Fields, Habitus and the International Baccalaureate’s Interpretation of International Mindedness

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Abstract
International Mindedness (IM) is recognised as being a key component of an international education (Hill, 2015). However, IM is also acknowledged as an ‘under-reported and under-researched aspect of elite [international] education’ (Bunnell et al., 2020). This has led to the concept being described as ‘enigmatic and under-defined’ by researchers (Poole, 2017) and ‘fuzzy’ by practitioners (Barratt-Hacking et al., 2016: 38). This paper will attempt to conceptualise IM by drawing on Pierre Bourdieu’s theories of fields and habitus. It will show that IM can not only be thought of in terms of a specific habitus but that the International Baccalaureate (IB) and the schools that offer International Baccalaureate programmes can, and do, also play a significant role in creating the field (and subsequent structures within the field) in which IM can take root in students. The data and analysis in this paper are taken from a more substantial, recent, mixed-methods case study focusing on IM. The case study was conducted in a Chinese IB international school (of the type described by Poole, 2019: catering largely for Chinese students) on the Chinese mainland that offers the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme, Middle Years Programme and Diploma Programme. It is a private fee-paying school, which accepts students mainly from the local but also from the expatriate community.

Keywords
International Education, China, Habitus, Fields, International Baccalaureate, International Mindedness

International education has seen unprecedented growth over the past two decades. Across the globe, the number of international schools reached the 2,000 mark in the year 2000 and had grown to 11,000 in number by 2019 (Speck, 2019). This number is widely expected to double in size by 2029 (Fraser, 2019). Being seen ‘previously [at an] academic fringe position’ (Bunnell, 2020), the field of international education is now being viewed as of growing importance and significance. This paper is concerned with what is considered a fundamental aspect of this fast-growing yet still...
under-reported area of education: the concept of *international mindedness* (IM). IM is widely accepted as a key component of an international education (Hill, 2015). However, IM is also acknowledged as an ‘under-reported and under-researched aspect of elite [international] education’ (Bunnell et al, 2020). Indeed, it is even the case that many researchers still regard the concept as somewhat nebulous and ill-defined. For example, Poole (2017) described it as ‘enigmatic and under-defined’, and Plotkin (2013: 19) stated that, despite conversations with professionals from international organisations and his own research, he had never been able to pin down a definition that was of any use in a professional sense.

This paper will attempt to conceptualise IM by drawing on Pierre Bourdieu’s theories of *fields* and *habitus*. It will show that IM can not only be thought of in terms of a specific habitus but that the International Baccalaureate (IB) and the schools that offer IB programmes can, and do, also play a significant role in creating the field (and subsequent structures within the field) in which IM can take root in students. The following data and analysis are taken from a more substantial, recent case study focusing on IM. The case study was conducted in a Chinese international school, or more specifically, a ‘Chinese internationalised school’ (Poole, 2020): a school that is international in name, outlook, and curriculum but caters mainly for students with Chinese nationality on the Chinese mainland. The school offers three IB programmes: Primary Years Programme (PYP), Middle Years Programme (MYP) and Diploma Programme (DP). It is a private fee-paying school, and accepts students from both the local and expatriate communities but with a significantly larger number of Chinese students than Non-Chinese students. In order to anonymise the school, it will be referred to as *Yangtze* throughout.

In the ever-growing scope of international schools, *Yangtze* can be considered as a Type C school, as defined by Hayden and Thompson (2013), with the following definitions as interpreted by Bunnell et al (2017):

| Type A | Established to provide an education for the children of parents who are working for multinational companies and embassies. |
|--------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|        | Often have an extensive range of nationalities.                                                                             |
|        | Often have high levels of parental engagement.                                                                            |
|        | High level of transient students.                                                                                        |
|        | Fee-paying but not-for-profit.                                                                                             |
| Type B | Committed to education for ‘global peace’.                                                                                |
|        | Progressive pedagogy.                                                                                                      |
|        | Provision of an international curriculum such as the IB framework.                                                         |
| Type C | May be run for-profit.                                                                                                     |
|        | English language instruction.                                                                                                |
|        | The name ‘international’ is used for marketing.                                                                            |
|        | Serve mostly local students and families.                                                                                 |

The understanding of *Yangtze* as a Type C school is largely due to the makeup of its students (of which the vast majority are Chinese) and the fact that the curriculum is international, with English being the primary language of instruction. Interestingly, however, I would suggest that the school has changed ‘type’ since its inception. It has always been ‘not-for-profit’ (although owned by a for-profit company), but there has been an almost complete reversal of the ratio of Non-Chinese to Chinese students since its doors opened. There used to be a ‘cap’ on Chinese nationals of 25%, but since this ‘cap’ was removed, the school’s student population is now approximately 75% Chinese nationals. This change means that it could well be seen to have shifted from a Type A (mainly for foreign expatriates) to a Type C school and perhaps suggests that these defined boundaries are not
rigid in nature. Although IM is the main focus of this paper, it is also with Bourdieu’s theories on fields and habitus that I hope to give more nuance to how international schools are defined and hence the potential relevance of research to these institutions.

The Chinese Context

China is recognised as a fast-growing area for international education (Boix-Mansilla and Wilson, 2020; Wright et al, 2022). Within China, there has for some time been a call for a modernising of the education system. It has been proposed that this modernisation should involve open exchange with other countries as well as the promotion of students’ global competence (Su, 2015 in Boix-Mansilla and Wilson, 2020). The continued growth of IB international schools across the globe and Chinese internationalised schools in China could well be read as a consequence of this push towards globally competent students, to which IM must surely be of importance. As such, it is vital to understand how IM develops in this context and the significant factors involved in its growth.

This paper will first focus on the IB’s interpretation of IM, before considering the theory of fields and habitus and how they relate to an international education setting: a focus surprisingly sparse in the literature in this area (Dugonjic-Rodwin, 2021). After a brief discussion of the methodology of the case study upon which this research paper is based, findings from the case study will be drawn on to develop an argument that an IB school (which could conceivably incorporate Type A, B or C international schools) environment can be conceptualised as a sub-field within international education, and that IM may be conceptualised as habitus that results from the various structures within this field.

The IB and International Mindedness

The concept of IM has been discussed for over a century. More recently, it has been described as ‘an important conceptual tool that is being used in the field of education to rethink and rework what the rising generation of local/global citizens needs to be, to say and to do in the changing local/global order’ (Singh and Qi, 2013: 1). Singh and Qi explain that there appears to be a general belief that this concept of IM can be achieved when people work together to develop shared understandings of both global and local realities, and that what should follow from this is the acknowledgement of responsibility for taking appropriate action. Hence, it is an ethical rather than political concept.

IM continues to evolve, with several definitions from various sources suggesting similarities with terms such as ‘world-mindedness education’, ‘global citizenship education’, ‘education with global or international dimensions’ and ‘education for international understanding’ (Metli and Lane, 2020). Despite a lack of consensus on an IM definition, the IB has championed and promoted its interpretation of the term for some time. In the past, it has given its definition of IM as being:

‘an attitude of openness to, and curiosity about, the world and different cultures. It is concerned with developing a deep understanding of the complexity, diversity and motives that underpin human actions and interactions’ (IB, 2009: 4).

Perhaps adding to the confusion, and in keeping with the IB philosophy that reflection and revision are an important part of a progressive and cosmopolitan education, the IB’s definition of IM has been seen to evolve and develop over the years. This may well have played a further role in its understanding becoming ‘fuzzy’ among IB practitioners (Barratt Hacking et al, 2016: 38). While
in 2009 the IB’s definition of IM was as stated above, by 2017 the concept of IM had been read-dressed and updated. It is now seen within the following lengthy definition:

‘a multi-faceted and complex concept that captures the way of thinking, being and acting that is characterised by an openness to the world and a recognition of a deep interconnectedness to others . . . An IB education fosters international mindedness by helping students reflect on their own perspective, culture and identities and then on to those of others . . . By learning to appreciate different beliefs, values and experiences and to think collaboratively across cultures and disciplines, IB learners gain the understanding necessary to make progress toward a more peaceful and sustainable world’ (IB, 2017: 2 in Savva and Stanfield, 2018).

Further to the IB’s definition of IM, Barratt Hacking et al (2018), when engaging with the ideas of several other authors, suggested that IM can also be noted as a disposition in students that is cosmopolitan in nature coupled with a distinctive understanding of world politics and events. Discussions on the specific forms of this cosmopolitan outlook are also starting to appear in the literature (Wright et al, 2022). Barratt Hacking et al (2018) also built on research by Singh and Qi (2013), which outlined the three main ‘pillars’ of IM: multiculturalism, intercultural understanding and global engagement.

As this paper will highlight real-world examples taken from a case study considering the development of IM in an IB Chinese internationalised school that offers the PYP, MYP and DP, it is this IB interpretation of IM (taken from the aforementioned Savva and Stanfield quote) that will be its focus.

The Attributes of International Mindedness in the IB Programmes

With the IB interpretation of IM in mind, it is important to understand what the IB considers as the essential attributes of an internationally minded learner, described as the ‘IB Learner Profile’ and conceptualised as follows:

‘The Learner Profile concisely describes the aspirations of a global community that shares the values underlying the IB’s educational philosophy. The IB Learner Profile describes the attributes and outcomes of education for international-mindedness.’ (IB, 2015: 1).

There are ten attributes, described in numerous IB documents, considered essential for a student of any IB programme. They should be: Reflective, (an) Inquirer, Balanced, (a) Communicator, Principled, (a) Risk-Taker (at Yangtze this is often interpreted as Courageous), (a) Thinker, Knowledgeable, Caring and Open-Minded. The Learner Profile is seen not only as important in developing IM, but also as a critical factor in providing a continuity that binds together the PYP, MYP and DP (Wells, 2011; Bryant et al, 2016). It also plays a significant factor in ‘mould[ing] policy and practice in order to provide a unifying ethos for the disparate organisations that comprise IB World schools’ (Bullock, 2012). It is this latter role, coupled with the structure of the educational institution itself, that will create the foundation for the argument and the framing of examples that follow in this paper – that when the IB Learner Profile is put into practice by schools, teachers and students, it can be conceived as a way to ingrain habits and skills that allow for a specific disposition: a habitus. This habitus is ingrained not only via an emphasis on the attributes of the Learner Profile but also via the structures of the field in which they are developed.

The attributes of the Learner Profile are described, in detail, by the IB in first-person statements, each of which gives an insight into what the IB considers vital in internationally minded students. They are as follows:
Inquirer: We nurture our curiosity, developing skills for inquiry and research. We know how to learn independently and with others. We learn with enthusiasm and sustain our love of learning throughout life.

Open-Minded: We critically appreciate our own cultures and personal histories, as well as the values and traditions of others. We seek and evaluate a range of points of view, and we are willing to grow from the experience.

Knowledgeable: We develop and use conceptual understanding, exploring knowledge across a range of disciplines. We engage with issues and ideas that have local and global significance.

Caring: We show empathy, compassion and respect. We have a commitment to service, and we act to make a positive difference in the lives of others and in the world around us.

Thinkers: We use critical and creative thinking skills to analyse and take responsible action on complex problems. We exercise initiative in making reasoned, ethical decisions.

Risk Takers (at Yangtze often referred to as ‘Courageous’): We approach uncertainty with forethought and determination; we work independently and cooperatively to explore new ideas and innovative strategies. We are resourceful and resilient in the face of challenges and change.

Communicators: We express ourselves confidently and creatively in more than one language and in many ways. We collaborate effectively, listening carefully to the perspectives of other individuals and groups.

Balanced: We understand the importance of balancing different aspects of our lives—intellectual, physical, and emotional—to achieve well-being for ourselves and others. We recognise our interdependence with other people and with the world in which we live.

Principled: We act with integrity and honesty, with a strong sense of fairness and justice, and with respect for the dignity and rights of people everywhere. We take responsibility for our actions and their consequences.

Reflective: We thoughtfully consider the world and our own ideas and experience. We work to understand our strengths and weaknesses in order to support our learning and personal development.

(IB, 2013)

Educational Fields

Field theory addresses a generic sociological question of ‘how can we account for a differentiated social order?’ (Dugonjic-Rodwin, 2021). Dugonjic-Rodwin goes on to suggest that field theory contributes to two main aspects of social theory. It first offers insight into the historical processes of social differentiation. Secondly, it can provide the ‘methodological tools’ for constructing social fields as autonomous objects of research. When seen through the lens of sociology, Bourdieu considered a field as a ‘social space in which interactions, transactions and events take place’ (Thomson in Grenfell, 2014: 65). It is a duality that consists of a structured space of positions and a space of positions-taking (Bourdieu, 1993). Additionally, the properties of a field are determined by the relationships between the agents within them, and can be determined without specific regard to the characteristics of the occupants (Ferrare and Apple, 2015). In the case of a school, these agents would be teachers, students, administrators, and reified objects such as curriculum and pedagogical methods. Hence, when we attempt to understand an international school through this lens, we can see it as being something that is not necessarily being dictated by the characteristics (ethnicity, for example) of the agents within the
school, but as having more to do with the relationship between these participants. The structures and power hierarchies influence these relationships within the field. Bourdieu further describes a field as:

‘a structured social space, a field of forces, a force field. It contains people who dominate and people who are dominated. Constant, permanent relationships of inequality operate inside this space, which at the same time becomes a space in which various actors struggle for the transformation or preservation of the field. All the individuals in this universe bring to the competition all the (relative) power at their disposal. It is this power that defines their position in the field and, as a result, their strategies.’ (Bourdieu, 1998: 40-41)

There are many actors within an IB school, with varying degrees of power and influence over the others, and with inequalities of power found within the school setting. Powerful actors, such as teachers and administrators in many international schools, are likely to wish to instil in students (among numerous other things) a sense of IM. This will dictate their ‘strategies’: how they teach, the language they use and how the school is run. However, these structures are unlikely to be completely uniform in nature across all schools, as the dictates of the IB will always be open to interpretation by administrators and teachers. Additionally, the IB may strongly suggest that IM is the key goal of an IB education, but this may not be reflected by other actors within this field, such as the members of the school board, parents, and students. This, in turn, adds another layer of complexity to the interactions between the (human) agents within this field: hence, further drawing on Bourdieu’s conceptual understanding of a field and suggesting the potential for a truly contested space with individuals who hold varying amounts of power vying for ‘transformation or preservation of the field’.

Within this definition, we can further understand the complex nature of the educational field of an international school as a number of overlapping smaller fields (that of the classroom or the playground, for example) that define and shape the behaviours of those actors within them. This understanding of the case study’s social environment, and the social environment of IB schools in general, is given more weight with the deliberately transformative nature of the IB’s programmes and the schools that offer them. Schools (specifically the administrators and teachers) are the dominant, powerful actors within this educational field. If a school has been authorised by the IB to offer one or more of its programmes, then it can be assumed that one of its priorities is for students to become internationally minded. This transformation is promulgated in substantial part by, for instance, language, pedagogy and the ethos created within the school by these powerful actors. These are all structures within the field that require social interactions between people and are all to some extent controllable by the IB and schools (as opposed to, for instance, home and family influences or the effects of external, large culture). The IB is seen as holding a large amount of symbolic power and pedagogical authority that have accumulated over its more than 50 years of existence (Dugonjic-Rodwin, 2021), with IB schools and the IBDP seen by many parents and students as an optimal route not only to prestigious universities and beyond, but also to an internationally-minded habitus. This stems from the IB’s ability to offer substantial cultural capital to its member schools and graduating cohorts. The structures that the IB requires to be in place (needed before a school can officially call itself an IB World school) can be seen to play a significant role in developing the ingrained behaviour and dispositions (a habitus) of the actors within that school. And provided these structures are maintained in the form that the IB wishes (via its monitoring and reauthorisation process), these agents within the field then influence others within the school, hence creating the potential for this field to be self-reinforcing. It is these structures and power actors dictating behaviour and movement within the field that enable us to explicitly relate the area of IB education as a field in itself. Bourdieu made clear that all fields are governed by their
own principles of vision and division that define how agents relate to their environment (Bourdieu, 1969). The IB clearly has its own visions of education and IM, as noted above, which differentiate it from other curriculum programmes. Moreover, the structures put in place (discussed below) and dictated (from a distance) by the IB specifically define how agents (students, teachers and others within the field) relate to their environment.

This understanding of the IB framework and the sub-fields the IB hopes to create in schools that offer its programmes sees this sub-field as being more than just ‘greater than the sum of its parts’ (ie the students, teachers, curriculum and campus) but instead as something fundamentally different from the sum of its parts. It is the interactions and relationships between actors and structures that are creating this different conceptual object. It is this focus on the interactions that Bourdieu’s theories suggest that distinguishes this approach from the more typical way of investigating schools as non-dynamic entities; the variances in interactions denote a different conceptual object and hence help us to better understand the nuances of (in this case) different international schools: IB and non-IB. These interactions (driven by an actor’s habitus – see below) between students and students, students and teachers, students and curriculum, students and the school, will be analysed below with respect to how they may foster IM development and growth.

Habitus within an Educational Field

Bourdieu’s concept of habitus is understood as

‘a way of describing the embodiment of social structures and history in individuals – it is a set of dispositions, internal to the individual, that both reflects the external social structures and shapes how the individual perceives the world and acts in it’ (Power, 1999).

With regard to the IB, I argue that this concisely defines its concept of IM as described above; IM is the embodiment of the values and the philosophy of the IB, manifested in attributes that are unique to each individual, reflecting a combination of on-campus and off-campus influences. It shapes a mindset that strongly influences how an individual perceives the world and how they act and interact within it.

Bourdieu further unpacks the definition of ‘dispositions’ from the above statement by Power (1999). He describes them as, firstly, the result of an organising action, a set of outcomes which he describes as resembling ‘structure’. Secondly, this disposition is a ‘way of being’ or a ‘habitual state’; thirdly, it is a ‘tendency’, ‘propensity’ or ‘inclination’ (Jenkins, 2002: 76). This definition can again be further linked to the transformative intent of the IB programmes: a school offering the IB programmes is provided with an expected way of organising itself, its curriculum, the language used within the curriculum and pedagogical methodology. These can all be understood as ‘structures’ within the IB educational field, with the habitus of the students being understood as a result of these structures. The ‘way of being’ or ‘habitual state’ is seen in the way in which students personify and manifest their understanding of IM, guided by the structures in place. Finally, the ‘tendency’ or ‘propensity’ can be seen in the way in which the IB wishes those who have completed any of its programmes to approach real-world situations and problems: in an open-minded and reflective way that draws on available knowledge, thinks through the options and delivers the most principled outcome.

Hence, within this conceptualisation, the social structures within habitus do not determine behaviour and perceptions. Instead, they predispose an individual to act in a particular manner due to the social structures that have shaped them. In other words, the social structures become ingrained in individuals and can manifest in the way they talk and behave. The more powerful the actors and structures within the field, the more influence they have on developing this habitus.
Moreover, the habitus of actors within a field can also be seen as a structure itself that affects the relationship with other actors. Habitus can be seen to be closely linked to the field concept. It is not only understood to be a product of structures and a producer of practices, ‘but it is the reproducer of structures’ (Power, 1999). Power goes on to state that

‘habitus tends to generate practices that coincide with the social conditions that produced it. In continuing to act in accordance with the structures that helped create their habitus, people reproduce those structures (though potentially with modifications)’.

Here is evidence that the habitus of actors themselves can also be conceptualised as a structure within a field. This statement has crucial links with the case study discussed in this paper. At an educational field level, it would seem to support the idea that in a field, one that nurtures the concept of IM, the actions and manifestations of the actors involved in the field would self-reinforce this ethos within the context of the school. This could therefore be an additional factor in the continued growth and development of this concept.

Case Study Methodology

The case study that these examples are taken from followed a mixed methods methodology, conducted according to the guidelines set out by the British Educational Research Association (2018). Consent was obtained from both parents and students and confidentiality was maintained at all stages of the research process. The quantitative phase consisted of questionnaires completed by Grade 6-12 students (n = 264), parents (n = 136) and teachers across the school (n = 60). The questionnaire was created to gather views on IM, and drew on much of the IB’s research into IM over the past ten years. The answers to the questionnaire were collated and analysed. The specific details of the qualitative data are beyond the scope of the discussion to be had within this paper and will be presented elsewhere. Data from the questionnaires were used as a basis for interviews with focus groups of Grade 11 students. There were 29 volunteer students within the focus groups, divided according to their years of experience with the IB programmes: I divided them into smaller groups according to nationality and how long they had been in an IB school setting. There was one group of students who had joined the school in Grade 10 or 11, and two groups who had joined the school either in Grade 7, 8, or 9, or in Grade 5 or 6 after experience of both the MYP and DP. Another group had joined during the PYP years and had experience of PYP, MYP and DP. One final group comprised students with Non-Chinese passports; they are referred to as Non-Chinese (NC) students. 11 focus group sessions were held, each approximately 30 minutes long and conducted by myself in a semi-structured format. Thematic analysis using the model outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) was conducted on data recorded in the transcripts, and relevant themes were drawn from this analysis for further consideration. From the thematic analysis of these discussions, connections to the theories of fields and habitus were drawn.

The limitations of case study research, and its generalisability, have been addressed (Yin, 2014: 19-22), and should be acknowledged here. However, it has also been suggested by Flyvbjerg, in his much-cited 2006 work, that formal generalisability is vastly over-rated as the primary source of scientific progress: Flyvbjerg argues that generalisation is only one of many different ways that people can accumulate knowledge and that descriptive results from a case study can also be used to ‘cut a path toward scientific innovation’. Hence, while the data from the case study may not meet the generalisability threshold, they may still be seen as making an important contribution toward a greater understanding of IM.
Findings and Discussion

Many findings could be taken from this case study that are beyond the scope of this paper. Here I will discuss the statements and understandings that can help to affirm what was discussed above; if we conceptualise IB education as a specific field, we can also start to conceptualise IM as a desired habitus of students who graduate from IB schools. These students will all have been affected by the structures specifically put in place by the IB and the schools that offer its intentionally transformative programmes.

Student Demographics

The majority of students believed that the makeup of the student body was fundamental to facilitating the growth of IM; that students with different backgrounds would have different views about the world, education, IM and how it was manifested. This can be interpreted through a Bourdieuan lens as ‘students from different backgrounds coming to school with an already different habitus to their peers’. This view was expressed by both students with an experience of the PYP, MYP and DP and those with an experience of MYP and DP. Also, it was suggested by many students from across the focus groups that if the questionnaire were given to different students at schools around the world, then the results would also be different. Interestingly, the NC students (who had more experience of living outside China than did the Chinese students in the study) were the most adamant that there would be a difference. This would seem to imply a general view that it is the different demographics and contexts, and subsequent relationships between these structures, that would produce different survey results; that the habitus of the students themselves was, therefore, a significant factor in how the actors in a field related to each other and in how IM was understood to take shape. It is also noteworthy that of the structures that can be identified, the demographic makeup of the student body, despite being thought of as fundamental to IM, is one over which the IB has very little control. The student demographic is in fact determined much more by other agents such as the school board, parents, or even financial contributors; agents whose priorities may not align with the IB’s vision of ‘education for a better and more peaceful world’ (IB, 2022).

Students also seemed to be very aware that their social environment could alter how they thought and acted. One stated that

‘I’ve been in [Yangtze] for a year so it’s kind of changed my critical thinking skill – and my friends in local school, they won’t have that much critical thinking in their . . . classes’

thus acknowledging that the different environment, or field, affected their own behaviour and that this new way of thinking about approaching problems was becoming ingrained.

There was a definite belief among many members of all focus groups that a student body with varied backgrounds facilitated a need to be open-minded and communicate better with others. This was because different people from different cultural backgrounds interacting with the world in different ways required additional comprehension on the part of the Chinese students to understand ‘the way they [Non-Chinese people] think’. Indeed, it was thought by nearly all those interviewed that in a school with little or no variation in student demographics the development of IM could be very difficult or even impossible; the main actors’ habitus would be too similar to effect significant change within the field. Further to this, an NC student who had been at Yangtze since elementary school expressed the view that ‘I don’t think that would work at all!’ when asked if IM could develop in a school with international teachers and an IB curriculum, but
with only Chinese students. This is interesting, as it implies that although exposure to the IB framework and structures may well be influential in the development of IM, it was not considered by this student, who had completed all three of the PYP, MYP and DP, to be sufficient on its own. This student further suggested that teachers could only do so much with IM and that ‘peer interaction is vital’, which would appear to reaffirm the suggestions from Bourdieu’s theories discussed above. Interaction between actors in a field would have a vital influence on their habitus.

Further emphasising the power of interactions between actors in a field, it was suggested that IM would develop in diverse classrooms and schools that ran in a ‘traditional Chinese’ way (ie teacher- and test-driven). A student who had come from one of those schools stated:

‘I think it’s the [social] environment [that is the most important] because I’m picturing . . . having class in a Chinese local school, with a bunch of foreigners. (laughs). And I think that it would be . . . pretty different from what I’ve been through in local school before (laughs) ‘cause the culture background is different, so even though it’s the same way – like the teacher taught us about knowledge and teaches us in the same way – but there will be more . . . interaction between cultures.’

From numerous examples such as these, conclusions and parallels could be drawn that relate to Bourdieu's theories of fields and habitus. Students would have varying levels of power and influence over their peers. It was these interactions with varying habitus that were considered vital when developing a mindset that was in line with the IB's interpretations of IM. The students understood themselves to be the fundamental structures within the educational field of the school when it came to shaping their own habitus.

Teacher Demographics

Concerning the teachers within the school, it could be interpreted that their behaviour and dispositions (or habitus) within the educational field were also a prominent factor in shaping the habitus of the students. This habitus can be understood to be ingrained in teachers in IB schools to such an extent that many feel that they would be capable of moving to any IB school across the world (Dugonjić, 2014: 262-266).

Within a social field such as Yangtze, the teachers clearly have considerable power. Hence, their influence on the habitus of the students would potentially be strong. As with the demographics of the student body, it was clear that students at Yangtze were very aware of the differences in the teacher demographics compared to local schools, and the benefit that this brings to their growth in IM. One long-serving student referred to:

‘the place that we are in, the environment that we are in. I think . . . especially here at [Yangtze], as most of the teachers are from an international background, they bring a certain perspective and that kind of cultivates a culture around the campus that encourages international-mindedness’.

This could be relevant to the students' IM development since, in this context, teachers are more than just ‘passers of knowledge’ or adult role models but are also, specifically, role models for IM and significant agents within this educational field with which students interact. An NC student who was relatively new to the school suggested that it was very important for teachers to model IM across all subjects, as students ‘look up to their teachers’. Several students across the focus groups thought this to be especially the case in elementary and middle school, where younger students were thought to be more susceptible to external influences. This opinion would appear to be supported by the work of Piaget (1997) and Herman (2005).
It would seem clear that teachers within any educational setting will exert a degree of power and influence over their students. Within Bourdieu’s Field Theory, teachers can be seen to be interacting with students in a manner that promotes the development of an IM habitus, provided that their educational and professional philosophy aligns with the IB and that of their school. They will undoubtedly bring with them their own specific habitus, one that can be assumed to have been checked by the school to ensure that it aligns with that of the school and the IB, and this, in turn, becomes a significant structure within the field of the school.

**Pedagogy as a Structure Within the Educational Field**

As noted above, teachers are likely to be appointed to work in a school if their habitus is deemed suitable by the school. Within the larger field of international education, the IB is a powerful agent. It strongly influences the focus and vision of numerous schools. In turn, schools need to employ teachers who have similar educational philosophies to theirs, and who conduct their classes to fit with the school’s vision. In this case, a ‘suitable habitus’ for teachers would involve being aligned with the IB’s values and philosophy as well as being competent with the IB’s recommended pedagogical methods. With this in mind, we can begin to understand the pedagogical methods of IB teachers as structures, deliberately put in place by powerful actors within this field.

The IB pedagogy of inquiry, concept-based learning, is thought to lead to a deeper and more conceptual understanding of themes and content covered (National Research Council, 2001: 118). It would appear, though, that the structure of the teaching style within IB classrooms is understood by the students to do more than just this. At Yangtze, the teaching style was understood to directly influence the development of critical thinking skills, abilities to cooperate and converse with others, and the dispositions of the students, thus supporting the suggestion by Medwell et al (2017: 18-19) that inquiry-based learning is linked to critical thinking.

Several students explained that the way they were explicitly taught encouraged creative and critical thinking and ‘thinking outside the box’, something that could be seen as a positive factor in an internationally minded habitus. Chinese students could also see substantial differences between their previous education in local schools and their current setting. Several students who had been at the school since beginning the MYP (age 11), and were now in the Diploma Programme, made statements such as the following:

‘before I just learn what teacher told me. But now I need to come up with my own idea, and to explore the things by myself’

and suggested that local school students were of a ‘certain mould’ and would only approach a problem in one specific way that their teacher had taught them. This indicated a very different habitus than that the IB is pursuing and one that students were aware of and influenced by.

Many students were also of similar views that collaboration and group work in class and discussions between students from different backgrounds helped them ‘think globally’, develop other communications skills, and influence the development of their critical thinking skills. It would appear that students were reasonably uniform in their views that the pedagogy employed by teachers at Yangtze fostered IM, and encouraged an environment where these dispositions (conducive to what can be conceived of as an internationally minded habitus) could develop.

**The Learner Profile as a Structure**

As discussed above, the IB believes that ‘the IB Learner Profile describes the attributes and outcomes of education for international-mindedness’ (IB, 2015: 1). With this in mind, it is vital to
understand how the students see this language structure (of the consistent use of the formative language of the Learner Profile) as being infused into their teaching and learning throughout their time within the IB programmes, and how this varies from the more ‘traditional’ teaching practices seen in the external culture and in local Chinese schools.

Firstly, students across the focus groups were very aware of how many assignments were assessed and graded throughout the MYP and DP in subjects such as English, humanities and Theory of Knowledge, with regard to the Learner Profile (and hence IM). Students understood that they would score better in assignments if they approached them from various perspectives – fundamental aspects of the ‘thinker’ and ‘open-minded’ Learner Profile attributes. Linking closely with the ‘thinker’ attribute, being an ‘inquirer’ was also considered an integral part of students’ IM journey, with students making comments such as:

‘before I moved to an international school, I’m just going the way others have taught me to do . . . but after I came to [Yangtze] I tried to found ways out by myself’.

Furthermore, students even specifically stated that their critical thinking skills had improved at Yangtze due to the classes they had been in:

‘I’ve been in [Yangtze] for a year so it’s kind of changed my critical thinking skill, and my friends in local school, they won’t have that much critical thinking in their . . . classes’

Additionally, being a risk-taker and standing up for your principles are vital parts of the Learner Profile. Students understood this aspect to be developed by teachers using activities and assignments where students were required to argue their point while being open-minded to other opinions. Hence, this form of assessment can be seen as shaping how students interact and approach the work they are set in school.

Many students from the focus groups were aware of the wide-open nature of acceptable answers to questions posed by teachers; that in fact there was often ‘no [single] correct answer, as long as you have a clear and logical reasoning for that statement’. Again, this showed that students were encouraged to think through their answers carefully, reflect on what they know, communicate effectively and be courageous in their assertions (all Learner Profile attributes). This approach is vastly different to Chinese pedagogy, where there was said by interviewees always to be what one student described as ‘a correct answer or point to touch upon’. One focus group discussed the fact that learning as a whole is very different in Chinese schools where, to quote one student, ‘[the students will] learn what teacher taught them and then they do homework and then that’s how the foundation is built’, whereas in a school such as Yangtze teachers, according to another student, ‘tend to encourage students to kind of find their own way home’, again appearing to utilise the inquirer attribute, specifically encouraging a very different habitus.

The Learner Profile could also be considered to play an active role in creating an internationally minded ethos within this specific educational field. There were new students who believed that, especially at the lower grades, the Learner Profile becomes ‘embedded’ in your life. This would seem to imply that they are aware that the Learner Profile and its manifestations are all around in the culture and makeup of the school and students, a point further supported by a long-term student describing how the Learner Profile was ‘everywhere’ in the elementary school. This long-term student also made the significant statement that the Learner Profile attributes became ‘almost like a reflex’, explaining that things such as being reflective and open-minded were second nature and automatic (or a habitus) by the time students had passed from the PYP to the MYP and arrived in the DP. This ‘subconscious’ development was acknowledged by students
across the focus groups, with a typical view expressed in comments that ‘teachers use the Learner Profile when teaching, so we learn through that’, and that IM was ‘infused’ within lessons throughout the MYP.

Moreover, students who began at Yangtze with the PYP were exposed to these attributes daily in every lesson and classroom; they were integral factors in the curriculum and were prominently displayed throughout the school, leading one long-time student to state that these attributes had developed in them ‘almost in an invisible way’, further emphasising the ingraining of these thought and behaviour processes in particular IB students via the structures around them.

While it has been suggested by Wells (2011) that the Learner Profile is a significant thread running through the IB programmes that ties them all together, I suggest it is more than just a thread. There is evidence within this case study that the Learner Profile is an important structure within the field of an IB education; one that not only ties the IB programmes together, but is also significant in forming the habitus of IM as defined by the IB.

Curriculum as a Structure

It is important to understand that the curriculum in a considerable number of international schools, and especially at Yangtze, is substantially more than a list of content that needs to be taught. This is due to the fact that the IB framework around which the curriculum is built dictates much of the pedagogy, language and assessment that happens within it (IB, 2017). As per Bourdieu, this can be seen as one of the significant structures within the field of the school. Yangtze’s curriculum uses the IB framework, and the content is then built around this structure. The framework also contains the language and semantics of delivery, and the methods through which the content is taught and assessed, as well as dimensions that are actively encouraged outside of, and extending from, the classrooms such as sports teams, the Creativity Activity Service (CAS) component of the IBDP and events such as the Model United Nations.

Students who had experienced all three of the IB programmes offered by the school (PYP, MYP, DP) had a uniform belief regarding where IM began. It was stated by one student that a ‘major part of our school’s programme of being internationally minded was in the elementary school’, and that by the time they arrived at the DP programme, IM was just expected—again, giving further weight to the idea that IM was conceptualised by the students as something that was ingrained in a person over time and then manifested automatically. Additionally, it was mentioned that factors involved in IM were more explicitly taught and ‘fed into classes’ in the elementary school, hence directly affecting the habitus of the students. One of the longest-serving students declared that ‘a lot of the things that we learn now [in the DP] were seeded in elementary school’, thus implying it was perhaps in the lower grades that growth in IM really takes place, is emphasised by teachers, and is apparent in the curriculum.

Conclusion

International education is clearly a growing and developing field that is as diverse as it is complex. The factors that influence how students within this field relate to each other, to adults, and to the world beyond are uncountable. However, building on the work of Dugonjic-Rodwin (2021), I have attempted here to demonstrate that Bourdieu’s theories do appear to provide the tools for us to differentiate between various sub-sections of the field of international education. There is evidence above that these sub-fields, and specifically that of IB education, can be understood as dynamic conceptual objects on their own.
Of these sub-fields, it is arguable that the IB has manufactured the most obvious and defining structures within its field that heavily influence how actors interact with each other within them. It is the power exerted over the actors (in this case students) in the field, via a near-linear hierarchy (IB – school – teachers – students), that can be understood as playing a significant role in how the students from these institutions develop and interact with their environment and the world around them, i.e., how their habitus is. A number of examples are given above of students understanding IM to be ‘infused’ into lessons, ‘deeply embedded’ in their actions and ingrained in their consciousness. IM was seen to develop ‘subconsciously’ and ‘almost in an invisible way’; a way that on reflection from the students was deemed to develop from such aspects as daily interactions with peers and teachers from various global backgrounds, the encouragement of critical thinking via open-ended questions, peer and self-assessment and perspectival thinking. Furthermore, ‘exploring things by [them]selves’, the explicit use of formative language (i.e., teachers continually referring to the Learner Profile attributes in classes, in assessments and around the school) in daily classes and assessments, and the pedagogy used by teachers were all thought to lead to developing a more critical thinking process. These actualizations can all be understood as a consequence of the various structures in place in the case study school.

Due to the nature of the field of IB education and the symbolic power exerted by the IB, many of these structures can be assumed to be in place in other IB schools around the world. This is an important point to consider when considering further research in this area. When conceptualizing IB education as a field, we can start to distinguish IB schools as being different from non-IB schools. This has relevance when it comes to defining end goals of international education, such as IM. IM has often been seen as ‘fuzzy’ (Barratt Hacking et al., 2016: 38) or ‘enigmatic and under-defined’ (Poole, 2017) due to its various incarnations and descriptions. If we can draw connections between a field and the habitus that it seeks to produce in people within the field, we can better define what exactly IM is in this instance and, in turn, what is needed within the fields to best produce a similar habitus in other contexts. As supported by Boix-Mansilla and Wilson (2020), this IM framework can then be re-interpreted through a local lens, taking into account further agential factors such as parents and board members: thus adding further meaning and local value to ideas that the IB has defined.

Regarding IB education as a field and IM as a desired habitus will also allow for the social and cultural idiosyncrasies of each contextual location to be taken into account when understanding what IM will look like. As stated, habitus is understood to be the ingrained dispositions and behaviour of a person. This will clearly be linked to the background they have come from and how they interact with others outside of the school campus before they even start to participate in any educational fields. Hence, IM can be understood as being nuanced and unique to each cultural setting and student body: IM need not be, and probably should not be, uniform across all contexts. The understanding that individuals will bring with them to the field of IB education a combination of their own social histories and interactions that make up their own habitus, means that this can be factored into any growth toward the IB interpretation of IM; how it is developed via the structures that will be put in place by the IB organization and each individual school. In this case study, this conceptualization can also be seen as an attempt to frame the answer to the question: What does it mean to be globally competent in a Chinese context? put forward by Boix-Mansilla and Wilson (2020). Within this conceptual framework, China’s unique culture and history can be welcomed as a forming factor of IM in this part of the world.

Conceptualising in this manner the school field and the habitus of the agents within also enables us to reaffirm the need for an appreciation of the philosophical alignment of the stakeholders within each school institution. The IB has considerable symbolic power in this field, but in reality has very little power in the day-to-day running of any school, and hence in the specifics of the
development of IM. The IB offers authorisation (and the cultural capital that comes with it) to schools which, in turn, have the responsibility to employ teachers and staff who are capable of prioritising specific aspects of its mission.

Further, conceptualising in this way will allow researchers to better define categories of international schools. In the introduction to this paper Yangtze was described as a Type C school. However, we can now see that being an IB school differentiates it from other Type C international schools and sets it apart from the A, B, C categories of Hayden and Thompson (2013). At Yangtze, the term 'international' is not only used for marketing but, due to the IB framework, can be seen as a fundamental and defining aspect of its character and mission and is a heavy influence on the structures within the institution. This more nuanced understanding of schools such as Yangtze should help highlight research that will be of practical use to schools in this context and help formulate policy relating to the growth of IM.

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**Author biography**

David Whitmarsh has been teaching in an international school in Beijing, PR China and is approaching the end of a part-time doctorate. His research considers how international mindedness develops in the context of an international school that offers the IB Primary Years, Middle Years and Diploma Programmes and has a student body made up mostly of local Chinese students.