officiellement représentées, car la représentation du programme scolaire comme produit de marque estompe les frontières entre les espaces publics et privés.

Keywords: British Columbia offshore schools; British Columbia; international curriculum; curriculum brand

Mots clés : Écoles extraterritoriales de la Colombie-Britannique; Colombie-Britannique; curriculum mondial; marque mondiale

Introduction

The Canadian province British Columbia (BC) has authorized its public curriculum to be taught by BC-certified teachers in accredited schools abroad since the late 1990s (Cosco, 2011; Schuetze, 2008; Wang, 2017). Students who attend a BC offshore school (BCOS) intend to go abroad for postsecondary education; they complete the BC graduation program in order to earn the BC high school diploma—the same one earned by domestic students in Canada (Schuetze, 2008; Wang & Mazawi, 2024). There are currently 34 BCOSs operating in 11 countries, with 22 schools in China (BC Government, 2024a), which makes BC one of the largest providers of Canadian international education (Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials [CICIC], 2024). This paper examines persistent discourses that the BC provincial government employs to portray and rationalize their offshore schools to broad public audiences on two BC government websites and two online videos that promote BCOS. By using critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 1992; 1993; 2013) we sought to understand how and why BC participates in offshore education, specifically we examined its definitions, purposes, and justifications for offshore schools. By analyzing the main representation of BCOS online, we discovered what the BC government indicates as important, and what was marginal or absent. The data sources in this study are the primary Offshore School Program (OSP) website (BC Government, 2024b), a secondary website called BC for High School (BC Government, 2024c), and two promotional videos embedded in the primary website. Video 1 was on the OSP website from 2018 to 2023 (BC Government, 2018) and was replaced by Video 2 (BC Government, 2021) in late 2023 as this study was in progress.

Both authors of this article have worked as BCOS teachers in China—the first author in two large schools from 2011 to 2017, and the second author in a smaller school from 2018 to 2020. While we were teachers, neither of us had viewed the videos or websites before or during employment; however, we discovered these data as graduate students upon returning to Canada. Upon viewing the videos and closely examining the websites, we sensed misalignments between what was presented on the public websites and our own experiences. Therefore, we formulated two research questions: How does British Columbia define, rationalize, and portray offshore schools on their government websites? What does BC indicate as more important and what is overlooked or erased?

These questions are significant for the field of international education, and particularly for the burgeoning literature on Canadian offshore schools (Wang & Mazawi, 2024) because BC offshore education is an example of how a public curriculum can become a privatized brand. A branded curriculum product marketed globally in order to be accessed by students to assist their upward mobility reflects contemporary neoliberal ideologies which encourage education systems to privatize, globalize, and individualize in order to be competitive (Ball, 2012; Harvey, 2007). Neoliberal educational reforms in British Columbia in the early 2000s have resulted in privatization (Fallon & Poole, 2014; Stein, 2020), internationalization (Poole & Fallon, 2015), and school choice (Yoon, 2011; 2016). To help illustrate the complexity and fluidity of BCOS, we draw on Ball's (2012) definition of neoliberalism:

A complex, often incoherent, unstable and even contradictory set of practices that are organized around a certain imagination of the “market” as a basis for the universalization of social relations, with the corresponding incursion of such relations into almost every single aspect of our lives. (Shamir, 2008, as cited in Ball, 2012, p. 3)

For the purposes of this paper, we will focus on two aspects of this definition. First, how the need to be competitive in a global neoliberal market impacts the BCOS program. Second, the incursion of market forces into the personal and social relations among BCOS students, parents, teachers,

and the curriculum. We begin with background context, then a literature review, followed by an overview of the data and findings and a discussion in three sections.

Background Context: Internationalization in British Columbia Education

British Columbia education has been increasingly internationalized since the 1990s (Fallon & Poole, 2014; Poole & Fallon, 2015; Stein, 2020; Waters, 2008). This internationalization included the establishment of offshore schools which teach the BC curriculum in 11 other countries (CICIC, 2024) as well as the recruitment and admission of fee-paying international students to both public and private schools in BC (Deschambault, 2018; Waters, 2008). The first BCOS was the privately owned Maple Leaf International School which opened in 1995 and was inspected and certified to confer the BC high school diploma in 1998 (Maple Leaf Schools, 2024; Wang, 2017; Waters, 2008). It began as an authorized pilot program with Canadian and Chinese teachers until a memorandum of understanding was signed between BC and Liaoning province in Northeast China to collaborate on education and award dual degrees. While Maple Leaf grew to become the largest organization authorized to use the BC curriculum, subsequent Chinese regulations in 2003–2004 allowed for more Chinese private schools to adopt the BC curriculum (Wang, 2017) and the number of schools has increased. An annual inspection process where the BC Ministry of Education sends inspectors to visit offshore schools has developed over the years (Auditor General of BC, 2020; Waters, 2008). Over the next two decades, BCOSs opened schools in 10 other countries, and other Canadian provinces opened their own offshore schools based on their provincial curricula (BC Government, 2024a; CICIC, 2024).

Literature Review

Most of the scholarly research on Canadian offshore education has examined how provinces authorize offshore schools and teach provincial curriculum programs in China (Alexander, 2024; Cosco, 2011; Schuetze, 2008; Wang, 2017; Zhang & Heydon, 2016; Zhang, 2019). Schuetze's (2008) case study of three BCOSs in China described the emergence of different types of school structures in the first decade of growth in China: some schools stand alone and some are relatively small cohorts of BC students within larger schools. Although the schools in the case study were in different Chinese provinces and operated under separate leadership, they were all proprietary schools owned by Chinese-Canadian businesspersons who do not necessarily have academic or professional backgrounds in education (Schuetze, 2008, p. 14). Wang (2017) examined policy documents from 1980 to 2016 to understand each country's values and objectives regarding offshore education and found that self-interest drove policymaking of each Canadian province and the different levels of Chinese government, stating that "educational cooperation between China and Canada is built on policies that are business-driven, either as service provider or consumer" (Wang, 2017, p. 536). A comprehensive report on the global educational presence of multiple Canadian provinces during an expansionary period by Cosco (2011) concluded that offshore schools are a uniquely Canadian approach to international education because it is the only nation with provinces that authorize their curricula for export. Cosco (2011) explained that

Canadian schools overseas are a potential asset to Canada and Canadians. Not only do they open up new business and educational opportunities abroad, but they are a conduit for developing and sustaining positive international networks and two-way flows of people. (p. 2)

These three studies are crucial in understanding the scope and structure of offshore schools; however, BC provincial government's portrayals of BCOSs have yet to be researched.

Stein (2018) critically examined the portrayal of international education through the Canadian government document which introduced *EduCanada* as a brand initiative for promoting Canada as a destination for international students. Stein (2018) found that *EduCanada* marketed Canadians' good character with abundant discourses of liberal exceptionalism that sometimes does not reflect the reality of racialized international students living in Canada. Stein (2020) also studied the provincial government's international education policy documents, particularly British Columbia's International Education Strategy (BC Government, 2012) and the BC Jobs Plan (BC Government, 2011), which laid the economic justifications for increasing international education initiatives.

As offshore schools matured, recent research has explored the role of state sovereignty and placement of borders (Wang & Mazawi, 2024), how students navigated between two powerful educational cultures (Alexander, 2024), and how a variety of BCOS websites portray their programs (Xu, 2024). Alexander (2024) researched the experiences of policies around classroom assessment and English language use in three BCOSs in China and found that students explained that they enacted their own agency when navigating between two powerful cultures in their offshore schools. Xu (2024) examined the definition of the "educated citizen" on the BC for High School website (BC Government, 2024c), as well as the private websites of 14 individual BCOSs. Xu (2024) analyzed the English language versions of these websites and noticed how they seemed to promote the BC curriculum over the host country's curriculum which uses the local language. These three studies explored the contested and shifting representations of BCOS from perspectives within and afar. While Alexander (2024) found that participating students enacted transnational identities in their schooling, Xu (2024) was critical of the Western perspective promoted on some BCOS English-language websites. Overall, BCOSs exist at the consent of multiple different governmental policies and these overlapping claims maintain ongoing tensions.

In our literature review, two studies have shed light on the roles and branding of Canadian international education activities (Stein, 2018) as well as the private websites of some BCOSs (Xu, 2024); this present study aims to advance this field in the more specific case of the British Columbia government's website portrayals of offshore education.

Data Sources

This section describes the two websites and two videos while our findings and analysis will be thoroughly explained in the findings sections. Government websites, while sometimes viewed with cautious skepticism, can often be seen as trustworthy or "official" sources of information. They are easily accessible and are likely the initial entry point that members of the global public—including teachers, students, parents, and administrators—would use to learn about offshore education. Analyzing official websites can spotlight the types of discourses that institutions use to represent their program goals and rationales. Website analysis can be a window into officially sanctioned constructions of offshore education, including prevalent rationales and reasons for existence. These sources were chosen because they are public and easily accessible sources. While there are links to BCOS inspection reports, we have not included these lengthy documents because they have different purposes than the public media, and as PDFs, they are a step removed from the websites.

The OSP website features a large and prominent photograph of a teacher at the front of a classroom along with some students. This one photograph suggests that smiling teachers in bright and colourful classrooms are important for the BCOS image. Below that is a short statement outlining the basic requirements for a school to be certified as an offshore school. An important

hyperlink, “See all of the certified and pre-certified offshore schools and their inspection reports,” leads to a list of all of the offshore schools organized by country. Through this link, each school on the list includes its location, the name of the owner/operator, the Offshore School Representative, and PDFs of recent annual inspection reports. Back on the main page, and through another link, “How to establish a B.C.-Certified Offshore School,” is BC’s rationale for offshore schools.

The website titled BC for High School (BC Government, 2024c) is designed differently than the other BCOS website. The website’s homepage is divided into two equal halves, with the left side titled, “Study BC’s Curriculum Internationally” and the right titled, “Study in British Columbia.” Beneath each subtitle are short overviews of the two programs, followed by a link that invites users to explore either the “Offshore” or “Onshore” programs. The main sections are: Study BC’s curriculum in your own country; A globally respected education system; and Establish a B.C. offshore school (BC Government, 2024c).

Video 1 is titled “British Columbia’s Offshore School Program” (BC Government, 2018) and was uploaded to YouTube in 2018 by the Government of BC YouTube channel and has been viewed 3230 times. It is just over 3 minutes long and features short clips of various administrators, principals, graduates, current students, and parents speaking about different aspects of the program. Short video clips and still photographs from existing BCOSs are interspersed among the testimonials. Students are shown interacting with teachers and engaging in educational activities such as sports, class presentations, and group work. There are multiple images of graduation ceremonies, especially closer to the end.

A newer video appeared on the OSP website in Autumn 2023 just as we were completing our initial data analysis. Since Video 1 had featured prominently on this website from 2018 to 2023, it would have been viewed widely and should remain as the main data source for this article. Video 2 (BC Government, 2021) was uploaded to YouTube in 2021 and has been viewed 1428 times. This video is significantly different from its predecessor because it is animated with simple graphics and a single voiceover commentary. It does not include the voices or the faces of students, principals, or parents like in the first video. Some quotes from Video 1 are included in Video 2, but now as text on the screen, no longer spoken by the original speakers. Additionally, a portion of the video is dedicated to explaining the annual BCOS inspection process and shows the certification crest as indication that a school has been certified by the province, which was likely added to amplify the legitimacy of the program. Overall, Video 2 retains most of the same discourses as Video 1 but has additional, and more deliberate, explanations about the program and current curriculum.

Methodology: Critical Discourse Analysis

To analyze these data, we used critical discourse analysis (CDA), particularly based on studies by Fairclough (1992; 1993; 2013), Janks (1997) and Scollon (2008) to guide our research. Key in the CDA of textual and visual data of public webpages is viewing them from a constructivist epistemology (Crotty, 1998) which considers the ways that meaning is socially and individually constructed. Particular to CDA, researchers consider factors behind and beyond the spoken and written words.

Fairclough’s interpretation of discourse prompted researchers to not only consider the linguistic characteristics of text, but also consider the historical and social conditions that shaped the text (Janks, 1997, p. 329). Fairclough (2013) stated that discourse is not independently definable and “we can only arrive at an understanding of it [discourse] by analyzing sets of

relations” (p. 3). Therefore, discourse is meaning of text beyond the sentence level. In addition to this definition, we drew on Fairclough’s (1993) analysis of advertisements for academic appointments which revealed how the marketization of universities in the early neoliberal era affected how both modern and traditional universities attracted new faculty. Fairclough’s comparative analysis was helpful because we compared two different websites and videos for the same program. In addition to perceiving how and why the aforementioned webpages were written and published, we also discuss how readers from various standpoints may interpret the text. Therefore, we have considered social, historical, political, and economic contexts that influence discourses around BCOS. The extensive framework that Scollon (2008) developed and outlined to analyze public discourse, webpages, news releases, and public consultation transcripts was useful in reading government discourses. Scollon (2008) considered the message in words and sentences, as well as the design of the documents/webpages, such as font, typeface size, hierarchy of information, symbols, logos, and images. Based on some of the above approaches, our study sought to analyze how the provincial government of BC has represented its OSP.

Data Analysis

As this paper is an analysis of websites, we knew that our data sources would be precarious and subject to change by forces beyond our control. After we completed the analysis of two websites and one video, the original video was replaced with a new video on the OSP webpage. Since Video 1 (the original promotional video) was featured on the government website from 2018 until 2023, it is still an important source of information and insight into the portrayal and rationalization for BCOS, so we retained it for our analysis. Therefore, we did not replace our analysis of Video 1 with Video 2, but added it to our data corpus to explore what changed over time and what continuities remained.

We initially navigated the OSP website and explored the various hyperlinks, such as a list of current offshore schools and information for prospective teachers. Then, we transcribed and analyzed Video 1 by watching it individually several times to familiarize ourselves with the content and discourses. Next, we returned to the OSP webpage and using Scollon’s (2008) process, considered the ordering of headings, and questioned why information about offshore schools and the curriculum was so sparse. After initial familiarization, we noted what words were dominant and what words were rare or missing, and how language was used to describe students, teachers, and the curriculum. With these questions, we analyzed the texts individually and then shared with each other to check for reliability and generate new ideas for findings. As we derived themes to organize our findings, we connected with the social and historical contexts, previous scholarly studies, and our own experiences as BCOS teachers. After the first version of this article was written, Video 2 was published on the OSP website and replaced Video 1 as the main video after five years. Because of this, we added Video 2 to our data corpus and began another round of analysis with the (now) four data sources considering if the initial themes impacted any of our interpretations. What follows are the results of our analysis and discussion of the findings.

Findings

The three findings discussed below are the result of our critical discourse analysis outlined above. We found that (1) the BC curriculum is presented as a brand that students and their families could choose; (2) there is confusion and misalignment of the rationales for BCOSs; and (3) that Indigenous perspectives and knowledge were omitted from the websites and videos.

Curriculum Brand

The BC curriculum is portrayed as a branded product in both the videos and the websites. In all four data sources, this curriculum brand is based on British Columbia's initials "BC" which fits the need to be translatable as a simple acronym. Marketing the proper name of the province, *British Columbia*, to families around the globe could be confusing and cumbersome. Since many international programs are exports from Britain (Wu & Koh, 2022), it makes sense that BC's brand would seek to avoid geopolitical confusion. The title of the BC for High School website contains a double meaning depending on the perspective of the reader—a potential international student may read that BC (the province/place) is for high school; or they may read BC (the curriculum) is for high school. One half of the homepage links to offshore programs, and the other half to onshore programs; therefore, the BC government could be suggesting that offshore schools are equally as authentic as its domestic schools. While showing equal balance, this page also shows a clear partition of the offshore and onshore programs. However, portraying them as two distinct programs may be appropriate since we found that there are no substantial links between the offshore and onshore educational initiatives.

The clearest definition of BCOSs is on the OSP website in the excerpt below which affirms their legitimacy, and explains their purposes and value to students:

B.C.-certified offshore schools are located outside Canada and the Province of British Columbia and are authorized to offer the B.C. curriculum. The Ministry of Education and Child Care certifies, inspects and regulates offshore schools, and ensures that they meet B.C. education standards. The Offshore School Program creates pathways that support international students who are considering coming to B.C. to study, live and work. (BC Government, 2024b)

The first sentence indicates the government's BCOS definition as schools located outside of Canada that are authorized to offer the BC curriculum. The third sentence refers to the rationale for the program by explaining that it is intended to create "pathways" for international students who are considering coming to the province for a short period of time (to study) or for a longer period of time (to live and work). In the second sentence, BC aims to affirm the legitimacy of the schools with four verbs: *certifies*, *inspects*, *regulates*, and *ensures*. These verbs indicate that offshore schools are sanctioned by the provincial education authority and are intended to give legitimacy to the brand. In another excerpt on the OSP website, the legitimacy of offshore schools is further claimed by their association with the reputation of the BC education system as a whole:

British Columbia is a global leader in education modernization. British Columbia's students, schools, teachers and curriculum are world-renowned for excellence:

- Top-ranking in student outcomes in English-speaking jurisdictions
- Best student outcomes in Canada
- Graduation diploma recognized by post-secondary institutions around the world. (BC Government, 2024b)

This second excerpt uses ranking and measurement terms, like "world-renowned," "top-ranking," and "best outcomes" to explain why British Columbia is a good curriculum choice for offshore education. BC presents its curriculum as a product offered to students in the Global South, implying that education in other countries is subpar, and that students attending a BCOS can get access to better educational opportunities. This textual discourse implies that BC has more competitive schools and a better education system compared to where the students originate (Harvey, 2007).

A section on the BC for High School website titled “Unique Advantages” also speaks to the legitimacy and rationale for BCOS. The text on this webpage has claims of worldwide acceptance of the BC graduation diploma with statements about quality assurance and accountability measures, admissions to postsecondary programs globally, high achievement on external assessments, and diversity. These points are similar to the OSP website. However, none of these assertions are supported by external links or sources which is necessary when making such declarations of superiority, especially in the competitive market of international curriculum programs. The final two points of the “Unique Advantages” section state that “B.C. educators working at offshore schools—their contributions enrich teaching practice and help schools develop an international curriculum” (BC Government, 2024c). The meaning of “international curriculum” is vague since it is unclear if the BC curriculum is taught the same way as in domestic schools or adapted by offshore teachers and principals for the local or national contexts. The final line of this page states that graduates have a pathway to immigration to contribute to “B.C.’s growing economy that offers graduates the opportunity to live and work in B.C.” (BC Government, 2024c). This sentence echoes the OSP webpage except that the verb “study” found on that webpage is omitted, indicating a slight misalignment of reasons for graduates to potentially migrate to BC or the rest of Canada. Overall, the BC for High School website appears to be a separate attempt to portray BC’s offshore program alongside BC’s international student “onshore” program. This portrayal of the schools as *international* somewhat distances offshore schools away from British Columbia itself. It also aligns with the brand portrayal in the videos.

In both excerpts on the OSP website, BC is positioned as giving opportunities to, and opening pathways for, students from outside of Canada by stating that students would have access to “top-ranking” and “best” student outcomes in Canada as well as earning a globally recognized diploma. Thus, students are positioned as customers using a service rather than learners developing themselves academically and socially with the BC curriculum. Students are framed as being offered opportunities rather than situated as active individuals succeeding in a foreign curriculum in their second language. Furthermore, in both excerpts, the BCOS brand places the curriculum-as-plan itself as what creates opportunities for students, instead of students, using their agency, creating opportunities for themselves while learning through the curriculum-as-lived (Aoki, 2004). By foregrounding the BC curriculum as a commodity to invest in, these excerpts neglect to show how offshore students can use their agency to be successful learning the curriculum.

In Video 1, students speak about why they prefer the BC curriculum, using the phrases “you are entering to a new world, to new opportunities” (0:22), “to have your own thoughts, to speak up” (0:48), and “we widen our views ... a little bit more of an international citizen” (0:38). One administrator explains that BCOSs “blend devotion to study, strong computational skills, the inquiry base, group research, interaction, higher-level thinking skills. They’re engaged” (1:26). The emphasis on progressive pedagogy sometimes used in Western education may imply deficiencies in education in host countries. The video also emphasizes the *global* nature of the program where graduation “opens the door for them to go to any Western university” (2:05). The discourse circulating in the videos and websites imply that schools in students’ own countries are deficient in providing these kinds of opportunities. The footage in which the students explain their high-status career aspirations—as lawyers, astronomers, and engineers—are placed immediately after a series of adults explaining the importance of English competence in “these global times” (2:20); thus, connecting wealth and prestige that comes with these professions with an English-medium education. The implication is that students would not have the opportunity to achieve these career dreams without the BC curriculum. A similar discourse is found in the *EduCanada*

brand in which Stein (2018) stated that Canadians' good characteristics are "implicitly contrasted with its opposites. That is, if Canada is a modern, progressive, open-minded nation, then it must be more evolved than "pre-modern" or underdeveloped/non-progressive nations—potentially including those countries from whence Canada's international students hail" (p. 467).

Student testimonials in the videos are similar to the responses of student participants in Yoon's (2016) study of mini-schools in Vancouver. The students in Yoon's study came to see themselves as top academic performers and leaders based on their attendance in mini-schools for high performing students. The same theme is found when students in Video 1 state that their career aspirations and a "new world" of learning are made possible thanks to the BC curriculum in offshore schools. Since Video 2 retains some of the testimonials from the original video, it suggests that the concept of upward mobility through Western education and migration is a key part of the brand that continues over the years between the two videos.

Whereas students are in the forefront of all data sources, teachers are noticeably absent. When the BC curriculum itself is portrayed as the most effective part of BCOS education, it prevails over the agency and personality of teachers and students. In such a way, the curriculum-as-plan is prioritized over the curriculum-as-lived (Aoki, 2004). These four data sources place most emphasis and prestige on the BC curriculum as a brand that is legitimate and valuable for mobility, but they omit how teachers enact the curriculum according to local contexts. These discourses are relevant to curriculum studies because the positioning of the BC curriculum as a brand and a product means the government's public discourses value the curriculum-as-plan more than the lived curriculum which students and teachers create together (Aoki, 2004). The online portrayal of offshore schools may leave readers wondering if and how teachers adapt the BC curriculum to local cultures and laws, or if it is identical to how it is taught in British Columbia.

Brands can distort as well as display reality. The BC curriculum brand exhibited in Video 1 showcases people and images from different offshore schools in a variety of host countries, suggesting extensive global appeal. A world map graphic with a list of BCOS host countries opens the video exhibiting the global reach of the program (0:18) while, simultaneously, one of the administrators states that BCOSs are found "pretty much all over the world" (0:18), portraying an even distribution of offshore schools across four continents. Words like "world" (0:11; 0:19; 0:24; 2:53), "international" (0:43; 0:46; 1:23; 2:28), and "global" (2:21; 2:48) are used by administrators, principals, parents, and students throughout the video. This global focus is justified because offshore schools are located internationally. However, as the video progresses and the discourses zoom out from the connection to BC itself, the global perspective of the OSP is emphasized and the ties to BC stretch and weaken. Video 2 continues with the global branding (now with an official certification crest) while maintaining the distant connection to the province of British Columbia. These videos align with the notion that branded products are typically desired, which include multiple global educational brands that are part of the marketing of a variety of international schools as well as countries (Wu & Koh, 2022; Stein, 2018).

The global brand created by BC in Video 1 distorts the distribution of offshore schools and downplays the proportion of BCOS operating in China which has always hosted the most offshore schools (CICIC, 2024). Videos 1 and 2 both graphically portray BCOS as spread out evenly around the world with Video 1 listing all the hosting countries in a world map graphic. Although it is important to draw attention to the global reach of the program by listing all the countries that authorize the BC curriculum, the distorted portrayal does not account for the fact that China is the only country that hosts more than two offshore schools (BC Government, 2024a). Video 1 features only two speakers who are Chinese BCOS graduates; however, students, principals, and parents

from Colombia, France, and Japan speak more frequently in the video. By populating the video with students and administrators who are not from a Chinese BCOS, the video seems intent on downplaying BC's presence in China. Although BCOSs outside of China have significantly smaller student populations and employ only a few teachers (BC Government, 2024a), they are overly represented. Therefore, the video is deceptive and may have been designed for anticipated expansion into more countries besides China. The clue that Video 1 is forward-looking can be found on the BC for High School website where there is a world map with South Asia, Western Asia, and South America as priority regions for future expansion.

By downplaying the number of schools and students in China, the videos craft a cosmopolitan facade that may be attractive to Canadians who fear Chinese influence in education. Anderson's (2020) research on Canadian news-media representations of international and refugee students showed how discourses of Chinese or Asian students existed in contradictory ways—they are portrayed as both helpful contributors or “as harmful exploiters who are linguistically incompetent and academically undeserving” (p. 21). Likewise, Lin (2019) who analyzed BC news websites and comment threads found negative opinions of BCOS and Chinese international students. The video producers may have been aware of such media representations and sought to enhance the visibility of the other countries. From another viewpoint, host country families who view the video may desire a cosmopolitan curriculum and schools rather than the blended Canadian-Chinese curriculum which is abundant in Canadian offshore schools in China (Alexander, 2024; Wu & Koh, 2022; Zhang & Heydon, 2016). By certifying new schools in Taiwan, Bangladesh, and Kazakhstan since 2022, (BC Government, 2024a) the BCOS program is currently becoming more globally diverse.

Misaligned Rationales

Although brands are malleable, rationales should be clear. We began this study by asking what the province of BC publicly states as its rationale for offshore schools and have found misalignment among the data sources. The emphasis on cosmopolitan internationalism and the global appeal of the BC curriculum and its diploma in Video 1 are misaligned with the OSP website's overall purpose and definition of the BCOS program which states that “The Offshore School Program creates pathways that support international students who are considering coming to B.C. to study, live and work” (BC Government, 2024a). In addition, the BC for High School website also states that graduates can “study, live and work” in Canada (BC Government, 2024c). It is unclear whether these three actions refer to only the years attending university in BC or if it is an invitation beyond postsecondary education with long-term employment and settlement prospects. This unidirectional pathway to study, live, and work in BC (only) is misaligned with comments by the administrators, parents, and students in Video 1 who have a more global view. One principal, for example, explains that the program teaches “21st-century learners who are able to fully engage in the international world,” and a parent praises the BC high school diploma as “highly recognized in many countries,” conveying that this diploma can be used for postsecondary studies globally, not just in Canada. Herein lies the misalignment: Are students enrolling in the BC program to (only) study and live in BC? Or is the real goal of the program to prepare internationally minded and mobile citizens? Further evidence of misaligned rationales is on the OSP website where it advertises the BC diploma as “recognized by postsecondary institutions around the world” (BC Government, 2024b) which is misaligned on the OSP website which directs graduates to Canada. The sources seem to have conflated global internationalism with Canada/BC itself which may be contradictory, but it is also the branded version of BC that is out on the market. This contradiction may also be an

example of where “discourses collide,” outlined by Scollon’s (2008) analysis of public documents that emerged from stakeholders with different perspectives, intentions, and thus discourse traditions and purposes. Scollon (2008) explained that discourses collide on public webpages when private economic interests occlude public realms (p. 73). This has occurred in our findings when education as a public good intersects with consumer models of education which are common in international education.

When comparing with earlier political documents, the OSP website states that its rationale is to attract students to BC and this immigration discourse aligns with government publications (BC Jobs Plan, 2011; BC International Education Strategy, 2012) from a decade earlier. The BC Jobs Plan (2011) put an economic emphasis on international education which explains that “we’ve barely begun to tap its [BC education system’s] potential to support our economic growth” (p. 14). The prospect of a growing workforce of BC-educated international students, who would contribute to economic growth, is presented as one of the benefits of exporting the public curriculum through offshore schools. Similarly, the BC International Education Strategy (BC Government, 2012) stated that offshore schools should “direct as many students as possible to B.C. educational institutions” (p. 17). International student “recruitment and retention” was also emphasized in this strategy document along with the importance of a “competitive edge [being] built into B.C.’s K–12 Offshore Agreements” (p. 21) which may mean that there was some concern that a portion of BCOS graduates had been choosing other jurisdictions for their postsecondary education. After reading these rationales and purposes for the BCOS program, we build upon Stein’s (2020) questions about how the public good of a provincial curriculum is framed by these provinces and whose interests they are serving. Do the local citizens of BC receive any benefits by extending their public curricula and credentials to children in the Global South, and are these benefits situated as charitable giving?

The misaligned rationales suggest that the BCOS program is at a crossroads. There is confusion about whether the schools are meant to direct international students towards BC postsecondary institutions or whether the BC curriculum is one of many global curriculum products to choose from. As the curriculum became a brand, it has become detached from the province where it originated.

Absence of Indigenous Perspectives and Knowledge

Finally, efforts to elevate Indigenous Perspectives and Knowledge (IPK) in the BC curriculum are absent from the websites and videos. The curriculum brand presented is misaligned with the complicated conversation regarding indigenization of curriculum and pedagogy in BC (Chrona, 2014; Miles, 2018). IPK are a key feature of the current BC curriculum (BC Government, 2024d) and across Canada, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action numbers 62 and 63 call for mandatory education about residential schools, treaties, and “Aboriginal peoples historical and contemporary contributions to Canada,” as well as curriculum integration and teacher education (TRC, 2015). In BC, more teachers are integrating First Peoples Principles of Learning (FPPL) into their pedagogy. These principles were originally developed for the English 12 First Peoples course by the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC, 2014), but were then adopted more widely with the new BC curriculum to benefit not only Indigenous children, but all students (Chrona, 2014).

The current BC curriculum, with more elevated IPK than the previous curriculum, commenced in both BC domestic and offshore schools in 2016–17 and the video was published in early 2018 concurrent with the lengthy roll out of the new curriculum. Therefore, it is puzzling

that IPK are absent considering that these constitute an increasingly significant portion of the current curriculum (BC Government, 2024d). IPK still remain missing in Video 2 even though First Peoples Principles of Learning and place-based learning have become more common in BC domestic schools. These findings mirror Stein's (2018) study where Indigenous Peoples are "almost entirely absent from the *EduCanada* website" (p. 468) and when mentioned, they are consolidated under the Canadian state rather than revealing historical injustices and Indigenous sovereignties, titles, and treaties which are absent.

The absence of Indigenous curriculum from Video 2, the most recent of the four data sources, certainly does not mean BCOS teachers and principals have been evading their responsibilities to teach IPK. Only by searching deeper into the list of offshore schools (BC Government, 2024a) can readers find the inclusion of FPPL in the annual inspections which are presented in the lengthy PDFs but not on the main webpages. By including FPPL in the inspection reports, we can assume that BCOS teachers are including these learning principles to some extent. By omitting FPPL and IPK from BCOS websites and videos, the province does not appear to consider a role for offshore schools in reconciliation even though website rationales state that students have a pathway to Canadian immigration. Including information about how BCOS teachers might be teaching for truth and reconciliation and applying FPPL would strengthen the connection of the program to the province and reinforce the legitimacy of the branded curriculum. It is unfortunate that the more visible and easily accessible public promotion of BCOS education omits any mention of IPK. This raises questions whether this erasure of IPK is an oversight or whether the authors did not see IPK as relevant marketing materials to foreign families.

The theorization and guidelines written by Beck and Pidgeon (2020) in their call to reconcile international and Indigenous education can be a useful framework to offer suggestions to realign curriculum and pedagogy in BCOSs and reconnect with the BC domestic education program. In addition, Chen (2021) argued that international students and scholars may be unprepared for transitioning to Canadian universities and "can face significant barriers to developing nuanced understandings of the ongoing violence" (p. 3). BCOS should provide opportunities for students to enter decolonial conversations and begin to gain understanding of contemporary reconciliation movements occurring in Canada. Further scholarship and ethical engagement along the lines proposed by Beck and Pidgeon (2020) can assist in reconciling movements of internationalization and indigenization in Canadian education. Overall, the ways that BCOS teachers are integrating IPK are absent from both BCOS websites and videos. BCOSs are at multiple crossroads, and one of these centres on questions about if and how offshore schools can engage with global decolonization, de-imperialism, and the rights of Indigenous Peoples worldwide as the program continues to expand into more countries.

Conclusion

The discourses on the BC government websites indicate that the OSP has been drifting away from the province of BC. The commodification and branding of curriculum, the portrayal of offshore schools distributed evenly around the world, and the absence of IPK are all related to the growing detachment of offshore schools from BC itself. The discourses imply that BC's curriculum is more progressive and worldly than those in other countries—but also farther from the province and towards being packaged as a globalized product. When the BCOS program is viewed through the lens of these data, it appears that it is going through an identity crisis. The OSP website portrays a close connection between the province and its offshore schools aligned with the two BC government strategic plans (BC Government, 2011; 2012); yet Video 1, and even the newer Video

2, portray BC's curriculum as a vibrant and dependable choice among an array of international curriculum brands in the global market. For the international market, BC has erased the presence of IPK in its curriculum much like the *EduCanada* website where Indigenous sovereignties and titles are absent (Stein, 2018). Overall, this study has revealed prevalent neoliberal discourses that permeate the portrayal of BC offshore education as a global brand, showcasing a version of BC that can be a curriculum product, that can be selected or discarded by offshore families, and has incrementally deviated and drifted farther from British Columbia.

Looking ahead, addressing this problem requires an effort by BC educators and school owners to reimagine a BCOS program that aligns with progressive curriculum reforms that include core competencies, project-based assessment, IPK, and place-based learning evident in the curriculum documents (BC Government, 2024d), as well as the calls for equity, reciprocity, and sustainability outlined in the Accord on the Internationalization of Education crafted by the Association of Canadian Deans of Education (ACDE, 2016). BC educational stakeholders should reassess and refashion BCOS portrayals with closer connections to the province, the BC curriculum, and Canada as a whole. This call to bring offshore schools closer to BC does not bypass the fact that the domestic BC education system has colonial roots and has participated in oppressive activities. Nor is it desirable to return to the mid-2000s when domestic BC school districts created "business companies" with intentions to generate revenue from offshore students (Cosco, 2011; Waters, 2008). While this study was limited to examining the BC government's public websites, further studies on individual offshore school websites in multiple languages, inspection reports, as well as studies on news media would allow a more profound perspective on offshore school representation.

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