Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Master of Arts

of

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BEd (Brock University, 2005)
BA (Mount Allison University, 2001)

“Chinese International Student Perspectives of their
British Columbia Offshore School Experiences”

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Wednesday August 21, 2019
1:00 P.M.
MacLaurin Building
Room A341

Supervisory Committee:
Dr. Tim Anderson, Department of Education and Curriculum, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Ruthanne Tobin, Department of Education and Curriculum, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:
Dr. Andrew Marton, Department of Pacific and Asian Studies, University of Victoria

Chair of Oral Examination:
Dr. Peter Götz, Department of Germanic and Slavic Studies, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies
Abstract

Over the past twenty years, high school students in China have been learning the British Columbia (BC) public curriculum in certified private offshore schools with the intention of attending post-secondary institutions abroad. This internationalization and privatization in the Chinese education system began after critical reforms that allowed non-state actors to own and operate schools or programs that offer foreign curricula and credentials (Liu, 2018; Liu & Dunne, 2009; Schuetze, 2008; Wang, 2017; Young, 2018). BC offshore schools (BCOS) are one of the foreign curriculum options available to students in China and are comprised of approximately 12,000 students in thirty-seven certified schools (Government of British Columbia, 2019a). These students then may become international students when they migrate abroad, often to Canada.

Within this setting, this case study (Yin, 2014) explores the perspectives and experiences of five female first-year university students who have just recently graduated from three different BC offshore schools. The theoretical framings of sociocultural theory (Lantolf, 2000; Vygotsky, 1978), second language socialization (Duff, 2010), community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991), and transnationalism (Ong, 1999; Vertovec, 2009; Waters, 2008) help situate the perspectives of the students in this dynamic educational phenomenon. The primary data sources include semi-structured interviews at the beginning of their first and second semesters at a large BC university and participant responses to journal prompts through the semester, as well as publicly available BC educational documents.

This study’s findings indicate that graduates of BCOS were prepared for undergraduate academic courses because of their socialization into foundational research skills, essay writing, lecture listening, and project-based assessments. The similarities between the BC and university curricula have helped these participants transition from high school to university as well as from China to Canada. Each participant revealed different challenges that they faced including systematic grammar knowledge, increased reading requirements, and socializing with Canadian peers. Overall, Chinese BCOS graduates are a dynamic, diverse, and under-researched population. These participants’ socialization into the learning environment in BC offshore schools has helped them prepare and learn skills necessary for favourable experiences in university.