Establishing the legitimacy of a school's claim to be 'International': The provision of an international curriculum as the institutional primary task

Abstract

The recent growth in the number and diversity of schools around the world classified as 'International Schools' raises questions about what makes a school's claim to be an International School legitimate. From the analysis we report here, the provision of an international curriculum emerges as what a school must do to be legitimate as an International School. It is an International School's primary task and those in such a school ideally undertake institutional work on that task. We consequently bring the idea of the institutional primary task into institutionalisation theory where it assumes a significant but previously unacknowledged place and a key consideration in institutional legitimacy. In the article, we use the provision of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme in an International School to illustrate the notions of the institutional primary task and the pillars and carriers of institutionalisation in practice. The analyses reported in the article develop understandings of International Schools and institutionalisation theory.

Key words

International schools, International curriculum, Institutional legitimacy, Institutionalisation theory, Institutional work, institutional primary task

Introduction

In the past decade, the number of schools around the world classified as International Schools has grown rapidly and substantially (Brummitt and Keeling, 2013; Keeling, 2015). The size of this growth and the underpinning demand were largely unforeseen, and forecast growth appears to have been under-estimated (Hallgarten et al., 2015). At the same time, the diversity of International Schools has increased considerably (Hayden, 2011) adding to an already complicated landscape (Bunnell, 2014). With such growth in numbers and diversity, the legitimacy of these schools as (international) educational institutions becomes a matter of growing interest. Evidence indicates that the term 'international' is increasingly being used in various ways for different purposes, with some International Schools using it in ways that have little veracity (Tarc and Mishra Tarc, 2015).

Institutional legitimacy is the sense that the actions of an entity of some kind in the social world are what is required, right and suitable in a way that is consistent with a system of socially created customs, ideals, meaning and definitions (Suchman, 1995). It is established by the processes of institutionalisation (Scott 2014). The institutional legitimacy of International Schools is important for all those who have an interest in them and their proper conduct.

The initial aim of the analysis we report here was to answer the question: 'What makes a school's claim to be an International School legitimate?' In answering that question, the provision of an international curriculum emerged as dominant and central; it is what an International School must do to be legitimate as an 'International School'. The provision of an international curriculum is therefore an International School's primary task (Rice, 1963), which, according to Lawrence (1977) is the formal or official task. We consequently bring the idea of the institutional primary task into institutionalisation theory where it assumes a significant but previously unacknowledged and under-explored place and a key consideration

in institutional legitimacy. In doing so, we thus achieve a second aim: to develop institutionalisation theory

The article has four main sections. Following this introduction, we analyse the way International Schools have been, and are currently characterised. In particular, we consider the way the characteristics of a school may or may not legitimately underpin its claim to be an 'International School'. From that analysis, the provision of an international curriculum emerges as the most robust underpinning of such legitimacy. It is an International School's primary task (Rice, 1963; Lawrence, 1977). In the second section, we explore the processes of institutionalisation and develop the idea of the institutional primary task. We draw on Scott's (2014) analytical framework for theorising organisational institutionalisation processes which explains how organisations become institutions and acquire legitimacy. In the subsequent section, we apply the analytical framework to the provision of an international curriculum and consider how organisational practices in curriculum provision in a school would legitimately underpin its claim to be 'International'. We use the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP) as an example. In the final substantive section, we discuss issues that arise from our analyses. In particular, we discuss the way analytical frameworks we have advanced will be of value to both practitioners and researchers and will enhance understandings of international educational provision and institutionalisation theory. The article ends with some concluding comments.

The characteristics of International Schools

For nearly half a century, numerous authors have sought to identify the defining characteristics of 'International Schools'. Until relatively recently, characterizations of such bodies have been dominated by those of the conventional and long-established kind, of which there are two

forms: 'Type A Traditional' International Schools and 'Type B Ideological' International Schools (Hayden and Thompson, 2013).

'Type A' schools are those established to provide education for the children of globally mobile parents, who were typically working for the United Nations, embassies or multinational companies (Findlay, 1999; Hill, 2014; Hallgarten et al., 2015). These schools generally: have a history of considerable parental involvement (Benson, 2011); have students of a wide range of nationalities (Mayer, 1968; Leach, 1969); have relatively high levels of student mobility; use English as the medium of communication; are fee-paying but are run on a not-for-profit basis; and over time have formed membership associations, such as the European Council of International Schools (ECIS). These 'Type A Traditional' International Schools provide an international curriculum (Leach, 1969; Jonietz, 1991; Hallgarten et al., 2015), mainly for pragmatic reasons. Such provision enables curriculum continuity for the children of a globally mobile workforce of a range of nationalities (Hill, 2002). Regardless of other characteristics, we argue that for a 'Type A Traditional' International School, the provision of an international curriculum securely underpins the legitimacy of its claim to be an 'International School'.

Schools in the 'Type B Ideological' category (Hayden and Thompson, 2013) are those committed to the philosophy of Kurt Hahn (Veevers and Pete, 2011) and/or education for global peace. Examples of 'Type B Ideological' International Schools include the United World Colleges, for example, Atlantic College, Wales, UK and the International School of Geneva. In this journal, Tate (2013, p.256) has argued that such International Schools have a progressive pedagogy focused *"on a vision of an improved world"*. Central to this approach is the provision of an international curriculum, such as the IBDP (Hill, 2014). Thus the provision of an international curriculum is central to the legitimacy of any claim of a school in the 'Type B' category to be an International School.

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The traditional terrain of 'Type A Traditional' and 'Type B Ideological' International Schools is being reconfigured by the rapid growth of 'Type C Non-traditional' International Schools (Hayden and Thompson, 2013). Machin (2014, p.21) argues that many of these newer International Schools, may *"have less altruistic aims than those of the original pilgrims of international education"*. In a similar vein, Tarc and Mishra Tarc (2015 p.36) assert that: *"Some of these* (International) *schools are international in name alone, offering little more than English-language instruction by home nationals and a token expatriate as consultant"*. The notion of being international is used for marketing purposes only (Hill, 2006). Thus Hallgarten et al. (2015 p.3) argue that such schools *"may be diluting the distinctiveness of the* (International School) *model"* indicating the implications of these new entrants for established International Schools.

These new 'Type C' International Schools are typically privately owned and are operated to make a profit for the owners (Brummitt and Keeling, 2013). This for-profit rationale differs from that of the traditional 'Type A and B' forms and contrasts with Robert Leach's vision nearly 50 years ago of *"The Ideal International School"* (Leach, 1969 p.175). However, the case for arguing that being for-profit undermines the legitimacy of a school's claim to be an 'International School' is not strong.

A second characteristic of 'Type C Non-Traditional' International Schools is that many have been established to serve the needs of the local (indigenous) population. Thus local/indigenous students often dominate in these schools. This lack of student diversity contrasts with the diversity of the student body in conventional International Schools, which is viewed by some as a defining characteristic (Findlay, 1997; Allen, 2002). Although having an internationally diverse student body may facilitate the provision of an international curriculum, we argue that such a characteristic does not legitimise a school's claim to be an 'International School'.

A significant factor in the growth of these new non-conventional 'Type C' International Schools is the demand from local (indigenous) parents willing and able to pay fees for an English education (Tarc and Mishra Tarc, 2015). Such an education, providing a US or UK curriculum through the medium of English, is considered to enable students to gain the necessary qualifications and capabilities to access US and UK higher education (ISC Research, 2015). We argue that such provision does not underpin the legitimacy of claims by schools of this kind to be 'International Schools'.

In summary, in the past, the International School landscape was dominated by schools of the conventional kind: 'Type A Traditional' and 'Type B Ideological' (Hayden and Thompson, 2013). The recent, rapid rise in the number of schools labelling themselves/being labelled as 'International Schools' has radically changed the nature of the landscape (Bunnell, 2014). The descriptive norms of these new non-conventional International Schools, 'Type C Non-Traditional' International Schools, such as being for-profit and catering for local children, contrast with those of conventional International Schools. However, more significantly, these new International Schools typically do not provide an international curriculum, which we argue undermines the legitimacy of their claim to be 'International Schools'. We consider that the provision of an international curriculum is the characteristic that makes any such claim to be legitimate. It is what an International School must do if it is to legitimately claim to be International. On that basis, we introduce the notion of the primary task (Rice, 1963), which is in essence what an organisation/institution is there to do. The institutional characteristics and processes that relate to that task, the so-called pillars of institutionalisation (Scott, 2014) will, in addition to the legitimacy of the institution's primary task, serve to confirm an institution's legitimacy. In the next section, we consider the notion of the institutional primary task and the processes of institutionalisation in greater depth and in so doing seek to develop institutionalisation theory.

Institutionalisation theory

The concept of the institutional primary task

Lawrence, Suddaby and Leca (2006 p. 215) define institutional work as *"the purposive action of individuals and organizations aimed at creating, maintaining and disrupting institutions"*. Arguably, such a definition is somewhat circular and a sharper focus for purposeful action is required. In our view, that focus is provided by the primary task, a notion which was first developed by the English anthropologist Albert Kenneth Rice (1958 p.32) as *"the task an organization was created to perform"*. Rice (1965 p.17) later modified this to: *"the task an organization must perform to survive"*. In other words, it is *essential* activity.

Meyer and Rowan (1977) have argued that institutions only survive if those in their environments deem them to be legitimate. It follows therefore that the task, which is the focus of the purposeful actions of institutional work (Lawrence, Suddaby and Leca, 2006), must be viewed as legitimate. This assertion applies to schools as it does to any other type of institution, including those that do not work in a highly-marketized environment, such as prisons, magistrates' courts, or a local authority social services department.

The relationship between organisational goals and the primary task is of interest. Organisational goals and their significance for legitimacy feature in the institutionalisation literature (Scott, 2014). Parsons (1960, p. 21), referring to goals, argued that: *"they legitimise the main functional patterns of operation, which are necessary to implement the values"*. For Scott (2014 p.28), schools are considered legitimate in a society to the extent that *"their goals are connected to wider cultural values . . . . and to the degree that they conform in their structures and procedures to established 'patterns of operation' specified for educational organisations"*. We acknowledge that the nature of goals is important in institutionalisation

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but that the institutional primary task has a more central place. The institutional primary task is what the members of the institution must work on if their institutional work is to be legitimate; the institutional goal is what that work intends to achieve. The task defines what the institution is there to do; the goal (or 'mission') is the outcome of that doing. The task is therefore pre-eminent in a consideration of institutionalisation and institutional legitimacy.

Accepting the idea of a primary task can be challenging for organisation members for a variety of reasons (James, 2010; James et al., 2006). It obliges individuals and groups to marshal their resources and to commit themselves to work on, and to engage with, the task. The moral purpose of many institutions including and especially schools may exacerbate the challenge of working on the institution's legitimate primary task. Individuals and groups may adopt task avoidance strategies, to ease the challenging nature of the institutional primary task (James et al, 2006; James, 2010).

Despite its challenging nature, the notion of the primary task is a valuable heuristic device and is useful organisational analysis (Miller and Rice 1967; James et al., 2006). For a number of reasons, defining an institution's primary task can be difficult (Obholzer and Roberts 1994; James et al., 2006). Too narrow a definition may threaten the institution's survival; too broad in terms of the institution members' resources, and prioritising work on it will be difficult. Institution members coming to an accepted definition of the institutional primary task may create conflict. To avoid such conflicts, institution members may concentrate on institutional processes and outcomes rather than the task and/or define the task in a way that fails to give priority to one set of activities over another. Regardless of those difficulties, we argue that clarifying an institution's primary task can be valuable in securing institutional legitimacy.

The three pillars of institutionalisation

Institutions *"provide stability and meaning to social life"* (Scott, 2014 p. 56). Organisations that can be characterised as institutions are very diverse and include: banks; universities; prisons; the church and, of course, schools. As social entities they are relatively durable, but they can and do change. Being legitimate distinguishes organisations from institutions. Organisations may not have legitimacy but can gain it by institutionalisation. Scott (2014) argues that institutionalisation has three distinct elements: regulative; normative; and cultural-cognitive, which he refers to as pillars because they underpin and support institutionalisation.

The regulative pillar

The regulative pillar of institutionalisation encompasses rule-setting, monitoring and sanctioning activities (Scott, 2014). Compliance with these regulative aspects is coercive and arguably on the basis of expediency; it is simply more advantageous to comply than not. The influences of this pillar are considered to be disruptive; they are particularly troublesome, worrying and disturbing but of course, compliance shows commitment to institutional requirements. Arguably, rule-setting is the key to this pillar with both monitoring and sanctioning being subsequent activities. Regulative rules have an instrumental rationale and they are legally sanctioned, which is the basis for their legitimacy.

The normative pillar

The normative pillar of institutionalisation comprises those aspects of institutional life an institution is expected to undertake. It comprises values and norms and helps the formation of a distinct mode of operation. Values are notions of what is preferred/desirable and the development of standards against which structures and practices can be evaluated. Norms specify practices which are deemed legitimate ways of pursuing valued outcomes (Blake and

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Davis, 1964) and they are considered very significant in institutionalisation (March and Olsen, 1989). In part, the significance of norms is related to the moral basis of many institutions (Stinchcombe, 1997) and the moral agency of institutional actors (Heclo, 2008). Conformance to norms is based on social obligation.

The cultural–cognitive pillar

The cultural–cognitive pillar of institutionalisation is the shared notions of the nature of reality and the jointly held sense-making schema which enable meaning-making and interpretation. It is how institutions promote and cultivate a particular thought-style (Douglas, 1986), which is in essence the way institution members/actors think about institutional phenomena and act. This institutional thought-style influences individuals to think and behave similarly, irrespective almost of whether they agree or not. Rules develop, which have a specific institutional rationale. A collective consciousness is thus created (Douglas, 1982). We speak of those who work in an institution over an extended period as becoming institutionalised.

The four carriers of institutionalisation

The three pillars of institutionalisation are communicated and made evident by means of carriers (Jepperson, 1991). Each pillar is carried by: symbolic systems; relational systems; activities; and artefacts.

Symbolic systems. From an institutionalisation perspective symbols encompass *"rules, values and norms, classifications frames, schemas, prototypes and scripts"* (Scott, 2014 p.97).

Relational carriers. In essence, relational carriers are patterns of interaction within role systems. These social structures are often widely shared and therefore create similar forms, which is the basis of structural isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983).

Activities. For the regulative pillar, activities encompass monitoring, sanctioning, and disrupting, which are those activities that ensure compliance. For the normative pillar, activities include roles, jobs/tasks, routines, customs and repertoires of co-operation and for the cultural-cognitive pillar they comprise shared predispositions and scripts.

Artefacts. These are material objects, deliberately created under the influence of the cultural or physical environment (Suchman, 2003). In the context of institutionalisation, they are objects that: comply with mandated specifications (regulative pillar); meet conventions and standards (normative pillar); and possess symbolic value (cultural-cognitive pillar). The carriers of institutionalisation are summarised in table 1.

Table 1: The institutional pillars and carriers of institutionalisation (adapted from Scott, 2014).

Carriers of Institutionalisation	The Regulative Pillar	The Normative Pillar	The Cultural-Cognitive Pillar
Symbolic Systems	Rules, Laws	Values, Expectations Standards	Categories Typifications Schemas, Frames
Relational Systems	Governance systems Power Systems	Regimes Authority systems	Structural isomorphism Identities
Activities	Monitoring Sanctioning Disrupting	Roles, Jobs Routines, Habits, Repertoires of collective action	Predispositions Scripts

Artefacts	Objects complying with mandated specifications	Objects meeting conventions and standards	Objects possessing symbolic value

In essence, we are arguing that the carriers of institutionalisation communicate the pillars, which are the essential elements of institutionalising processes, all of which ideally relate to the institutional primary task. It is the task which initiates and validates the institutional processes, which in turn are evidenced by the carriers.

The institutionalisation of the provision of an international curriculum

In this section, we use the institutionalisation framework and the notion of the institutional primary task to consider how organisational practices in a school need to be configured to legitimately underpin the school's claim to be international. We use the provision of the IBDP as an illustrative example. For the analysis, we draw on a range of data sources including: IB authorization information, for example, IBO (2016a); our professional/research-based knowledge of International Schools, for example Bunnell (2013; 2014), Fertig (2007; 2015) and James and Sheppard (2014), and other published works, such as, Hill (2002).

The IBDP is one of four programmes offered by the Geneva-registered IB (IBO, 2013). It is a well-established two-year programme for 16 – 19 year-olds that was developed in 1962 by educators at Atlantic College in south Wales, UK and the International School of Geneva (Hill, 2010). The IBDP curriculum comprises six subject groups (Studies in language and literature; Language acquisition; Individuals and societies; Sciences; Mathematics; and The arts) and the programme core, which consists of the Theory of Knowledge, Creativity, Activity and Service

(CAS), and a 4000-word research essay (IBO, 2016a). The IB claims that *"An IB education is holistic in nature - it is concerned with the whole person"* (IBO, 2013 p.1). Assessment is undertaken by the students' teachers and by means of externally assessed examinations. Currently, just over 3,000 schools provide the programme, 30% of which are located in the US.

The sections that follow explore the institutional primary task, the pillars of institutionalisation and the carriers of institutionalisation in relation to IBDP provision.

The institutional primary task in relation to provision of the IBDP

In the previous sections of this article, we argued that the provision of an international curriculum is central in establishing the legitimacy of a school's claim to be an International School. It is an International School's institutional primary task. We also considered the notion of the primary task, arguing inter alia for its significance in institutionalisation theory generally. In this illustration, the provision of the IBDP would be the way the school meets its obligation to provide an international curriculum as its institutional primary task.

The regulative pillar and the carriers in relation to provision of the IBDP

The regulative pillar would be centrally concerned with the conformance to IBDP requirements and monitoring activities (Scott, 2014) associated with the provision of the IBDP as the institutional primary task; *"They must all be evidenced if a school wants to become an IB World School authorized to offer the Diploma Programme"* (IBO, 2016a p.6).

Symbolic systems. International Schools wishing to provide the IBDP curriculum must undergo a two-year authorization process preceded by an authorization visit before it can be granted 'IB World School' status and provide the IBDP as its institutional primary task. The

school would be ruled by the requirements of IB authorization in its IBDP provision. The authorization process, which leads to 'IB World School' status, requires the appointment of an IBDP Co-ordinator (DPC), the implementation of a CAS programme, which involves activities both within and beyond the school, and the appointment of a CAS Co-ordinator.

Relational systems. A key aspect of the governance and the authority systems of a school's provision of the IBDP would be its relationship with the IB. The DPC is the school's point of contact with the IB. All teachers directly involved with providing the programme must undertake professional development and training at IB authorized workshops.

Activities. Following initial authorization by the IB to provide the IBDP, subsequent authorizations take place every five years. The school's 'IB World School' status is thus monitored, albeit not particularly frequently. The DPC will monitor teaching practices and ideally authorise appropriate pedagogic practices and stop inappropriate practices. The designated CAS Co-ordinator will monitor and record CAS activity.

Artefacts. The school would display the IB Mission prominently as is required by its authorization as an 'IB World School'. The school's provision of the IBDP would feature in any such displays, thus communicating its responsibility as an International School to provide an international curriculum as the institutional primary task.

The normative pillar and the carriers in relation to provision of the IBDP

The normative pillar comprises values, expectations and standards (Scott, 2014) and in this example these norms would be primarily concerned with enabling legitimate IBDP provision, which is how it meets the requirement to provide an international curriculum that is the institutional primary task.

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Symbolic systems. Authorization as an 'IB World School' requires the adoption of a distinct set of standards, values, and expectations of ways of operating in relation to IBDP provision. These would be evidenced in the school Mission Statement, its Guiding Statements, and on the school web-site and it would feature prominently in displays and information about the school.

Relational systems. The school's management systems are significant relational systems that ensure conformance to the required norms. This conformance thus ensures that the school meets the necessary requirements for providing an international curriculum, the institutional primary task that supports its legitimacy as an International School. The DPC would be called to account by the principal for her/his work co-ordinating IBDP provision and would report periodically to the IB. Similarly, the CAS Co-ordinator would be accountable to the DPC, and the principal. Mutual accountability amongst the teaching staff would also be important in ensuring conformance to norms.

Activities. Management roles and tasks and activities in relation to IBDP provision would be specified, for example, the DPC and CAS Co-ordinator roles. IBDP teachers' roles would be made clear and teachers would seek to use jointly held habitual repertoires of practice to ensure a co-ordinated and coherent pedagogic approach. As part of the CAS element of the IBDP, schools would typically provide activities such as Model United Nations to promote international mindedness, intercultural understanding and global engagement. All these activities relate directly to the institutional primary task of providing an international curriculum.

Artefacts. A range of objects carrying the normative pillar would be apparent, such as the school prospectus and the school website which communicate the school's mission statement and core values; displays of the IB Learner Profile (a listing of ten attributes/outcomes of an IB education), student participation in CAS, and high quality work of students on the IBDP;

and communications to parents. The artefacts communicate the international nature of the curriculum being provided as the institutional primary task.

The cultural-cognitive pillar and the carriers in relation to provision of the IBDP

The cultural–cognitive pillar of institutionalisation is the shared conceptions of reality and the jointly held interpretive schema that enable shared sense-making among institution members in relation to the institutional primary task of providing an international curriculum, which in this illustration is the provision of the IBDP programme.

Symbolic systems. The way teachers: think about and plan classroom activities; vary, sort and categorise activities; and structure and support learning will reflect the requirements of IBDP provision, which is how the school meets it obligations of its institutional primary task. These forms of professional/practical knowledge would be held jointly amongst the teaching staff.

Relational carriers. Through joint working on IBDP provision, IB authorised training, and actively engaging with teachers in other schools via the IB's Online Curriculum Centre, systems of provision would take on a similar form, and teachers may develop an IBDP teacher professional identity.

Activities. These carriers of the cultural-cognitive pillar would relate to rehearsed, established, collaborative practices learned over time by those in the school providing the IBDP, which is how the school meets the requirements of its institutional primary task as an International School. Teachers, once trained in the use of the IB Learner Profile in IB authorized workshops, would be expected to use the vocabulary of the Profile in their everyday teaching (e.g. 'inquirer', 'balanced'). These practices will shape their sense-making and pedagogic practice.

IBDP teachers may seek to gain the IB Educator Certificate (IBO, 2016b). The school might regularly celebrate festivals and cultural events of international significance, such as United Nations Day, perhaps jointly with schools providing the IBDP in other countries.

Artefacts. Artefacts that shape sense-making for teachers would include: IBDP curriculum documents; lesson plans; records of student assessments; and notes from IBDP teaching team meetings. For those with management responsibility objects possessing symbolic value might include: the 'IB World School' regulations document, monitoring reports from the DPC and CAS Co-ordinators; and IBDP student assessment data, all of which relate directly to the institutional primary task.

Examples of the institutional primary task, and the pillars and carriers institutionalising an 'IB World School' as a legitimate provider of the IBDP, and therefore an International School is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: The institutional primary task and the pillars and examples of carriers that institutionalise a school as a legitimate provider of an international curriculum and justify the school's claim to be international as illustrated by the provision of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP).

The Institutional Primary Task		
The provision of an international curriculum, an obligation which in this instance is met by the provision of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP)		
Carriers	**Carriers of the Regulative Pillar**	**Carriers of the Normative Pillar**	**Carriers of the Cultural-Cognitive Pillar**
Symbolic Systems	The school must be accredited as an IB World School.	IB World School authorization requires adoption of a set of standards, values and	The shared ways teachers: think about, plan; vary; sort and categorise classroom activities;

		expectations relating to IBDP provision.	and structure and support learning relating to IBDP.
Relational Systems	School-IB relationship is important; IBDP Co-ordinator is the school's point of contact with the IB. All teachers undertake IB authorized development and training every two years.	Management systems are significant in ensuring conformance to norms. Mutual accountability amongst teachers also important in ensuring conformance.	Through joint working on IBDP provision, IB authorised training, on-line engagement with other IBDP teachers, systems of provision become similar, and teachers develop an IBDP teacher identity.
Activities	A two-year authorisation process to gain IB World School status to provide the IBDP. Co-ordinators monitor pedagogic practices required by authorization.	Management roles tasks relating to IBDP provision and teachers use jointly held habitual repertoires of practice routinely deployed to ensure a co-ordinated and coherent pedagogic approach.	Rehearsed, established, collaborative practices learned over time by those providing the IBDP and the use of a shared vocabulary shape teachers' sense-making and pedagogic practice.
Artefacts	The school displays its IB World School authorization certificate and logo showing its legitimacy as an IBDP provider.	The school prospectus and website communicating the school's mission and values, displays of the IB Learner Profile and work of IBDP students.	IBDP curriculum documents; lesson plans; student records; and notes from IBDP teacher meetings. The IB World School regulations, Programme co-ordinator reports, and IBDP student assessment data.

Discussion

To briefly rehearse the main issue we have addressed, International Schools have a long history but the recent rapid and substantial growth in the number of schools defining themselves or being defined as such calls into question the legitimacy of these new schools as 'International Schools'. That led us to consider the question: 'What makes a school's claim to be an International School legitimate?' In answering that question, the provision of an international curriculum emerged as the dominant and central characteristic. We concluded that the provision of an international curriculum is an International School's institutional primary task, which, as we have argued, is central to an institution's legitimacy. We then explored the notion of the institutional primary task, and Scott's (2014) institutionalisation framework. We have sought to give the institutional primary task a central place in institutionalisation theory in relation to the pillars and carriers of institutionalisation. In so doing, we have developed institutionalisation theory by bringing the institutional primary task to the fore. In the subsequent section, we illustrated this broader institutionalisation framework by using the provision of the IBDP. In this section, we discuss some of the matters to arise from our analyses.

The framework of the institutional primary task, institutionalising pillars and carriers could be of value in a range of ways. It could be used by the teachers in an International School as a heuristic device for reflecting on their (international) educational practices and how they might be improved. For a teacher considering joining a school describing itself as an International School, the framework could be of value in checking the extent to which the school is indeed international. The framework could be developed into an instrument for auditing schools and their international nature. Its use in that way might be of value for associations of International Schools such as ECIS which might wish to strengthen their membership criteria, or by bodies who accredit schools such as the Council of International Schools (CoIS). This kind of auditing and assessment might also help to prevent the dilution of and damage to the International

School brand referred to by Hallgarten at al., (2015). For those researching in International Schools, the framework would be of value in providing analytical clarity for establishing the context of their research. It could also be of value in charting the growth of International Schools worldwide.

Although we assert that the provision of an international curriculum is the institutional primary task in those schools wishing to legitimately claim to be international we acknowledge that the notion of an international curriculum may be problematic. Cambridge (2011) argues that the concept of an international curriculum is complex, and defining both the international and curriculum aspects of provision is not straightforward (Hayden, 2013; Tarc, 2009). Several international curriculums have been specifically designed to be international in nature, for example, the International Primary Curriculum (IPC) (Fieldwork Education, 2016). The IBDP and the IPC curriculums both include the promotion of a form of international mindedness and particular values, which aim to *"introduce students to other ways of seeing the world"* (Fail, 2013 p.114) that do not necessarily reflect a single national perspective. The international nature of a curriculum and how it might be validly construed as such is a matter for further analysis.

The institutional primary task's role in institutional legitimation has two aspects. The institutional primary task has a central legitimising role because of its significance in its own right. What a particular institution is there to do is central in establishing an institution's legitimacy. Any dissonance between what those working in the institution and those in the institution's environment consider the institution is there to do will have significant implications and is likely to result in problems and conflict. In addition, the institutional primary task has a central legitimising role because the institutionalisation pillars and the carriers can only be legitimately validated in relation to it. Arguably, institutionalising

processes and practices will only be properly justifiable if they are valid in relation to what the institution is there to do.

Although we have developed the notion of the institutional primary task in the context of International Schools, it clearly has utility in other kinds of schools in a range of settings. Arguably, for those who work in any school to reflect on the question: 'What are we here to do?' can help to identify their sense of the institutional primary task and can be valuable prompt for reflection and development. Further, the institutional primary task would appear to have similar value in other non-educational institutional settings.

A number of other issues have emerged during the analyses. First, an inspection and accreditation process greatly strengthens the regulative pillar. In the case of International Schools and the provision of the IBDP, authorization by the International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO) has a significant role in institutionalisation. The role of IBO authorisation in International Schools has been analysed before, see for example, Fertig (2007; 2015), but here we see it playing a central part in establishing institutional legitimacy. Arguably, inspection regimes in particular countries, for example, Ofsted (2016) in England, play a similar role but one is struck by the robustness of the IBO authorization process. Second, the development amongst IBDP teachers of an IB professional teacher identity is of potential interest and is worthy of further discussion. It is conceivably the case that the teachers themselves become institutionalised by undertaking work on the institutional primary task of providing an international curriculum, which in the illustration we have used is the IBDP, and by exposure to the carriers of the regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive pillars of IBDP provision. The potential institutionalisation of IB teachers and the development of a particular 'IB Educator' or 'IB Profesional' identity are worthy of future research. Thirdly, we are clear that in our analysis of the new 'Type C' International Schools, we are not seeking to dismiss these new forms of school and their curricular provision in any way. We have simply used their

emergence in the international school field as a matter to be researched, understood and theorised.

Concluding comments

In this article, we have considered the nature of International Schools in light of their increase in numbers and diversity and have developed institutionalisation theory by bringing the idea of the institutional primary task to the fore in institutionalisation theory. We would seek to encourage other researchers to apply the framework we have developed to understand more fully the nature of schools including but not only International Schools. Similarly we encourage others to work with and develop the idea of the institutional primary task, applying it to other organisations/institutions to understand its institutionalising role more fully.

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