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International School Institutional Legitimacy and Accreditation
A Case Study from the Federal Republic of Germany

Eaton, Richard

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Richard Dean Eaton
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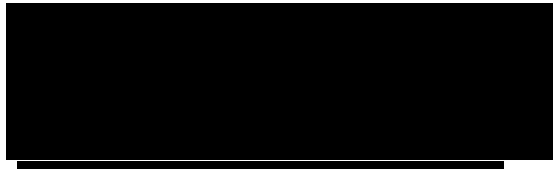
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Acknowledgements

Abstract

International schooling's proliferation has advanced studies of international school institutional legitimacy. While accreditation can substantiate an international school's legitimacy, international accrediting bodies as legitimate institutions have remained unexamined. My project takes up the challenge. Framed as a retrospective case study, it asks how the Council of International Schools (CIS) has 'built' and 'maintained' institutional legitimacy to accredit international schools in Berlin-Brandenburg, an undertheorized region in the Federal Republic of Germany. The appropriateness of this region for study is examined, and the complex history of accreditation's globalization is explored. Tensions and contradictions are revealed. Contextual understanding of institutional legitimacy is shaped, and a qualitative research design crafted that strives for rigor and considers the researcher's insider-outsider relationship with CIS and international schools in Berlin-Brandenburg. This enables interviews with historical actors to shed light on CIS' institutionalization as an accreditation provider in one context. An analytical framework used to theorize international school institutional legitimacy, and a process of constant comparison of data activates these insights revealing themes in CIS' institutionalization as an accreditation provider that, in tandem with complementary slices of data, unlock understanding of how institutional legitimacy has been 'bui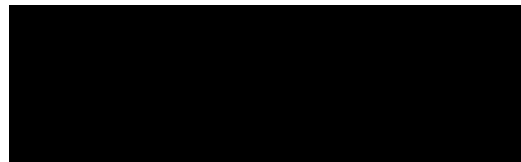lt' and 'maintained.' CIS accreditation is found to have well-embedded institutional legitimacy in Berlin-Brandenburg. Notwithstanding, as accreditation's fundamental conventions assume levels of common cognition, alternative forms of school evaluative behavior may be difficult for stakeholders to comprehend. Hence, the practice is found to have a precarious taken-for-grantedness that prevents providers and practitioners from recognizing its marginalization of localized development solutions in favor of globalized alternatives, which may be deepening patterns of educational elitism in the case study context. As inquiry sub-questions are linked to primary findings and the project is critiqued, valuable insights are shared that could benefit future studies, and an action-driven accreditation research landscape surfaces to shape policy and practice.

List of Abbreviations

AGM – Annual General Meeting

CEO – Chief Executive Officer

CFO – Chief Financial Manager

CIE – Cambridge International Examinations

CIS – Council of International Schools

COBIS – Council of British International Schools

COVID-19 – A strand of the infectious coronavirus disease first appearing in 2019

ECIS – Educational Collaborative for International Schools (formerly, European Council of International Schools)

FRG – Federal Republic of Germany

GDR – German Democratic Republic (East Germany)

GDPR – The EU's General Data Protection Regulation guidelines

IB – International Bachelorette

IBDP – The IB Diploma Programme

ICAISA – International Council Advancing Independent School Accreditation

IS – International School

IS – International School Magazine

ISS – International Schools Services

ISC – ISC Research

ISJ – International Schools Journal

MSA – Middle States Association

NAIS – National Association of Independent Schools

NEASC – New England Association of Schools and Colleges

PISA – Programme for International Student Assessment

SSEO – School Support and Evaluation Officer

TIE – The International Educator Newspaper

UK – United Kingdom

US – United States

VT – Visiting Team

WASC – Western Association of Schools and Colleges

Chapter 1.0. – Project Introduction and Overview

1.0. Introduction

This chapter introduces the study and frames its primary and sub-guiding research questions. It identifies assumptions, specifies purpose, and outlines project structure.

1.1. Project Introduction

It has been said "all organizations require some level of legitimacy as a condition of their viability" (Ruef and Scott, 1998, p.900).

The growth of international schooling as a field (Bunnell, 2014), and the problematic nature of classifying international schools has led scholars to ponder "the legitimacy of International Schools as providers of an international education" (Bunnell and Fertig, 2016, p.57). As Bunnell (2016a) writes:

> **international schools in general, but especially the newer entrants to the field, are being placed under pressure as institutions to legitimise their claim to be an 'international school' (p.17).**

Bunnell, Fertig, and James (2015; 2016a; 2016b; 2017a) have published and presented several papers on this theme. Accreditation routines and accredited status (Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2015; 2016b; Bunnell and Fertig, 2016) are seen contributing to international schools being perceived as legitimate providers of an international education. Presumably, therefore, international school accreditors would need to have 'built' and 'maintained' legitimacy to be accepted as legitimizers of international schools.

However, while the growth of international schools receives constant attention (Gaskell, 2016; 2017; Keeling, 2017; 2018a; 2020; Wechsler, 2017) with "demand exceeding supply" in some parts of the world (Machin, 2017, p.132), grabbing fewer headlines are the "variety of external groups" identified by Caffyn and Cambridge (2006) that "impact on international schools and have considerable power to shape and control them" (p.49). These influential players include "a myriad of support organizations" (Bunnell, 2007, p.349) engaged in networking, lobbying, training, servicing, resourcing, and curriculum provision. Organizations providing accreditation represent one under-studied (Fertig, 2007) subdivision of this constellation and have

been characterized as superordinate entities to whom international schools are "justifying their legitimate existence" (Bunnell, Fertig, and James 2015, p.6).

1.1.1. International School Accreditation and Legitimacy

While normative acceptance gained through accreditation "conveys important strategic advantages to many… organizational types" (Ruef and Scott, 1998, p.900), how international school accreditation providers have garnered legitimacy has been largely unexamined. Given the proliferation of international schools globally, this is surprising. The legitimacy of an international school is said to be forged by "the nature and authority of systems that ensure proper conduct" like accreditation (Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2015, p.10), which, as a practice, has also demonstrated unabated growth in the last two decades (ECIS, 1998; Fertig, 2007; Percy, 2008; *SI News*, 2018; Bohling, 2020).

While school accreditation has developed into a global enterprise, the convention is generally accepted to have originated in the United States (US) (The Alliance, n.d.; Cognia, 2020a). It was understood in mid-20th-century America to be a method that "educational associations, professional groups, or special agencies" used to evaluate "a secondary school, college, university, or professional school for membership" (Brumbaugh, 1949, p.61). Group affiliation and other forms of acknowledgement gained through accreditation were obtained by meeting "previously established standards or criteria" (ibid, p.61). However, accreditation is now conceptually applied (ECIS, 1998) and discussed more broadly (Bartlett, 1998) in relation to lower school education, and is considered a hallmark of "established international schools" (Broman, 2011). It is embraced by governments outside of the US (Queensland Government, n.d.; State Government Victoria, n.d.; Wilcox, 2006; *International School*, 2010), and meeting accreditation standards is thought to give schools "status" and entry into a "prestigious club" (NIS, 2017) where, "Membership has its Privileges" (MSA, 2006, p.14).

Internationally, accreditation seems to have transcended its importance for schools not benchmarked by or aligned with national systems (Murphy, 1998; James and Sheppard, 2014). Its present day vitality might be explained by its propagation as a global quality indicator (Bell, 2018) attractive to boards, families, and governments as an improvement and accountability assurance tool (Percy, 2007), one that is lauded for its honesty and rigor (Bartlett, 1998) and helps schools and school systems stay globally competitive (*SI News*, 2018) while projecting them as operationally

transparent and accountable (Fertig, 2007).

Nevertheless, the globalization of accreditation has paralleled increasing concern about the intentions and power of transnational organizations (Noori and Anderson, 2013), non-governmental entities, and corporations. Some of these categories have been applied to international schools (Peel, 1998; Hayden, 2011), and others could be used to describe their suppliers and accrediting partners, and certainly many of their funders and founders whose motivation for entry into the field has become a prickly, "relatively new and under-explored narrative" (Bunnell, 2019a, p.5). The most prosperous of these schools have established strong positions in the marketplace (Machin, 2017), which are reinforced by accreditation, justifying the ever-increasing school fees associated with their reputations.

While democratic virtues and free-market principles might imbue tolerance and understanding for those who choose and can afford accredited international schools, these organizations can also perpetuate "gaps between the 'haves' and 'have nots'" (Hayden and Thompson, 2008, p.84), threaten state-sovereignty over education (Resnik, 2012), and play a role in detaching influence from its "point of impact" (Lauder, 2007, p.447). Against this backdrop, how accreditation and accrediting bodies, often associated with school improvement, student achievement, high standards, lofty morals, and the celebration of success (*TIE*, 1997a; 2010; 2015; DeLucia, 1997; Murphy, 1998; Bowman, 2006; Cram, 2011a; Ranger, 2014a; 2016; Mott, 2017; Bradley, 2018a; Durbin, Stanfield, and Nanninga, 2019) have emerged as legitimate institutions that can bolster an international school's standing and viability is a timely, relevant, and overdue theme that this study addresses. It takes up this challenge by exploring the manner that a notable player in what Bunnell (2014) has regarded as "the 'traditional' supply chain" (p.13) of the field, the Council of International Schools (CIS), has 'built' and 'maintained' institutional legitimacy as a school accreditor in a region of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG).

1.1.2. The Council of International Schools

CIS, "a non-profit membership organization that defines standards and provides services to support the continuous improvement of international education" (Larsson, 2011, p.10), has been called "the leading provider… of accreditation for international schools" (*International School*, 2010, p.15). It inherited its historic and well-known "accreditation program from the European Council of International Schools (ECIS) on

July 1st, 2003" (Heard, 2007, p.30). Proponents claim CIS' "accreditation model is special and has world-wide appeal" (ibid, p.30).

1.1.3. Assumptions

This project embraces the assumption that institutions are important to collective meaning-making within communities (Scott, 2014); and, given the formative place of schooling in many modern societies, that understanding legitimacy in the educational sector is vital. Parents should be aware of what they can expect from state-funded schools, and with respect to private schooling, "what they are purchasing for their children's education" (Bunnell, 2016a, p.19). Graduates, meanwhile, "need to prove to other authorities (e.g., universities, and employers) that they have attended a legitimate institution" (ibid, p.19). Here, accreditation can play an important role. Moreover, educators should be assured the organizations they are employed by are reputable ones (ibid), which accreditation can also signal, and that schools and their associated partners, in this case accreditation providers like CIS, produce legitimate outcomes for society.

1.2.   A Case Study Informed by Standardized Open-Ended Interviews

In this study, CIS' institutional legitimacy as an accrediting body will be examined in relation to private international schools in an undertheorized setting, Berlin-Brandenburg, one of the FRG's eleven metropolitan regions (Berlin-Brandenburg.de, n.d.). It takes the form of a qualitative, retrospective case study (Thomas, 2011; Starman, 2013). Case studies can enable "exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, programme or system in a 'real life' context" (Simons, 2012, p. 21). In my inquiry, the case study "design frame" (Thomas, 2011, p.512; see also: Simons, 2012; Starman, 2013) facilitates *exploration* into how CIS has 'built' and 'maintained' institutional legitimacy as a school accreditor, "the phenomenon being studied" (Simons, 2012, p. 20), within the *context* of the Berlin-Brandenburg between the years 1989–2019 when, following on from a sequence of significant events (the fall of the Berlin Wall and the reunification of Germany), a number of international schools emerged that would come to utilize ECIS and CIS accreditation.

My project is informed primarily by standardized open-ended interviews "pertaining to participants' experiences and viewpoints" (Turner, 2010, p.754) on CIS and its forbearer, ECIS, as accreditation providers. These interviews will be supplemented

by resources from the historic ECIS and CIS eco-system—e.g., protocol documents, training materials, promotional and informational fliers, web resources, and corporate news briefs—to strengthen understanding and/or fill gaps in interview data. This sheds in-depth insight into CIS' institutionalization in the case study context, which is used to unlock understanding of how CIS 'built' and 'maintained' institutional legitimacy as a school accreditor in this setting.

As a professional in the CIS and international school network who worked in Berlin-Brandenburg during the study, I will also take time to clarify my researcher identity to enable readers "to decide on its usefulness" (Fink, 1999, p.272), and/or reflect on the limitations of my perspective.

1.2.1. Purpose

My project will provide detailed descriptions that will "generate in-depth understanding" (Simons, 2012, p. 21) of 'international' accreditation provider institutional legitimacy in one context that will contribute to knowledge of international school accreditation as a broader academic theme, and could "be used in subsequent studies for theory building" (George and Bennett, 2004, p.75) related to international school accreditor institutionalization and legitimacy. It will also embrace Hayden, Levy, and Thompson's (2007) sentiment that, "Educational research is only as important as the policy and practice that it influences" (p.2). As such, knowledge elicited may be used to strengthen the practice of accreditation in international schools, helping to ensure its outcomes are socially legitimate.

1.3.　Research Questions

The study's primary research question is:

Primary Research Question

How has the Council of International Schools (CIS) 'built' and 'maintained' institutional legitimacy as a provider of 'international' accreditation for international schools in the Berlin-Brandenburg region of the Federal Republic of Germany?

CIS-accredited schools in the case study region all offer *at least* two authorized programs of the International Baccalaureate (IB), an organization whose contributions to "the development of international schooling in practice" are well

documented (Bunnell, 2011, p.165), sometimes self-critically (Fabian, Hill, Walker, 2018). It is a universally-known player in "the 'traditional' supply chain" (Bunnell, 2014, p.13) that may have "legitimized much of what has taken place under the banner of international education" (Walker, 2015, p.14). This raises questions. If an international school is offering curricular programs that are theoretically international, such as those of the IB, presumably it would already have some degree of institutional legitimacy as an international school (Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2017a). Why, then, would IB schools seek international-themed accreditation through CIS? This and other conjecturing leads to the formation of several inquiry sub-questions that will be explored at points throughout the study and linked to findings, portending avenues for further research:

Inquiry Sub-Questions

- **Why is academic research on international school accreditation so sparse?**
- **What is international about international school accreditation?**
- **What is/are the primary task(s) of international school accreditors?**
- **Why do international schools with IB programmes pursue international school accreditation?**
- **How influential or detrimental is the work of international school accrediting bodies?**

1.4. Project Overview

Following this introduction, **Chapter 2.0** develops understanding of the educational landscape in the case study context, Berlin-Brandenburg. This region's "'top-tier international schools'" (MacDonald, 2006, p.204) are examined in relation to the theme of accreditation. Justifications for a case study in Berlin-Brandenburg are shared, and a research agenda that will elicit insights into accreditation and the field of international schooling is established.

Chapter 3.0 explores accreditation as a term, concept, and practice, identifying its place within the field of international schooling. Its proposition is that accreditation's meaning, typologies, implications, and impacts—particularly the more critical strands—could be better understood. This brings further clarity to the relevance of studying accreditation in relation to international schools and CIS.

Next, **Chapter 4.0** explores and conceptually differentiates between organizations, institutions, institutionalization, legitimacy, and institutional legitimacy. A project-

specific explanation of institutional legitimacy is crafted, and the study's analytical framework, Scott's (2014) "Institutional Pillars and Carriers" (p.95), is introduced and explained. The relationship between the concept of primary task (Rice, 1963) and this framework is explored, and both are linked to research design.

Chapter 5.0 examines the project's use of a retrospective case study (Thomas, 2011; Starman, 2013) to investigate CIS' institutional legitimacy as a school accreditor in Berlin-Brandenburg. It critically analyzes this decision in relation to the challenges of studying a "fragmented organization" (Denzin, 1981, p.152) like CIS, identifying the construct of primary task, and understanding the development of institutional processes over time. These complexities are linked to the study's application of "a naturalistic or an interpretative approach" archetypical of the qualitative tradition (Hallberg, 2006, p.141); and, to the selection of "a characteristic method" (Gough, 2002, p.2) of data collection within this paradigm, interviewing, as a primary means of gathering empirical material. Acknowledging the limitations of the chosen tradition, strategies are detailed that will bring rigor—credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Houghton, et al, 2013)—to a qualitative case study to leverage its advantages.

My approach to interviewing as a form of qualitative data collection is introduced in **Chapter 6.0**. Key choices are highlighted and explained, and the complexity of framing an approach to interviewing as someone with both "insider" *and* "outsider" membership status (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009, p.55) is examined. Then, building on understandings of researcher identity, a critical examination of comparative group selection is linked to interview design and interview question development.

Chapter 7.0 details the purpose and planning of the study's pilot interviews, including an overview of ethical considerations to prioritize participant safety (Knox and Burkard, 2009). Learning from pilot interviews is discussed with a focus on how they supported researcher training and proficiency (van Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001). The development of techniques and tools stemming from these experiences is clarified.

Methods of project-specific data collection are detailed in **Chapter 8.0**. How participants were identified, located, contacted, and selected is reviewed. Profiles of participants are shared and interview processes are detailed. Challenges arising and how they were overcome are discussed, and approaches to transcription, coding, and data appropriation are explained.

Chapter 9.0 presents project specific interview data. To "broaden, thicken, and deepen the interpretive base of the study" (Denzin, 1997, p.322)*,* interviews are triangulated with complementary "*slices of data*" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p.65). This sheds light on processes and patterns in CIS' institutionalization as an accreditation provider in the case study context and supports the identification of themes in CIS accreditation's institutionalization in Berlin-Brandenburg.

This is followed by a discussion, in **Chapter 10.0**, of the role themes in CIS' institutionalization have played in legitimacy 'building' and 'maintenance.' Emergent understanding is examined relative to the project-specific definition of institutional legitimacy, culminating in a narrative, analytic explanation of how CIS 'built' and 'maintained' institutional legitimacy in Berlin-Brandenburg as a provider of 'international' accreditation. Findings evoke critical reflections, and constructive feedback for CIS as an organization providing 'international' accreditation.

Chapter 11.0 takes the form of an epilogue linking the study's sub-questions to primary findings, exploring avenues for further research and action, critiquing the completed study, and clarifying its contributions.

With my project introduced, and its structure outlined, attention is turned to developing understanding of the case study context, Berlin-Brandenburg.

Chapter 2.0. – Case Study Context and Research Agenda

2.0.   Introduction

This chapter develops understanding of the educational landscape in the case study context, Berlin-Brandenburg, a metropolitan region in the FRG. I embrace Baxter and Jack's (2008) proposition that in a case study, describing "the context" (p.555) where a phenomenon occurs is equal in importance to explaining the phenomenon itself. Resultantly, the characteristics and complexities of this region and its "'top-tier international schools'" (MacDonald, 2006, p.204) will be examined in relation to the theme of accreditation. Justifications for a case study in Berlin-Brandenburg are shared, and a research agenda that will elicit insights into accreditation and the field of international schooling is established.

2.1.   A View from Berlin

Since 2014, I have been the Director/Head of School at an international school in Berlin, a city-state in the FRG. Over the years I have grown accustomed to the terse media coverage of local education. An expected shortage of school places (Beikler, 2019; Fahrun and Siebert, 2019) and Berlin's low ranking among German states in educational league tables (Beug, 2019) are familiar themes. Berlin spends more per student than other German states, yet has slipped from 13th to 16th (last place) in nation-wide educational standings (ibid). Some argue Berlin's education system is failing stakeholders (Akyün, 2019).

To take pressure off the state-system (AGIS, 2019), a convenient and affordable government strategy that ensures availability of school places in Berlin and elsewhere in the FGR is subsidizing private forms of schooling, including some international schools where additional tuition payments are required. This is not without controversy. In Germany, where there is a tendency "to view education as a state responsibility" (*TIE*, 2006, p.20), the price tag (Klöpper, 2018) associated with private schools makes them appear elite and exclusive. As a consequence, the term "'free' schools" (*Freie Schulen*) is sometimes substituted for the label 'private' by schools themselves to "avoid perceptions of exclusivity" (Eaton, 2018, p.23).

Another common refrain is that schooling is one of the "Basic Rights" (Basic Law, 1949, p.14) in the FRG, making additional costs associated with education unconstitutional. However, Article 7 of the FRG's constitution, the *Basic Law*,

explicitly states that "the entire school system shall be under the supervision of the state" (ibid, p.17). As the counter argument goes, if Berlin and other states cannot provide quality education and enough school places, faulty policies (Akyün, 2019) bear responsibility for the growth of the private school sector. The truth may lie somewhere in between, as private schooling has become a competitive, prosperous, and controversial niche that has swelled (ibid) to include approximately 10% of Berlin's students (Klöpper, 2018).

2.1.1. Berlin-Brandenburg and International Schools

In Berlin, a reunited city, in a country where an "overwhelming majority of German students attend public schools" (Fass and Friesenhahn, 2014, p.8) and politics reflect modern problems as well as time-worn East-West dichotomies, the presence of a range of private international schools contributes to the schooling debate and the complexity of the educational landscape.

However, while schools calling themselves international have become increasingly popular in the FGR, they are said to have been little researched in German-speaking academia (Deppe, Lüdemann, and Kastner, 2018). Bearing in mind "the designation 'international school'" is a term that was "coined in very different educational contexts than those in which we currently live" (Hayden and Thompson, 2019, p.3), Berlin was said to have had no true international schools (Trüper, 1993; Müller-Rytlewski, 2010) prior to the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989. Rather, only "a few public schools with bi-national goals (German-French/German-American), as well as several military schools (UK, USA, France)" (Trüper, 1993, p.1).

ISC Research (ISC), which holds arguably the largest collection of data in the field, considers an international school one that:

> **delivers a curriculum to any combination of pre-school, primary or secondary students, wholly or partly in the English language outside an English-speaking country**
>
> **OR**
>
> **The school is in a country where English is one of the official languages and it delivers an English-medium curriculum other than the country's national curriculum and the school is international in its orientation (Gaskell, 2018).**

While this characterization has been labeled "academically contentious" (Bunnell,

2014, p.3), ISC's definition and data offer a useful starting point for describing and statistically accounting for international schools.

An ISC (2019) report entitled *Berlin-Germany-Western Europe-Europe*, suggests a 35% global increase in so-called international schools between 2014-2019. However, in the same period, the number of such schools in Berlin is reported to have declined by 14.3% and in the FRG by 3.8% (ibid). This has engendered little commentary. Meanwhile, the Association of German International Schools (AGIS), a "professional support network" (AGIS, n.d.-a) founded in 1994 to serve the "educational and public interests" (AGIS, n.d.-b) of the FRG's international schools, has continued to suggest that "demand for international education is growing dramatically in virtually all parts of the world and in Germany too" (AGIS, 2019, p.1). Similarly confounding is that ISC does not make clear if their statistics apply to the state of Berlin, or *Metropolregion Berlin-Brandenburg* (it would appear the latter to be the case), a territory consisting of the city-state of Berlin and parts of the surrounding state of Brandenburg, one of the FRG's eleven metropolitan regions with a population of over 6 million inhabitants (Berlin-Brandenburg.de, n.d.).

Also troubling in the *Berlin-Germany-Western Europe-Europe* report is that ISC (2019) have incorporated Berlin schools into their statistics on Western Europe. This is despite the fact that the entire state of Brandenburg and part of Berlin were geographically located behind the proverbial Iron-Curtain, or within the German Democratic Republic (GDR), from the years following World War II until after the fall of the Berlin Wall and German reunification in the early 1990s. When statistically accounting for international schools, it appears this is a pattern. CIS (2020a) also includes the FRG, in spite of its divided history, in their statistics on Western Europe.

While the basis for the Western designation can be understood as a byproduct of Western political and legal practices moving eastward, observers have suggested the FRG "might have learned from the more enlightened aspects of life in the GDR" (*The Economist*, 2019), including approaches to childcare and early schooling. The most critical voices suggest East Germans were "a bewildered people" colonized "by an exploitative west [*sic*]" (ibid). At the very least, a Western categorization diminishes consideration of post-communist, Eastern characteristics, political and historical patterns, which have left a lasting legacy, influencing views on private schooling and educational politics in this region.

Moreover, the uniqueness of an Eastern context contributed to the nascence of one

early international school in Berlin-Brandenburg. In the final days of the GDR, leveraging the transitory nature of politics, the above-mentioned school was able to get a license in Brandenburg (Trüper, 1993), which, by agreements of the time, was converted into an operating permit in the FRG upon unification. Though registered in Brandenburg, the new school would operate outside the borders of the city-state of Berlin (ibid) while still strategically enabling it to draw on what would be an expected influx of new Berliners.

Today, Brandenburg, which ranks next to last (15th) among German states in educational rankings (Beug, 2019), continues to handle an outflow of students from the crowded city-state of Berlin, while students from Brandenburg routinely seek out some of the best schools in Berlin. To manage this, the two regions have coordinated their curriculums and teacher-training systems. As a result, educational studies might benefit from examining this region as a collective, or a Berlin-Brandenburg constellation, one beset with complex, modern problems and a complicated social and political history.

2.1.2. A Top-Tier

Examining international schools from an economic standpoint, MacDonald (2006) has suggested that geographic regions contain "'top-tier international schools'" that "aim to build upon their advantage and stay ahead of the competition" (p.204). A review of school websites in Berlin-Brandenburg revealed that only four private international schools are accredited by CIS, have English as their primary language of instruction, and run at least two programs of the IB. These schools might be labeled the region's 'big four;' all are also members of AGIS and ECIS, while three are Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) centers. Two are accredited jointly by CIS and the Middle States Association (MSA), a US-based agency, and another by CIS and the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), also an American accreditor. One is affiliated with the Council of British International Schools (COBIS).

Cambridge (2002) has argued that "international schools operate in local markets as the franchised distributors of globally branded international education products" (p.231). Compared to other schools in the region, Berlin-Brandenburg's 'big four' claim affiliation with an impressive amalgam of leading international brands. This is reflected in high tuition costs, which in some cases are transparently displayed on school websites. It could be suggested that these four organizations represent a

dominant strand (MacDonald, 2006) of private international schools in Berlin-Brandenburg that are bolstered by their association with a "veritable alphabet soup" (Bunnell, 2007, p.357) of organizations known by well-recognized acronyms.

Top-tier, dominant, or elite status can be measured using Bourdieu's (1986) concept of "capital," whereby "social obligations ('connections')" are "convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of a title of nobility" (p.243). Effectively, the schools supported by the largest meaningful "network of connections"—or recognizable brands, which are themselves well-connected—will wield the highest "volume of… capital (economic, cultural or symbolic)" (ibid, p.249) and be in a position to transfer this to their stakeholders, who will have the privilege of claiming association with these organizations as teachers, educational leaders, parents, students, and for some, graduates.

Expat websites support this notion, illustrating, for example, the perceived salience of both AGIS membership and accreditation:

> **The best international schools in Germany are affiliated with the Association of German International Schools (AGIS), or are accredited by either the Council of International Schools (CIS), or the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) (Buswell, 2020).**

Further, to join AGIS (n.d.-b), which today boasts 24 members, schools are said to "comply with certain standards" (Ralf, 2014), presumably further evidencing their quality. It is also stated that the FRG's international schools commonly "offer one or more" IB programme (Buswell, 2020). Notably, 50 of the IB's 80 certified schools in the FRG are private (Lebedowicz, 2020).

Before 2000, however, the IB's Diploma Programme (IBDP) was not a leaving qualification recognized as equivalent to the German Abitur. The meant German students attending IB schools generally went abroad for university (Buckheit, 1995). The decision in 2000 to recognize the IBDP "for German nationals to read at German universities" (Schwindt, 2003, p.76) was significant. It coincided with a weak performance by the FRG's school on PISA's (Programme for International Student Assessment) internationally comparable tests (ibid). Germans were shaken to find their schools ranked "among the bottom third of industrial nations" (*TIE*, 2006, p.20). School reform in Berlin (*New In The City*, 2016) and elsewhere followed. Debates that these reforms and other restructuring were not impactful continue to affect the reputation of the state sector, where Berlin leads the FRG in early school leavers

(Gallersdörfer, 2020). These challenges may have contributed to the growth of international-themed English and bilingual programs (Deppe, Helsper, Kreckel, Krüger, and Stock, 2015).

Hence, with its struggling educational sector, Berlin-Brandenburg presents a case where private schools have sought involvement in alternative networks (Bourdieu, 1986) to raise their status, and where parents are eager to transfer these associations into capital for their children. This perspective is reinforced by Lowe's (2000) hypothesis that the costs associated with international examinations in international schools can result in candidates "drawn predominately from the economic élites (p.373)" who value these credentials as "certification of an educational experience superior to the local alternative" (p.375). These examination systems are often facilitated in English, "valued as the lingua franca of the globalised economy" (ibid, p.375). The linguistic norm of international schools and their exam systems, English supports children from highly-mobile families (Deppe, Lüdemann, and Kastner, 2018), but it is also a harbinger to later economic advantage, offering another form of connectivity parleyed as capital by "'top-tier international schools'" (MacDonald, 2006, p.204).

While to date the FRG has not experienced the type of "institutional 'pillarization' of the elite education system" (Deppe, et al, 2015, p.92) seen in France, the US, and the United Kingdom (UK), particularly at the upper secondary level, further pillarization cannot be ruled out. An expanding private international school sector— strengthened by a complex network of well-connected, branded service providers— where educational provision is facilitated in English, can be seen contributing to a "process of differentiation" in German education (Deppe and Krüger, 2016, p.107).

2.1.3. The Role of the State in the FRG

Leveraging the potential for greater pillarization in the FRG are the federal states or *Länder:* "Private schools that serve as alternatives to state schools" must be approved by and "subject to the laws of the *Länder*" (Basic Law, 1949, p.17). In practice, this means to enroll German nationals without special exemptions in Grades 1-10, private international schools must gain *Ersatzschulstatus*, which signifies they are substitutes for schools provided by the state (Schwindt, 2003). Such schools will receive subsidies, but may not generate profit (Isenson, 2018). They should be affordable and accessible to all (which can mean alternative sources of funding beyond parent fees and subsidies), and they "must meet the same

standards as public schools" (ibid). This requires adherence to bureaucratic and curricular expectations that can complicate operations (Schwindt, 2003).

In recent years, as they have contended with such complexity, Berlin-Brandenburg's "'top-tier international schools'" (MacDonald, 2006, p.204) have had strained relations with local authorities (*The Economist*, 2014). This has made media attention inescapable. One of the 'big four' was accused of inadequately complying with local school laws regarding private school financing (Wangemann, 2018). Another's governing body allegedly did not fulfil requirements related to the percentage of German language that must be taught to receive financial subsidies (Petersen, 2015). A third, not an *Ersatzschulstatus* at the time, reportedly enrolled students who were permanent residents of Berlin, meaning it had not lived up to its designation as a supplementary school (*Ergänzungsschule*) for diplomats and families temporarily in the FRG (Vieth-Entus, 2015). Further complicating matters were revelations that the patriarch of this grouping's fourth school, which is family owned, had been an informer for the East-German secret police, the Stasi (Schuetze, 2019). The same school spurred further debate by temporarily closing during the COVID-19 crisis without state permission (Vogt, 2020). Regrettably, or deservedly, Berlin-Brandenburg represents an underexplored region where international schooling, as Bunnell (2016b) argues more broadly, has become "politically and socially disliked, disrespected, and distrusted" (p.546).

Nonetheless, Berlin-Brandenburg's 'big four' have prevailed. They are all known to be relatively stable. Moreover, since their establishment in 1990 (Wangemann, (2018), 1994 (Berlingeschichte.de, 2009), 1998 (Müller-Rytlewski, 2010), and 2004 (*New In The City*, 2020)—like many international schools, "in response to local circumstances" (Hayden and Thompson, 1995, p.332)—they have supported state education systems, and contributed to economic growth and development (AGIS, 2019) in the Berlin-Brandenburg region.

2.2.   A Research Agenda

How schools develop to survive is complicated (Fink, 1999). This holds true in Berlin-Brandenburg. While in many locations international schools originated "in the expatriate communities of, for instance, employees of multinational organizations" (Hayden and Thompson, 2008, p.15), a notable feature of Berlin-Brandenburg's 'big four' is their aboriginality. They were founded by local individuals (Trüper, 1993), local families (Schuetze, 2019; *New In The City*, 2020), an already established local

school group (Müller-Rytlewski, 2010), and, in one case, a private school group (Vieth-Entus, 2019) that sought to continue the traditions of a British armed forces school. This may have played a role in sustaining and substantiating them in the case study context. Other common denominators include their association with the IB and CIS, and their affiliation with AGIS and ECIS. Taken together, these organizations could be said to be the signalers and supporters of their international identity.

Yet it is accreditation headlining what has been said to be the "fault-line" between "'premium'" international schools, and the "'non-premium sector'" (Bunnell, 2019b, loc.2392 of 3338), and perhaps, then, survival in the "top-tier" (MacDonald, 2006, p.204). As Brummitt (2007) portended:

> **With so many new schools there are big differences between the best and worst and an increasing need, therefore, to make sure that as many as possible subscribe to recognizable standards of international education (p.39).**

Accreditation appears to have become one of the most vital of these standards (*SI News*, 2018). As AGIS (2019) has articulated, a "unique selling points of a 'real' International School (p.1)" is that they "put in place complex, regular quality assurance processes by means of international and external (multiple) accreditations" (p.3).

The salience of accreditation as a central means of quality assertion and control in international schools (Cambridge, 2002) may stem from international schooling's historic lack of a central governing body, or primary regulating system (Blaney, 1991; Hayden and Thompson, 2008; Bunnell, 2014; 2016b; Eaton; 2016). As a result, the field has ingeniously spawned its own "sometimes cluttered galaxy" (Haywood, 2005, p.7) of organizations serving its interests and objectives in contexts where provision by local authorities has been minimal or lacking.

The process of school evaluation based on externally imposed quality standards, for example, is still a relatively new concept in the FRG, introduced nation-wide only in school-year 2004/05 (Piezunka, 2019), and first utilized in Berlin in 2005/06, where it is referred to as *Schulinspektion* (school inspection) (Berlin.de, n.d.-a). Accordingly, these programs are characterized as only partially institutionalized in the FRG and have been beleaguered by criticism and resistance (Piezunka, 2019). This may help explain why the CIS website promotes numerous countries where its accreditation programs are officially recognized (CIS, 2020b) and the FRG is not among them.

Today, while school inspection could theoretically be required of private schools, it remains a practice consigned to the state sector in both Berlin and Brandenburg. While formal explanations for this are fleeting, it has been suggested that current levels of department of education staffing, at least in Berlin, may be insufficient to expand provision to private schools. Thus, notable is that Berlin-Brandenburg has four CIS accredited schools, more than any other German metropolitan region (CIS, 2020c).

While growth in the field and the underdeveloped nature of support provided to international schools in some regions might be rudimentary explanations for quality assurance outsourcing, the US Department of Education's (2019) website furthers understanding: Accreditation's potential to verify that certain standards have been met can also insulate schools from potentially "harmful internal and external pressure." Given the critical portrayal of international schools in the German press (see also: Rothstein and Trüper, 2019), and the political pressure they have faced in Berlin-Brandenburg, and elsewhere globally (Bunnell, 2014), accreditation may also act as a safeguard, and a signpost to "parents that international schools are truly distinctive and are the premiere institutions they claim to be" (Bohling, 2020, p.59), justifying their price tag, and strengthening their image and standing.

Consequently, it is all the more intriguing that while institutional legitimacy issues related to higher education accreditation in the FRG have been the subject of academic exploration and have revealed some distrust of the practice (Serrano-Velarde, 2014), investigations into what gives primary and secondary school accreditation its legitimacy in the FRG, and in Berlin-Brandenburg—an activity primarily, but not exclusively, associated with private international schools—are extremely rare. One outlying example, my own narrative account (Eaton, 2018) of a Berlin school's journey to revise its mission statement, could be read, in part, as a critique of the constraints brought on by normative legitimacy (Scott, 2014) associated with accrediting organizations and other players in "the 'traditional' supply chain" (Bunnell, 2014, p.13). More pointed studies of how international school accrediting bodies have become embedded institutionally (Owen-Smith and Powell, 2008) to support Berlin-Brandenburg's "'top-tier international schools'" (MacDonald, 2006, p.204) are lacking. The same could be said of other global contexts.

It is somewhat puzzling, therefore, that while international schools are suggested to be perpetuating an "educational gap between social groups and… inequality in societies" (Hayden, 2011, p.221), giving way to claims that they could benefit already privileged groups, acting as pathways to "positions of power within the global economy" (Brown and Lauder, 2011, p.39), that the legitimacy of accreditation providers who support and validate these schools is an underdeveloped theme. Engaging with this matter requires understanding of global agents, like CIS, said to be "among the most prestigious accreditors in the world" (Petry, 2018, p.38), and the local contexts and organizations within which they are rooted (Resnik, 2012). This brings us to Canterford's (2009) observation that there is no shortage of international schools to study and their widely dispersed geography can complicate research efforts. This is also true of accreditation providers. Accordingly, to frame their projects, researchers might embrace case studies of particular contexts (ibid) that have the potential to produce new "knowledge and/or inform policy development, professional practice and civil or community action" (Simons, 2012, p. 21).

As such, my study addresses two gaps in the literature on international schools: First, applying Simons' (2012) definition of the case study as an "exploration" into "a 'real life' context" (p.21), it will engender insights into one under-theorized locale, Berlin-Brandenburg, a setting that reflects many of the broader tensions between state and private, local and global education identified in the literature (Resnik, 2009; 2012; Hayden, 2011; Bunnell, 2014; 2019a); within this context, secondly, it explores a particular phenomenon (Simons, 2012), how a prestigious and pioneering accreditation provider, CIS—born from ECIS, the first non-US-based organization to accredit international schools, and innovator of what became a "valuable credential among international schools" (Paterson, 1991, p.41)—has 'built' and 'maintained' institutional legitimacy as an international accreditation agency. Though presented from the contextual perspective of one region in Europe, project insights may have value for further studies of accreditation and to international school practitioners.

With the case study context introduced, and a research agenda established, the stage is set for elaborating on accreditation as a concept and exploring its complicated history, a journey in which CIS, and its forbearer, ECIS, played significant roles.

Chapter 3.0. – Accreditation: Contours and Crevices

3.0. Introduction

This chapter traverses the historical contours of accreditation as a term, concept, and practice, identifying its place within the field of international schooling. Its proposition is that accreditation's meaning, typologies, implications, and impacts—particularly the more critical strands—could be better understood. This brings further clarity to the relevance of studying accreditation in relation to international schools and CIS.

3.1. Defining Accreditation

Defining accreditation, a word "derived from the Latin credito (trust)" (The Alliance, n.d.), seems a straightforward task, but doing so, and then differentiating the concept from well-known cousins, notably, but not limited to, inspection and authorization is not so straightforward.

3.1.1. Accreditation and Inspection

According to Knight (2007), concepts like accreditation "have different meanings and significance depending on the country, actor or stakeholder using the term" (p.139). Floden (1980), for example, describes accreditation as "the process by which an organization grants approval to an educational institution" (p.35). Though this definition seems concise, it does not entirely differentiate accreditation from the process of inspection. According to Fertig (2015), "essentially, where the process focuses upon educational institutions within the public sector domain, the word 'inspection' tends to be used" (pp.447-8); however, when "educational institutions are located outwith the public sphere" labels like "'accreditation' and, sometimes, 'authorization' tend to be employed" (ibid, p.448).

These depictions represent the perspectives of their authors. Floden (1980), a professor at Michigan State University, was writing about American accreditation. In the US, unlike other countries where educational governance is more centralized, accreditation is facilitated by independent regional agencies (Sheppard, 2011). There is no central authority like the Office of Standards in Education (Ofsted) in England, "a non-ministerial department" (GOV.UK, n.d.-a) that facilitates "inspections and regulatory visits throughout England" in both state and select private schools (GOV.UK, n.d.-b).

Fertig's (2015) vantage point can be seen as that of a Lecturer in Education at the University of Bath. It essentially describes the situation in England, where Ofsted manages the public sector inspection portfolio, and approximately half of private, or "independent" school inspections (GOV.UK, n.d.-c). Moreover, Fertig's assessment does not account for the fact that in the US regional bodies *also* accredit public institutions (NEASC, 2020).

At this impasse, it can be useful to deploy discourse analysis. As Allan (2013) writes:

> **words not only have meanings, they have power… to change states of affairs and the power to bring about action, among many others (pp.149-50).**

This can be appreciated by drawing on the work of Fairclough (1992) and conceiving the term inspection as an "overt power marker" (p.203), one firmly rooted where a public or contracted authority imposes or manages a school evaluation (Eaton, 2016). In certain cases, however, "a tendency towards informality" (Fairclough, 1992, p.204) can emerge whereby "overt power markers" are replaced by a "covert mechanism of control" (ibid, pp.203-4). Accreditation might be one such example (Eaton, 2016). In discussing the early history of the practice in America, Brittingham (2009) highlights a proclivity to utilize non-permanent staff and offices, and to rely on peer volunteers. The notion of serving as "a peer/colleague and a critical friend (not an inspector)" remains a tenant of accreditation today (CIS, 2018a), described as one of "the traditional… time tested" aspects of the practice (The Alliance, n.d.). Peer volunteers can be seen as less-formal brokers of authority when contrasted with fulltime/professionals and government inspectors (Eaton, 2016). Building on this thinking, lacking overarching monitoring and regulation (Bunnell, 2016b) similar to schools in early America, it is easy to see why international schools gravitated towards the informal language and approach of accreditation (Eaton, 2016) as a means of governing practices and establishing trust and credibility with stakeholders and the greater educational community (The Alliance, n.d.).

ECIS, developers of the first uniquely 'international' accreditation process, notably adopted practices that were being successfully implemented in the US and were beginning to be exported by American accreditation agencies overseas (Murphy, 1998). At least initially they took a "rather *informal* [my emphasis]" but also flexible, approach allowing "leeway for the professionalism and ingenuity of the visiting team members to find expression" (ibid, p.213). Moreover, in contrast to inspection's more formal feedback that might be useful at a specific point in time, accreditation is

characterized as an on-going process where schools are routinely evaluated against an accrediting organization's standards (COBIS, n.d.-a). It is speculated that this informal, flexible, and routine character, in addition to differentiating accreditation from inspection, supported its gradual acceptance across cultural frontiers.

3.1.2. Further Conceptualization

Further conceptualizing accreditation requires differentiating it from several other concepts, and clarifying its voluntary nature.

First, as Sheppard (2011) writes, we should distinguish accreditation as practiced in international schools from IB authorization, which:

> **merely examines a curriculum framework or model which a school chooses to employ and does not extend to examining any other aspects of school operations, especially governance (p.45).**

Sheppard's cogitations are mostly accurate. While today's CIS accreditation process is said to "evaluate all aspects of school life" (CIS, 2019a), the IB also examines governance support structures, and governing body awareness of implementation and programme development (IB, 2013).

Another process with similarities is the "*international institutional audit*" (Hayden and Thompson, 2008) whereby schools extend invitations to individuals or organizations who scrutinize their claims—"in the mission statement and strategic plan for example" (p.72)—to be international. The parameters of this type of audit are "set by the school" (ibid, p.72) in contrast to the explicit standards of an accreditation protocol, empowering organizations to determine what will be collaboratively presented and evaluated (Ranger, 2014b). While contemporary accreditation schemes categorically evaluate a school's international dimension (CIS, 2019b; Thompson, 2020), CIS was once disparaged for having "no references to international or intercultural learning" in their characterization of accredited schools (Lewis, 2005, p.19). Hence, the field's experimentation with internationalism auditing (Carr-de Avelon, 2006; McLay, 2015) may have played a role in accreditation protocol development and more explicit attention to elements like global citizenship (CIS, n.d.-a)

It is also said that given the "diversity of sponsorship and purpose among educational institutions" (The Alliance, n.d.), accreditation, with its basis of objective review

against standards, should not be with mistaken for advocacy. Nor, in the strictest sense, is accreditation something that is imposed (Floden, 1980). While today accredited status is required for schools to operate in some international contexts (Fertig, 2007; Ranger, 2014a), it is generally perceived to be voluntary (Floden, 1980; Fertig, 2015), which might augment its "relatively informal" (Bunnell and Fertig, 2020, p.12) disposition.

3.1.3. A Working Definition

With the foundations of the term, concept, and practice of accreditation deciphered, and differentiated from other evaluative processes, CIS' explanation of accreditation can be introduced as the project's working definition. Accreditation is:

> **an evaluative programme that ensures schools meet and sustain international standards through a process of continuous improvement (CIS, n.d.-b).**

This description does well to encapsulate the evaluative (non-inspectorial), standards-based, on-going developmental mechanisms of the process. It is also indicative of the evolved, distinctively international nature of today's CIS accreditation protocol, which is said to be "independent of any country, government, founder or curriculum" (CIS, 2018b).

However, as explored further in the next section, accreditation has been built on the pillars of American ideas and routines (The Alliance, n.d.; Cognia, 2020a). Its proliferation, therefore, might also be seen as synonymous with the rise of the US as a "hyperpower" (Coulby, 2005, p.279), which has influenced "the use of English as the global medium of communication, including the medium of instruction in 'international schools'" (Cambridge, 2003, p.55).

3.2. The Genesis of International School Accreditation

Appreciating the history of accreditation in international schools begins by highlighting accounts of its virtues emanating from its advocates:

> **Who needs accreditation? Every school does (Murphy, 1998, p.223).**

> **Who benefits? Everyone in the school community, and particularly the students who ultimately reap the benefit of working and learning in a school that values and achieves high standards and constant improvement (Bowman, 2006, p.14).**

Simply put, an accredited school is deliberately making a difference in the lives of the children it serves (Cram, 2011a, p.11).

I believe the only moral purpose for accreditation is to act as a catalyst for positive change in a school community (Ranger, 2014a, p.37).

If your school is considering the CIS International Accreditation process, I would thoroughly recommend it (Bunting, 2017).

Bradley (2018a) goes further and pits accreditation against present-day challenges, positing that it "offers international schools a comprehensive approach to promoting high standards of quality, safety, and on-going school improvement" in a world "where headlines scream peril and doom" (p.38). Accreditation confronts "the perilous trends of modern times with the best of modern practices" (ibid, p.38).

A synopsis of the legacies of ECIS and CIS, as well as reflection on the historic basis and varieties of accreditation service provision internationally aids understanding of these descriptions.

3.2.1. American Roots

As noted earlier, international school accreditation is rooted in one of this project's through-lines, international schooling's lack of a central, governing or regulatory system. That accreditation came to occupy this void is not without historical precedence (Eaton, 2016). Describing the rise of accreditation in America, Brittingham (2009) points out that, in many contexts, educational supervision is under the jurisdiction of central educational ministries. In the US, however, this is not the case (ibid). Matters not explicit in the US Constitution are "left to the states and to the people" (ibid, p.10). Consequently, the initial development of the American education system was somewhat "free of government control," which left "a vacuum that accreditation grew to fill" (ibid, p.10). Regional accreditation agencies mushroomed in late 19th- and early 20th-century American as a result (ibid). The New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) was the first, founded in 1885 out of a desire to ensure "that preparatory and secondary school graduates were ready for college" (ibid, p.11). This was a task complicated on the national level by America's plurality and expansiveness (The Alliance, n.d.), presaging the emergence of subsequent regional accreditors.

Fourteen years before NEASC's arrival on the scene, the appellation accreditation was first used by an American university:

on the basis of on-site visits by representatives of its faculty, the University of Michigan began 'accrediting' secondary schools entrusted with providing adequate preparation for university studies (The Alliance, n.d.).

Regional accrediting bodies can be seen as having systematized and commercialized this process. They developed what was theoretically "a voluntary method for identifying institutions capable of their objectives and worthy of trust" (The Alliance, n.d.). This greatly assisted colleges and universities. The work of these agencies made the standing gained through accreditation:

essential for successful participation in the free American system. Institutions unwilling or unable to establish credibility through accreditation had to use some other means—none could prosper without it (The Alliance, n.d.)

The notion of a free system is a complex and paradoxical one; though theoretically voluntary, accreditation in America would appear to have become a coercive method of control and operational requisite. Notwithstanding, the notion accreditation was necessary to prosper likely contributed to stateside commissions taking up the challenge of serving American overseas schools. Conspicuously, however, attempts to create "regional jurisdictions abroad" were largely unsuccessful (The Alliance, n.d.). This inability to partition the global market may have played some role in creating the space that independent-players like ECIS, and later CIS, would come to occupy.

3.2.2. 'International' Accreditation and Accreditation 'Internationally'

Before highlighting the emergence of ECIS and CIS, a distinction between the typology of accreditation that these two organizations would come to provide and other types of accreditation offered abroad is useful.

As Fertig (2007) notes, many international schools are "not directly tied to any national educational system" (p.336) leaving a regulatory void. For American-themed overseas schools, US-based accreditors like MSA—the most active agency abroad in the mid-1960s when ECIS was founded and discussions of 'international' accreditation were first initiated (Ruth, 2015)—filled this gap. Tasks performed by such accreditors using doctrines created for American schools, but applied outside the territorial boundaries of the US, might be referred to as processes of accreditation 'internationally.'

Accreditation 'internationally' can be differentiated from the development of a

specific, and unique accreditation processes for schools wishing to be more explicitly differentiated, or institutionalized as international (Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2015). The latter might be termed 'international' accreditation, first piloted by ECIS in the early 1970s as a context for improving schools and ultimately growing into a full-fledged accreditation scheme (Murphy, 1998). This typology now includes systems like CIS' International Accreditation protocol (CIS, 2017a; 2019b), NEASC's ACE Learning (NEASC/CIE, 2015a; NEASC/CIE, 2015b), and COBIS' Patron's Accreditation process (COBIS, 2017) that have been specifically designed for the international school market.

Effectively, therefore, we can divide international school accreditation into two distinct subtypes, accreditation 'internationally' and 'international' accreditation. Distinguishing between these typologies opens doors for more acute understanding of the context in which ECIS emerged, and the environment CIS now inhabits.

3.2.3. ECIS and CIS

ECIS, heralded as the "oldest association of international schools serving grades PS-12" (ECIS and NEACS, p.16), is said to have "played a seminal role in many of the achievements in international education as we know it today," including the genesis of a "world-wide international accreditation program" (Gellar, 2017, p.34). Appreciating ECIS' historic place in the field, Murphy (1998) explains it was common for international schools to be secluded, with little "opportunity to exchange ideas and share solutions with colleagues," which added to a "feeling of isolation prevalent among educators" (p.213). This resulted in schools across Europe joining forces between 1962 and 1965 to establish a regional organization, ECIS, to facilitate conferences and events and bring colleagues together (ibid). From the start, however, it was an organization with American influences (Hayden and Thompson, 2008). An earlier, tentative label had been the Council of European Schools Serving American Students (Paterson, 1991), as many initial proponents were heads of American schools abroad. The US State Department was also an early backer (Langford, 2019).

Yet, at the same time, underpinning advocacy for ECIS to develop an accreditation system was the view that the American-model was only one typology in an ever-expansive international schooling landscape (Ruth, 2015). Many organizations "had features that were different from US-type schools" (Paterson, 1991, p.40), including converted for-purpose facilities, complex financial challenges, particular admissions

requirements, and unique local laws and regulations. ECIS accreditation, as a consequence, also sprouted from the need and desire to serve a more expansive and diverse market of "truly international schools, those that did not fit easily into a national system" and would benefit from an evaluative toolkit that was malleable enough to "take into account the varying and different circumstances of schools abroad" (Murphy, 1998, p.213).

Eaton (2016), drawing on the work of Bunnell, Fertig, and James (2015), has suggested ECIS' initial accreditation tool, rolled out in 1970 as a documented entitled, *Guide to School Evaluation and Accreditation* (ECIS, 1970), presented schools, including those with American roots, the opportunity to institutionalize transcendent identities as *truly* international schools. This was a historic moment. For the first-time, schools could engage in a process that would demark them, at least in theory, as legitimately international, particularly advantageous against the backdrop of an expansive and competitive marketplace (Eaton, 2016). As many American-style schools were already in accreditation cycles with US-based organizations, ECIS made the most of this moment, developing collaborative processes with these agencies that would grow progressively more synchronized, ultimately resulting in accreditation from a joint protocol (Murphy, 1998; Ruth, 2015). This enabled schools to earn accreditation through two organizations with one school report and a single visit, making a "complex and time-consuming" process (Hayden, 2006, p.141) more efficient. Accreditation soon "developed into a major element of the services provided by ECIS and the numbers of schools involved grew steadily (Fisher, 2020, p.64). However, what began as a European experiment was soon in demand further afield, as were ECIS' services in general (Nelson, 2013).

The uptick in ECIS' accreditation portfolio in the 1990s (ECIS, 1998) and early 2000s (Fertig, 2007; Crippen, 2008) appears to have played a role in what is "often referred to as 'the split'" (Ruth, 2015, p.71) of ECIS into two entities. As ECIS' service provision expanded globally, "there was much debate about the currency and applicability of the appellation, 'European'" (Nelson, 2013, p.93). Was it appropriate for a European provider to offer an array of global services for international schools (Maybury, 2003)? After much reflection, the Executive Secretary and Board of ECIS were inclined "to create a new entity, the Council of International Schools… to focus on the provision of services with a global mandate, principally accreditation, recruitment, and higher education memberships" (Nelson, 2013, p.93).

The concept of a Council of International Schools was not entirely novel, having been

raised nearly 40 years earlier at an International Schools Services (ISS) conference in 1964 (Paterson, 1991). Now, however, with CIS realized, ECIS was left to focus on its original remit, professional development, as CIS absorbed global services like accreditation (Nelson, 2013). An initial CIS Board meeting took place at an ECIS Conference in Berlin (*International School*, 2002; 2003), a detail of significance related to this project, and in July 2003, "'the split'" took affect (Ruth, 2015, p.71).

3.2.4. The Current Landscape

In the years that followed, ECIS endeavored to remake itself, dropping its European label due to European Union (EU) regulations regarding the phrase European Council, and rebranding (Ruth, 2015) to become The Educational Collaborative for International Schools (ECIS, 2016). Today, from its base in London (Ruth, 2015), it provides teacher and leadership training, "recruitment and human resources, governance and risk, and global advisory, complemented by grants and awards that illuminate significant impact" (ECIS, n.d.-a). It boasts a membership of "425+ schools at every level of education" and is represented "in over 75 countries" (ECIS, n.d.-b). This is a dip from 2003, when ECIS could claim 585 members in 114 countries (Maybury, 2003). While this may be suggestive of an organization still searching for a present-day "identity and rationale for existence" (Fisher, 2020, p.69), it is hard to deny ECIS' contribution to the development of 'international' accreditation.

CIS, once spread across three international offices (CIS, 2006) in the UK, Spain, and the US, with accreditation services provided from Madrid (Wilcox, 2006), is now headquartered in Leiden, the Netherlands (Larsson, 2011). Its fortunes, on the surface, seem to have eclipsed those of ECIS. Crippen (2008) once called CIS "the largest international school accreditation body," at the time tallying "190 accredited schools and 450 member schools" (p.387). However, this statement may only be valid statement today when speaking specifically of 'international' accreditation.

As 2020 dawned, CIS recognized 506 accredited schools (CIS, 2020c) and had 749 members (CIS, 2020c) "in more than 122 countries around the world" (CIS, 2020d); at the time, this was more than double the number schools accredited by NEASC (2019), the next largest provider of 'international' accreditation using a specifically tailored protocol; meanwhile, both organizations were significantly outpacing relative 'international' accreditation newcomer, COBIS (COBIS, n.d.-b), who launched their own scheme, Patron's Accreditation, in 2017 (COBIS, 2017). The leading provider of accreditation 'internationally,' on the other hand, has been the American

organization, Cognia, "formed as a result of two leading education nonprofits merging in November 2018" (*Business Wire*, 2019). A corporate website search in January, 2020 revealed 866 accredited schools outside of the US (Cognia, 2020b). These schools can be found "in 85 countries across the globe" (Bohling, 2020, p.59), making Cognia's assemblage of accredited overseas schools larger than CIS' entire membership base.

This suggests there is ample market space for multiple providers and varied approaches to accreditation on a global scale, enabling schools to choose the approach most relevant to their context (Hayden, 2006). Prior to the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2019–20, this looked set to continue (*SI News*, 2018), with CIS poised to remain a leading player, providing justification for academic exploration into its institutional legitimacy, and critical examination of accreditation's appeal and impact internationally.

3.3. International School Accreditation: Distilling Appeal and Identifying Tensions

ISC (Gaskell, 2018; Cook, 2019) data suggests the total number of accredited international schools has, in recent years, hovered around 20% (of all schools). While this could be used to support the thesis that the field is not well-monitored or regulated (Bunnell, 2016b), such a position does not appreciate the manner that accreditation has kept pace with the exponential growth of international schooling itself (Brummitt, 2007). This warrants further distillation of accreditation's attractiveness, as well as consideration of its tensions.

3.3.1. Understanding Appeal

We can now return to Brittingham (2009) to make further sense of positive commentary on accreditation in international schools. She writes:

> **Alexis de Tocqueville's 1835 *Democracy in America* is remembered in part for his observation that Americans form associations to deal with matters large and small. Accrediting organizations are one such example (Brittingham, 2009, p.11).**

Such associations, together with other "formal and informal" bodies can contribute to denseness in civil society, establishing "a counterweight to state power" (Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens, 1992, p.246). Or, as in the case of American accreditation, nobly fill gaps where matters were not explicitly stated in the

constitution (Brittingham, 2009). In like manner, providers of 'international' accreditation and accreditation 'internationally,' in the vacuous realm inhibited by international schools where there was "no central entity to fall back on" (Sheppard, 2011, p.40), have developed identities as virtuous associations that help to establish operational parameters in a field that has never been "a *system*, with a coherent sense of standards, rules, practices or procedures" (Bunnell, 2016b, p.47).

This has earned accreditation an identity as a regulative, and moral source of good that is summed up well by one agency's slogan: "Don't Your Students Deserve an Accredited School?" (MSA, 2006, p.14). Accreditation's sometimes-overstated character (Ranger, 2014a; Bradley, 2018a), which has earnestly seen its powers likened to those of superheroes (Cram, 2011b), remains largely intact, save for select accounts that can be built on to provide a more balanced overview of accreditation's implications and impact in international schools.

3.3.2. Elucidating Tensions

While accreditation in international schools has cited upsides—faculty empowerment (Fertig, 2007), participatory involvement of stakeholders, and "helping schools continuously improve" (Bohling, 2020, p.61)—it should also be subjected to critical scrutiny.

International schools implement approaches to accreditation similar to those used in other contexts (Fertig, 2007). Generally, this consists of an internal self-review process and an external review (ibid) by peers. ECIS' early accreditation practices borrowed heavily from American models (Murphy, 1998), influencing CIS' routines, where accreditation has continued to hinge on a recommendation from a team of peer visitors (Hayden, 2006; CIS, 2017a). In international schooling circles, these volunteers are routinely thanked (Percy, 2008) and their service celebrated (Bhatt, 2016). However, as Turner (2000) points out, "industry-managed accreditation processes" can be regarded as "the 'fox watching the hen house'" (p.55). Peer volunteers, while positively able to appraise organizational quality, could also be understood as "insiders taking care of each other—a perpetuation of the old-boy and old-girl network" (O'Brien, 2009, p.2). In these situations, do collegial relations diminish constructive-criticism (Floden, 1980)? To what extent, going further, might socialization within the field result in peers taking "questionable practices for granted" (ibid, p.43)?

English as the modus operandi of international schooling *and* the language of 'international' accreditation is another legacy of American influence. The position could be taken that accreditation is a dominant educational process fashioned in America, an emergent and later established "hyperpower" (Coulby, 2005, p.279), facilitated in a hegemonic language, and rebranded for export where it has been adopted by international schools lacking traditional regulators. Prominent knowledge systems may bring benefits when modified for non-hegemonic contexts, but they also engender unforeseen predicaments (Swanson, 2013). If, as Fertig (2017) has theorized, accreditation fosters a standardized-type of school internationalization, it could be advantaging "a specific form of knowledge" whereby "good professional practice is solely what can be documented as being good" (Engebretsen, Heggen, and Eilertsen, 2012, p.411) in a hegemonic language through the monocle of accreditation standards.

CIS have also stated they are "recognized as an approved accreditation agency by the International Council Advancing Independent School Accreditation (ICAISA)" (CIS, 2020b). An American-based organization known until 2018 as the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) Commission on Accreditation (ICAISA, n.d.-a), ICAISA is said to be "a body that 'accredits the accreditors' in the United States" (CIS, 2020b). As a process, this demonstrates CIS is willing to subject its own standards and practices to review, ensuring they serve "the best interests of students, educators, and the public" (ibid). However, the American pedigree of this authorizing organization, with which CIS has voluntarily been associated since 2005 (Tangye, 2010), brings scrutiny to the claim CIS offers schools an "evaluation against internationally-agreed standards" (CIS, 2020e).

Moreover, in contrast to accreditation's identity as a virtuous, regulatory process, is the proposition that international schooling's proliferation is powered "by international business expansion" resulting in market-pressure "for new schools to adopt recognized, 'brand name'" provisions (Crippen, 2008, p.391). The issue of a "business mentality and methodology" prescribing the way international schools are run (Gellar, 2002, p.5) is well documented. One element derived from the commercial world is the "concept of 'best practice'" (Codrington, 2004, p.173). The use of accreditation tools for instilling "'best practice'" in schools (ibid, p.173), and/or spreading "global quality standards through quality assurance" (Cambridge and Thompson, 2004, p.164) could be conceived as marginalizing localized alternatives (Swanson, 2013), "unwittingly promoting a globalist agenda" (Crippen, 2008, p.391).

While Crippen (ibid) minimizes concern about accreditors like "CIS driving out the competition Starbuck's style" (p.391), Fertig's (2007) position that international school accreditation could be prone to "'mimetic isomorphism'" (p.346)—or institutional mimicry—should not be dismissed. While isomorphism in education is not a new theme (Shields, 2015), it is can be associated with power and inequity. If a *powerful* and *elite* brand of "'best practice'" (Codrington, 2004, p.173) is codified and cultivated through accreditation-driven isomorphism, generating a "particular form of school experience" (Fertig, 2007, p.346) branded international, it could depreciate the value of local educational thinking (Swanson, 2013). The extent to which "the lessons learnt by educational practitioners in one part of the world can be transplanted" and succeed in other contexts are questions with ethical implications (Fertig, 2000, p.149).

Viewed in this way, accreditation is a form of policy borrowing where a program innate to one educational setting is implemented elsewhere with differences or similarities between the point of origin and adopted environment determining impact and success (Nir, Kondakci, and Emil, 2018). Eaton (2016), for example, drawing on Fimyar (2014), has argued that teachers and school leaders in non-Western contexts might display partisan responses to accreditation, visibly and administratively embracing the required routines to earn a desired result, while privately reverting to timeworn strategies perceived to better serve local demands. This raises further questions. Can, as Kaplan (2011) suggests, accreditation stimulate "introspection and yield honest results" in all settings? As Fertig (2015) notes, "'accreditation' is not… a one-off position that is attained through a time-limited snapshot of institutional life" (p.454). It is a system of periodic review, and this might be a bulwark to such concern.

It could also be contended that accreditation's up-take is the result of its effectiveness as a "continuous improvement" (CIS, n.d.-b) tool; in educational policy borrowing, new approaches are advanced because they were *proven* effective elsewhere (Nir, Kondakci, and Emil, 2018). While this is a compelling narrative, it cannot alone account for accreditation's global spread. Zammuto (2008) writes that accreditation "can be used by organizations to differentiate themselves from competitors" (p.260), with early on-boarders seeking learning opportunities beneficial to competitiveness. This brings reputational differentiation and marketplace advantage (ibid). Initial advocates also promote the process, informing others "about accreditation as a quality standard" (Zammuto, 2008, p.263). This makes it hard for

competitors to "shield themselves from the desire to attain the kitemark" (Fertig, 2007, p.335). In effect, later adopters in the education sector may not necessarily pine for school improvement, rather they engage in accreditation to earn a seal of quality, or gain legitimacy for other programs or policies (Halpin and Troyna, 1995), which helps them stay competitive.

Aided by the work of Julian and Ofori-Danakwa (2006), Zammuto (2008) points to another paradox: Accreditation routines may be "dysfunctional for organizations operating in turbulent environments" (pp.256-7), restricting creativity and flexibility, diverting resources, and curtailing time and attention needed to overcome pressing matters. As Floden (1980) writes, accreditation "can hardly be expected to produce improvements when adverse conditions exist" (p.40). Simultaneously, volatility might be mitigated by "focus on key entities that confer legitimacy" (Sonpar, Pazzaglia, and Kornijenko, 2010, p.18) like accreditation providers. These polarities amount to a catch-22 for schools in tempestuous situations, requiring shrewd and stable management. This is not always a given. International schooling has been "a field with a high turnover" in leaders (Bunnell, 2016b, p.550; see also: Hawley, 1994; 1995). Accrediting bodies have been criticized for doing little to offset this trend (Stout, 2005).

This is not to say accreditors are irresponsive to international operational challenges. Processes allowing schools to proactively delay accreditation if and when needed are commonly understood. However, a recent study conducted by ISC and reported by *SI NEWS* (2018) indicated market expansion and competition have led to more schools "seeking accreditation to distinguish themselves." As pressure to stand out increases, it gives way to schools pursuing distinction or legitimacy in unpredictable environments. One resulting phenomenon is "accreditation overload" (Bryan, 2018, p.49), whereby schools strain to negotiate multiple visits and countless standards. Local competition might also press schools to seek accreditation prematurely. As Bastable (2010) warns, in a new school, dialing in accreditation too early might not "give the structure time to settle and find itself" (p.39).

Evidence in academic literature that demonstrates accreditation has a measurable impact on learning, on-going school improvement, and/or innovation, all of which are benefits espoused by accrediting agencies and their advocates (Cram, n.d.; Heard, 2008; Mott, 2014; 2015; CIS, 2017a; 2018c) is also lacking. Nor have scholars vetted other assertions: "Accreditation helps schools clearly understand their purpose" (Cram, 2011a, p.11); it increases enrollment (MSA-CESS, 2018); it supports

organizations to "focus on 'future aspirations'" (Durbin, Stanfield, and Nanninga, 2019); it leads to "lasting and impactful changes" (Bradley, 2018b), and can "shift a school's culture to reflect our changing world" (Bohling, 2020, p.61). This gives rise to the claim that commonly perceived benefits of accreditation are part of a global branding (Cambridge, 2002) initiative whereby these agencies promote products that are emotionally appealing to the buyer (Eaton, 2016). An MSA (2008) advert selling accreditation as "Creating Future Stars," and linking it to "The Gold Standard" (p.25) provides an acute example. In the absence of empirical validation, such branding could be characterized as packaging prevailing myths, rudimentary snapshots of social—or in this case educational—reality that, when reduced to a simplistically communicable language, entice popular imagination (Hughes and Tight, 1995). Consequently, and perhaps dubiously, myths can become the "organising principles on which policy and practice are based" (ibid, p.291), existing devoid of critical examination and possessing a hard-to-assail quality, and thus benefiting organizations. As Meyer and Rowan (1977) suggest:

> **Organizations which incorporate institutionalized myths are more legitimate, successful, and likely to survive (p.361).**

Meanwhile, new protocols and approaches to accreditation abound (Cram, n.d.; DeLucia, 1997; Percy, 2008; Leveillee, 2011; Mott, 2016; CIS, 2016a; Bell, 2017; 2018; Bradley, 2018b). Some claim to be significant shifts in the way accreditation is managed (DeLucia, 1997), or "'break the mold'" (Cram, 2014a, p.36), while others are said to have the potential to act as transformational stimuli (Mott, 2017). Analytical reviews (e.g., Eaton, 2016) and accounts where past protocols are questioned, critiqued, or challenged have been rare. This is perplexing, particularly at a time when reformers have called for accreditation to be repackaged "as a catalyst for change" (Cram, 2014b, p.36). This said, self-reflective and critical observations do surface. Ranger (2014a) parenthetically notes that protocol standards might be "too generic" and "insufficiently focused" (p.37) when applied to some aspects of international school life; Carder (2005) has raised the prospect that previous ECIS and CIS protocols may have marginalized the importance of language development and bilingualism; and, James and Sheppard (2011) have proposed amped-up monitoring of changes to school governance by accrediting bodies.

However, when critical commentary on accreditation emerges, its advocates can reply with gusto. Percy's (2005) rebuttal to Carder (2005) is a case in point, with Carder's (2006) rejoinder bookending the debate. A sponsored piece promoting data

analysis consulting suggesting schools failing to use data effectively "risk losing their accreditation" (Genzer, 2014, p.18) also attracted rebuke. In this case, CIS took the line that data should be used to support schools *not* earn accreditation (Ranger, 2015). Going back further, debate and discussion percolating in the 1990s can be found (e.g., Malpass, 1993; *TIE*, 1997b; DeLucia, 1997). Malpass' (1993) editorial in *TIE*, a fiery response to an anonymous critique of accreditation, suggests the practice has a sacrosanct quality, a standing strengthened by explicit embrace in newer protocols of sensitive themes like child and data protection (CIS, 2019b; 2019c).

Further troubling is in spite of accreditation's expansion and global reach, as mentioned earlier, "within the international school sector it has been little researched" (Fertig, 2007, p.345). At a time when shifting market and political pressures have brought international schooling's more critical implications to the surface (Bunnell, 2014; 2019a), and in regions like Berlin-Brandenburg where accreditation is part of a complex private schooling landscape, this is distressing. As such, we might imagine aspects of accreditation, as Fertig (2007) suggests, to be both "empowering" and "constraining" (p.345); or, much like international schooling and education generally, "ambiguous and contradictory" (Cambridge and Thompson, 2004, p.172), a practice that has prospered "largely within a hidden and friendly community of educators and stakeholders" (Bunnell, 2014, p.146). Accreditation, consequently, can be seen as a concept warranting a deeper academic knowledge base, and one that's institutional legitimacy in relation to international schools is worthy of unpacking to better appreciate the legitimateness of its social impact.

It is against this complicated backdrop that attention is turned to integrating these insights with conceptual understandings of organizations, institutions, institutionalization, legitimacy, and institutional legitimacy to support the selection of an analytical framework and craft a research design applicable to the study.

Chapter 4.0. – Analytical Framework and Research Design: Understanding Institutionalization and Legitimacy

4.0.   Introduction

Drawing on literature from within and outside the field of international schooling, this chapter explores and conceptually differentiates between organizations, institutions, institutionalization, legitimacy, and institutional legitimacy. A project-specific explanation of institutional legitimacy is crafted, and the study's analytical framework, Scott's (2014) "Institutional Pillars and Carriers" (p.95), is introduced and explained. The relationship between the concept of primary task (Rice, 1963) and this framework is explored, and both are linked to research design.

4.1.   Unpacking Terminology

Drawing on the work of Scott (2014), Bunnell, Fertig, and James (2016b), in one of several accounts of international school legitimacy, write:

> **Institutional legitimacy is a complex notion with a range of institutionalising forces contributing to it and establishing organisations as legitimate institutions (p.409).**

Rooting the concept of institutional legitimacy for the purpose of this study will require engaging with said complexity. However, to lessen confusion when working with the varied notions of legitimacy emergent in the literature, Koppell (2008) advises clarifying "the meaning of the word as it is being used in any given argument" (p.182). This will require conceptually differentiating between organizations and institutions, unpacking the concept of legitimacy in relation to institutionalization, and, finally, constructing an applicable understanding of institutional legitimacy.

4.1.1. Organizations and Institutions – Legitimacy and Institutionalization

Differentiating between organizations and institutions is an initial step. These two constructs, though sharing likenesses, have differences that can be drawn out (Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2016b) and are sometimes misunderstood. One disparity is the notion of legitimacy:

> **Clearly some organisations, for example, criminal gangs, people trafficking groups, or drug smugglers, would not be considered to have widespread social legitimacy and be considered to be institutions (ibid, p.415).**

At a basic level, therefore, an institution might seem little more than a legitimate organization. Dowling and Pfeffer (1975), contributing to early understandings of organizational legitimacy (Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2015), describe it as the "congruence between the social values associated with or implied by" an organization's "activities and the norms of acceptable behavior in the larger social system" to which it belongs (Dowling and Pfeffer, 1975, p.122). Such legitimacy, or broad-based social acceptance, posits Scott (2014), is a principal requirement for organizational vitality; when an organization has legitimacy, it is able to endure (ibid). However, if "an actual or potential disparity exists between" what is socially acceptable and an organization's actions, "there will exist a threat to organizational legitimacy" (Dowling and Pfeffer, 1975, p.122) and, hence, survival.

Defining legitimacy takes us a step further. Bunnell, Fertig, and James (2016b) and Scott (2014) work with Suchman's (1995) definition of legitimacy as:

> **a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions (p.574).**

While the broadness of this definition is attractive, Koppell (2008) suggest its all-inclusiveness also weakens it by applying the "word legitimacy as a catch-all" (p.182). This is exemplified in Bunnell, Fertig, and James' (2017a) definition of institutional legitimacy, which scarcely differentiates the construct from Suchman's (1995) description of legitimacy from which it descends:

> **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 (Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2017a, p.303).**

In spite of its limitations, however, Suchman's (1995) conceptualization of legitimacy offers width and depth that can be built on and extracted from.

Scott (2014) suggests that, "The 'socially constructed systems' to which Suchman refers are, of course, institutional frameworks" (p.71). Parameters of institutionalism, yes, but it is what happens within this framing that might serve to fully differentiate an

institution from an organization, leading to a more extrapolated model of institutional legitimacy. Jepperson (1991) helps to clarify by emphasizing the importance of "chronically repeated activity sequences" to establishing an institution as "a social order or pattern that has attained a certain state or property" (p.145). This "state or property" (ibid, p.145) *could* be imagined as a general perception of appropriateness within a normative system (Suchman, 1995), but for Jepperson (1991), it is repetitious sets of sequences that have become "self-activating social processes" mobilized in response to "some set of rewards or sanctions" (p.145) that are defining. Thus, when an entity—in this case, an organization—achieves symbiosis within its ecosystem, to the extent that it innately counters by way of systematized, organized behaviors, an institution, in a basic sociological and practical sense, could be said to exist. However, as will be illustrated, this could also occur without legitimacy (Jepperson, 1991). By Jepperson's (ibid) understanding, which will be embraced in this inquiry, it is not necessarily a question of whether an organization's activities or norms are accepted orthodoxies within its ecosystem (Dowling and Pfeffer, 1975), but the appearance of repetitiously enacted patterns or behaviors. These patterns and behaviors become institutional arrangements or "strongly held rules" (Scott, 2014, p.93), reinforcing adaptation, advancing prosperity, and enacting an institution (Jepperson, 1991)—in an evolutionary sense, institutionalization.

4.1.2. *Institutional Legitimacy*

This theoretical backdrop brings us closer to a more intricate and acutely applicable understanding of institutional legitimacy. It is useful to reflect on Suchman's (1995) analysis of different ways to envisage legitimacy:

> **Cultural definitions determine how the organization is built, how it is run, and, simultaneously, how it is understood and evaluated. Within this tradition, *legitimacy* and *institutionalization* are virtually synonymous. Both phenomena empower organizations primarily by making them seem *natural* and *meaningful*; access to resources is largely a by-product (p.576).**

Implied in this outlook is that institutionalization and legitimacy bind organizations to function within and be aligned to certain culturally codified rules; when these rules are held fast, power—over people (Koppell, 2008) and other units—and a deeper pool of potential resources (physical and/or human, including access to relationships and networks) are to be won (Scott, 2014). The state of naturalness (Suchman, 1995) institutions assume through this exercise is important to underscore. However, when reflecting on the way institutionalism has been explained so far, it might be

more apt to imagine legitimacy and institutionalization as interdependent rather than synonymous. As Jepperson (1991) estimates, legitimacy can contribute to institutionalization, or be an outcome of it.

Jepperson (1991) also maintains that elements that are illegitimate can be institutionalized. His conceptualization that an institution is "a social order or pattern that has attained a certain state or property" that is "relatively self-activating" in response to "some set of rewards or sanctions" (ibid, p.145) allows for this possibility. Still, naturalness would seem more obvious in an institution generally perceived to be socially acceptable (Suchman, 1995) or legitimate. A lack of social acceptability would likely constrict or problematize access to resources, inhibit open, transparent operations, and require power be asserted more clandestinely, posing challenges for illegitimate institutions that could affect long-term survival.

At this juncture, then, drawing on Dowling and Pfeffer (1975), Jepperson (1991), Suchman (1995), Koppell (2008), and Scott's (2014) theorizations, a distinct understanding of institutional legitimacy emerges as: *The alignment of an organization's activities and repeated behaviors with basic legalities, prevailing standards, codes, customs, and mindsets—collectively, cultural components—at a particular point in time and place; this gives the unit a potency that is strengthened via systematized, conventionalized, self-actuating reproductive practices that have developed into "strongly held rules" (Scott, 2014, p.93) highly responsive to the environment the entity inhabits, particularly to the potential yields and possibility of penalization therein; in turn, this enables openness of operations, a perceived naturalness of being and thus comfortable immersion within "a framework of institutions" (Jepperson, 1991, p.151) resulting in "stronger relations and more entrenched resources" (Scott, 2014, p.93), empowering, and enhancing organizational fortitude.*

Like other manifestations of legitimacy, based on real or latent incongruities in the environment, institutional legitimacy may be long lasting or temporary, in which case intervention or action requiring renegotiation of legitimacy might be required (Dowling and Pfeffer, 1975; Suchman, 1995; Sonpar, Pazzaglia, and Kornijenko, 2010; Scott, 2014). Accordingly, even legitimate institutions are likely to "undergo change over time" (Scott, 2014, p.57); notwithstanding, considering the resources they have at their disposal and the underling "stability and meaning" they bring to societies (ibid, p.56), institutions are liable to be markedly resilient and stable, with legitimate institutions conceivably even more so, illustrating the importance of understanding

them to appreciate their impact on society.

4.2. Analytical Framework

Bunnell, Fertig, and James (2015; 2016a; 2016b; 2017a), and Bunnell and Fertig (2016) have worked with an analytical framework adapted from Scott (2014). They apply it as an "instrument for the analysis" of international school "institutionalisation and consequent legitimacy" (Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2016b, p.420). This framework establishes three pillars (the Regulative, the Normative, and the Cultural-Cognitive) of institutionalization, which are conveyed by four carriers (Symbolic Systems, Relational Systems, Activities, and Artifacts):

Table 1. The Institutional Pillars and Carriers of Institutionalisation (adapted from Scott, 2014) (Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2016a, p.8)

Carriers of Institutionalization	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 [*sic*]	Regimes Authority systems	Structural isomorphism Identities
Activities	Monitoring Sanctioning Disrupting	Roles Jobs Routines Habits Repertoires of collective action	Predispositions Scripts
Artifacts	Objects complying with mandated specifications	Objects meeting conventions and standards	Objects possessing symbolic value

The Scott (2014) framework is conjectured to be an analytical device applicable beyond international schools (Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2016b). An understanding of the framework's basis—the pillars and carriers of institutionalization (Scott, 2014)—is required before connecting it to my study's research design.

4.2.1. Pillars of Institutionalization

Scott's (2014) three pillars of institutionalization—the Regulative, Normative, and Cultural-Cognitive—comprise an "interdependent and mutually reinforcing" (p.59) structure hypothesized to incorporate the fundamental components of an institution. The three elements are referred to as pillars because "they underpin and support institutionalisation" (Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2016b, p.415). Scott (2014) acknowledges the framework is not a blended instrument of analysis. Its stiches

"together three somewhat divergent conceptions" (ibid, p.59) needing to be distinguished from one another. Still, by examining elements separately, and drawing attention to their varied "assumptions, mechanisms, and indicators" it is possible to "separate out… important foundational processes" (ibid, p.59) enabling varied perspectives on how institutionalization occurs. A brief overview of each pillar follows.

<u>Regulative Pillar</u>

This pillar is associated with overt "rule-setting, monitoring, and sanctioning activities" (Scott, 2014, p.59). It gives weight to abiding by established guidelines, complying with formalized routines, and responding to "manipulative… rewards or punishments" (ibid, p.59). Conforming to formal bodies is mainly pragmatic, demonstrates adherence to legalities, and is not always easy or pleasant (Scott, 2014; Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2016b). However, the benefits of conformity can outweigh the consequences of resistance (ibid). Resultantly, this pillar can be "coercive" and "disruptive" (Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2017a, p.307), but what is required is transparent and official (Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2016b), providing a wellhead of legitimacy.

<u>Normative Pillar</u>

Observance of norms are the basis of this pillar: Social standards regarding "how things should be done," and a commitment to values, existing beliefs, and preferences toward structured and standard ways of doing things (Scott, 2014, p.64). These standards and beliefs coalesce to produce familiar ways of working toward objectives, resulting in "the formation of a distinct mode of operation" (Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2017a, pp.307-8) that actors conform to, and normative approaches that "are morally governed" (Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2016b, p.416). Adherence is based "on social obligation" (Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2017a, p.308) as opposed to sanctions. Failure to observe normative codes may result in "shame or disgrace," whereas their realization equates "respect and honor" (Scott, 2014, p.66). Thus, this pillar may be particularly important to the institutionalization of schools—and accreditation providers— where, "a duty, commitment and responsibility to others" could be imagined as moral imperatives (Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2016b, p.416). Theorists viewing institutionalization through this lens note the emergence of actors holding certain positions or roles who are charged with facilitating specifically prescribed tasks (Scott, 2014). Such positions are fashioned formally or surface

informally; status, access to resources, and special license may be associated benefits, making these roles desirable, and ensuring these players support in negotiating and regulating normative behavior (ibid). Consequently, while normative systems might be seen as constraining, they also propel collective activities and achievements (ibid).

<u>Cultural-Cognitive Pillar</u>

Compliance in this pillar is less dependent on rules and norms, and more the result of taken-for-grantedness: Fundamental conventions on which actions are based assume a level of commonly held cognition to the extent that "other types of behavior are inconceivable" (Scott, 2014, p.68). This can negate critical reasoning (Sonpar, Pazzaglia, and Kornijenko, 2010) as communal notions of social existence become entrenched, meaning-making schema (Scott, 2014). Subsequently, common conceptions lead to the development of thought-styles that induce repeated behavior patterns (Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2017a). This may result in roles and scripts being followed even when they are not particularly efficient (Droege, Lane, and Spiller, 2011), potentially limiting flexibility in changing environmental conditions (Jepperson, 1991). The Cultural-Cognitive Pillar also imagines that symbols (words, phrases, slogans, logos, or gestures) can play a formative role in collective meaning-making, helping actors grasp the relevance of certain activities or objectives (Scott, 2014). Essentially, this pillar's gravity relies on the emergence and maintenance of culturally encoded, logically and easily interpretable symbolic systems making things that must be done simpler, more familiar, and easier to replicate (ibid; Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2016b). The interminably complex outside world made simple, easy to internalize, highly relatable and interpretable, enabling it to be modelled and reflected to others (Scott, 2014). Institutionalization is thus achieved through a mimetic process of "copying or imitation" (Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2016b, p.416). In this manner, organizationally appropriate processes and procedures are rooted, becoming innately reproducible cultural orthodoxies (ibid; Jepperson, 1991) or institutionalized beliefs.

4.2.2. Carriers of Institutionalization

As Scott (2014) explains, "institutions ride on various conveyances and are instantiated in multiple media" (p.58). These conveyers, or carriers, can be imagined as divergent "in the processes employed to transmit their messages" (ibid, p.58) and, when packaged and explained, might be seen as intersecting and steadying the

institutional pillars. Use of the term carriers can be traced to Jepperson (1991), whereas Scott's (2014) framework highlights four varieties: Symbolic Systems, Relational Systems, Activities, and Artifacts (Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2016b).

<u>Symbolic Systems</u>

In the course of institutionalization, meaning-making symbols will be present in the pillars including:

> **the full range of rules, values and norms, classifications, representations, frames, schemas, prototypes, and scripts used to guide behavior (Scott, 2014, p.97).**

Written and spoken languages aid the transference of symbols, which, as they relate to institutionalization, are "transportable, versatile, and malleable" (Scott, 2014, p.98), making it possible to blend them with indigenous knowledge systems as they move through time and place. The Regulative Pillar is carried through adherence to determined legal codes or rules-based representations (Scott, 2014; Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2016b), whereas "expected standards, prevailing customs and accepted patterns of appropriate practice" are the Symbolic Systems conveying the Normative Pillar (Bunnell and Fertig, 2016, p.59). Attitudes regarding certain types of practices and their appropriateness in specific cultural-institutional contexts reinforce the Cultural-Cognitive Pillar (ibid); these include "shared notions of the nature of reality" and schemas used in simple sense-making, classifying, grouping, or framing understandings of the way things ought to be (Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2016b, p.416).

<u>Relational Systems</u>

Relational carriers rely on "patterned interactions connected to networks of social positions" (Scott, 2014, p.98) that form, and are formed by, institutions. With respect to the Regulative Pillar, patterns of governance practiced within an institution and "the power dynamics within those systems" (Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2016b, p.417) are conceived as carriers. Conveyers propping the Normative Pillar are institutional regimes, relationships within these networks, and the rightful influence and accountability of those individuals exerting power and having clout (ibid; Scott, 2014). The Cultural-Cognitive pillar, in contrast, is carried by mimetic means, or the degree that relationship structures or systems are akin to those in similar organizations, making shared meaning-making possible, and creating the conditions

for an expected experience to be fulfilled (Scott, 2014; Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2016b).

<u>Activities</u>

The vitality of activities as "habit, routine, and convention" advance institutionalization across the pillars (Scott, 2014, p.100). Activities are often learned within, and thus bound to, Relational Systems (ibid). Compliance activities support the Regulative Pillar (Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2017a) as meaning is carried by means of "checking, authorising, or monitoring processes, and preventing inappropriate practice" (Bunnell and Fertig, 2016, p.60). Such activities can be disruptive (Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2017a) and/or corrective, but their purpose is ultimately to empower suitable practices (Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2016b). The Normative Pillar includes ways shared activities are facilitated in an institution, often unconsciously (Scott, 2014). This occurs through habitual routines, engaging in customs and traditions, and via the performance of repetitive tasks by those in customary jobs or roles aligned in pursuit of organizational cooperation (ibid; Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2017a). Predispositions toward logical patterns or routinized scripts are expressed through the Cultural-Cognitive Pillar (Bunnell and Fertig, 2016; Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2017a); prevailing "modes, logics, and discourse" (Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2016b, p.419) are seen as reinforcing collective mentalities (Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2017a) that lend themselves to replication of certain activities and development of related skills, creating stability, and further promoting shared meaning-making (Scott, 2014). Communal behavior is enabled by "collections of actors" who "know what they are to do" and whose "counterparts know what to expect from them" (ibid, p.102).

<u>Artifacts</u>

Artifacts, lastly, might be characterized as physical things, "created by human ingenuity" (Scott, 2014, p.102) that aid in fulfilling:

> **mandated specifications (regulative pillar); meet conventions and standards (normative pillar); and possess symbolic value (cultural-cognitive pillar) (Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2017a, p.308).**

For example, exhibiting adherence to legalities or other regulations associated with safety requirements through certified documents exemplifies conformance and carries the Regulative Pillar (Scott, 2014). Material items illustrating acceptable

norms have been met convey the Normative Pillar (Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2016b). Representations can include prominently displayed mission and value statements (Bunnell and Fertig, 2016). Objects symbolic or representative of common understandings associated with what organizations *are* or *do* stabilize the Cultural-Cognitive Pillar (ibid; Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2106b). However, without human input, artifacts would be insignificant in institutional contexts, but once assigned meaning, they are vital to understandings, in some cases dwarfing "their material essence" (Scott, 2014, p.104) as they become part of an assumed reality.

By according scrutiny to Symbolic Systems, Relational Systems, Activities, and Artifacts we can see "how a particular issue may be 'carried' across the three pillars" (Bunnell and Fertig, 2016, p.61) effectually stabilizing and communicating them (Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2017a). This enables the identification of particular issues, challenges, or themes during institutionalization (Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2016b). It also supports a deeper understanding of how institutions change or remain the same over time (Scott, 2014). This returns us to adjoining the Scott (2014) framework to the subject of the inquiry, which requires conceptualization and application of an organization's primary task.

4.2.3. The Primary Task

According to Rice (1963), organizations are at all times engaged in a varied array of tasks. However, an organization, or a unit within an organization, will also be engaged in, "at any given time a *primary task—the task that it must perform to survive*" (ibid, p.13). Contributing to theoretical perspectives, Bunnell, James, and Fertig (2016a; 2017a) have linked the notion of primary task to the Scott (2014) framework.

Primary tasks can be performed knowingly or unintentionally (Bunnell, James and Fertig, 2016a). They may be precisely articulated or implicit (ibid); regardless, they are the tasks organizations must engage with to exist (Rice, 1963; Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2016a). Given the scope and sophistication of schools and large organizations, Bunnell, Fertig, and James (2016a) point out that conceptualization of primary task can come across as over-generalized. This may be because the performance of a multitude of tasks simultaneously means that different tasks could "be primary at any given time" (Rice, 1963, p.13). However, it is proposed that an explicit primary task supports procuring institutional legitimacy (Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2016a). Drawing on the work of Meyer and Rowan (1977), Bunnell, Fertig,

and James (2016a) suggest this requires the primary task to be seen as appropriate: The task that is at the center of organizational work should be legitimate.

The concept of primary task can be linked to Scott's (2014) framework, as Bunnell, Fertig, and James (2017a) posit:

> **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 (p.309).**

Simply put, the primary task plays "a central legitimising role" and the "pillars and the carriers can only be legitimately validated in relation to it" (ibid, p.314). In effect, "institutionalising processes and practices will only be properly justifiable" when authenticated relative "to what the institution is there to do" (ibid, p.314). This suggests that identifying primary task is central to appreciating the legitimate institutional patterns of an organization, or a unit within an organization, bringing us to the matter of research design.

4.3. Research Design

Research design is defined as the process by which an academic inquiry is facilitated, enabling its guiding questions to "link with empirical material" so conclusions can be drawn (Hancké, 2009, p.8). This requires researchers to contemplate innovative ways to solve the problems their research questions present (ibid).

4.3.1. A Framework Activated by Primary Task

Given the dearth of academic studies and journal publications related to my project's research questions, gathering and applying a range of empirical material would be required. My study will use the Scott (2014) framework as an instrument to appreciate the institutional processes that have underpinned the accreditation work of CIS and its predecessor, ECIS, in Berlin-Brandenburg. It will develop in-depth understanding of CIS' institutionalization, and will use this to inform analysis of how CIS has 'built' and 'maintained' institutional legitimacy as an accreditation provider in the case study context .

This will be achieved by identifying CIS' primary task as an accreditor in relation to Berlin-Brandenburg, which will require cognizance of ECIS' earlier and related

primary tasks. The position taken is that the primary task has "a central legitimising role" (Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2017a, p.314) and pillars and carriers are most authentically communicated relative to this construct. Understanding of primary task will be used to synthesize and elicit institutional processes, validating patterns frequently observable within the Scott (2014) framework as the legitimate ones in CIS' institutionalization as an accreditation provider. If, from these patterns, recurring elements or themes (Sandelowski and Barroso, 2002; Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen, and Snelgrove, 2016) can be identified, they can be examined relative to strategies of legitimacy 'building' and 'maintenance' (Suchman, 1995) in one setting, and analyzed in relation to the project-specific definition of institutional legitimacy to present a narrative, analytic description of how CIS accreditation 'built' and 'maintained' institutional legitimacy in Berlin-Brandenburg.

To realize this design, my project will be framed as a qualitative, retrospective case study (Thomas, 2011; Starman, 2013). It will draw primarily on empirical material from interviews "pertaining to participants' experiences and viewpoints" (Turner, 2010, p.754) on CIS and its forbearer, ECIS, as accreditation providers. Where and when appropriate, supplementary resources from the historic ECIS and CIS eco-system—e.g., protocol documents, training materials, promotional and informational fliers, web resources, and corporate news briefs will be also be used to strengthen understanding or fill potential gaps in interview data. A critical rationalization of these choices, and an overview of other strategies that will bring rigor to my study are the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 5.0. – Methodological Choices

5.0.   Introduction

This chapter examines the project's use of a retrospective case study (Thomas, 2011; Starman, 2013) to investigate CIS' institutional legitimacy as a school accreditor in Berlin-Brandenburg. It critically analyzes this decision in relation to the challenges of studying a "fragmented organization" (Denzin, 1981, p.152) like CIS, identifying the construct of primary task, and understanding the development of institutional processes over time. These complexities are linked to the study's application of "a naturalistic or an interpretative approach" archetypical of the qualitative tradition (Hallberg, 2006, p.141); and, to the selection of "a characteristic method" (Gough, 2002, p.2) of data collection within this paradigm, interviewing, as a primary means of gathering empirical material. Acknowledging the limitations of the chosen tradition, strategies are detailed that will bring rigor—credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Houghton, et al, 2013)—to a qualitative case study to leverage its advantages. This presages the application of these strategies in later chapters.

5.1.   A Qualitative Case Study

The case study is said to be "one of the principal means by which inquiry is conducted in the social sciences" (Thomas, 2011, p.511); it is also a device that is sometimes misunderstood (Baxter and Jack, 2008; Starman, 2013). This may stem from differing meanings accorded across disciplines (Simons, 2012), and confusion regarding methodology (Starman, 2013). While case studies are frequently thought of as "qualitative research and methodology, they may also be quantitative or contain a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches" (ibid, p.30). Consequently, the decision to employ a case study should be guided by what is being studied (ibid). As such, I will clarify the purpose of a case study (Thomas, 2011) relative to my project and link these considerations to the selection of a research tradition, and the choice of a "characteristic method" (Gough, 2002, p.2) of data collection.

5.1.1. Methodology Defined

We can begin by introducing Gough's (2002) explanation of methodology as "the reasoning that informs particular ways of doing research, or the principles that inform its organisation" (p.4). To this end, methodology can be viewed as going beyond

discussions of a particular manner of collecting information, but providing "reasons for using such techniques in relation to the kind of knowledge or understanding the researcher is seeking" (Gough, 2002, p.5) relative "to the issues and problems under examination" (Woods, 1986, p.15). Considering my identity as a professional in the CIS and international school network, and the potential for research to be politicized (Ozga, 2000; Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2007), I have taken the position that clarifying the rationale for choices will enable my study "to be 'read' clearly and transparently" (Ozga, 2000, p.93), giving it authenticity, and allowing readers to appreciate how knowledge was constructed (Lincoln and Guba, 1986).

5.1.2. The Case Study

Drawing of Gough's (2002) definition, my study sought *knowledge* and *understanding* of how CIS 'built' and 'maintained' institutional legitimacy. Recalling, however, that there is no shortage of international schools (Canterford, 2009) and accreditation providers to study and their widely dispersed geography can complicate investigations, researchers can employ case studies of particular contexts to manageably bind their studies (Baxter and Jack, 2008). As I was based in Berlin-Brandenburg when my inquiry was conducted, and intended to remain active in this region's educational landscape, a context presented itself whereby I could "discover the unknown"—how CIS had become and remained institutionally legitimate—"within well-known borders" (Starman, 2013, p.42).

Accordingly, my study takes the position that the case study is a "design frame" (Thomas, 2011, p.512; see also: Simons, 2012; Starman, 2013) that can be employed with a variety of research traditions. It embraces Simons' (2012) definition of the case study as "an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, programme or system in a 'real life' context" (p.21). Working with this definition, my study is an *exploration* of how CIS has 'built' and 'maintained' institutional legitimacy as a school accreditor, "the phenomenon being studied" (ibid, p.20), within the *context* of Berlin-Brandenburg; effectively, "the prism through which" the phenomenon would be "refracted, viewed and studied" (Thomas 2011, p.515).

The ability to "establish cause and effect" relationships in authentic contexts (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2007, p.253) is one of the advantages of the case study. However, in-depth awareness of historical processes would be required to appreciate how CIS as a global agent had become embedded in a specific locale (Resnik,

2012). Thus, I would employ a retrospective case study design (Thomas, 2011; Starman, 2013), collecting data on past events, individuals, and accreditation related situations, studying them in their "historical integrity" (Thomas, p.517) to appreciate in detail (Simons, 2012) how CIS as an 'international' accreditation provider 'built' and 'maintained' institutional legitimacy in one setting.

Notwithstanding, I was aware from my own experience that accrediting organizations would be difficult to study as singular, functional units in a specific context. Alertness to this and the related challenge of locating CIS' primary task as an accreditor helped inform the study's loosely-bound structure (Fink, 1999), its incorporation of "multiple perspectives" (Simons, 2012, p.21), and the embrace of a specific research tradition.

5.1.3. Fragmented Organizations and the Problem of Locating Primary Task

Accrediting bodies might be best characterized as "fragmented organizations" (Denzin, 1981, p.150) with service provision and providers dispersed globally. The involvement of an extensive range of players across a myriad of locales produces a wide-range of social experiences with accreditors, which complicates making sense of them. While worlds might "on occasion, connect, collide or mutually interact" (ibid, p.150), understandings and experiences with CIS are likely to differ from one environment to the next, making the identification of primary task, an intricate concept in its own right, relative to CIS' accreditation work in the case study context particularly complex.

First, it should be clarified, as Miller and Rice (1967) point out, in sizeable organizations, multiple primary tasks can coexist. At CIS, the School Support and Evaluation wing—one of several departments in the larger organization, which is overseen by CIS' Director of International Accreditation Services—bears responsibility for accreditation related work (CIS, 2020f). Drawing on Miller and Rice's (1967) thinking, this unit's primary task might diverge from those of CIS' other large departments, Higher Education Services, and Membership Strategy and Communications (CIS, 2020f). Moreover, while the School Support and Evaluation wing's primary task might overlap with the primary task of the greater CIS organization, here too there may also be differences. To be clear, then, it was the CIS School Support and Evaluation unit's accreditation related work, and the primary task of this department, that would be central to the inquiry.

Organizations are also "creatures of their distinctive times and places" (Scott, 2014,

p.217); their primary tasks can be altered in response to shifting contextual pressures (Miller and Rice, 1967). Taking into consideration regional change brought on by the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the reunification of Germany in the early 1990s, and reinstatement of Berlin as capitol, all of which impacted on the Berlin-Brandenburg education system, my study would need to provide perspective and insight into the work of CIS' School Support and Evaluation wing, and its predecessor, ECIS Accreditation Services, over an extended period. As a result, I would loosely-bind (Fink, 1999) my study using the years 1989–2019, during which, following on from the aforenoted events, a number of international schools emerged in Berlin-Brandenburg and began utilizing ECIS and CIS accreditation.

Reflecting on the case study context, it also became apparent that primary task characterization could be shaped by environmental (Miller and Rice, 1967) and cultural conditions, highlighting the probable value of German, or local Berlin-Brandenburg perspectives to my study. The vantage point of expatriates—a group that has been numerically well-represented in international schools (Hayden and Thompson, 2008)—who were familiar with the case study context might provide yet another unique perspective on CIS' work and primary task. However, given the "fragmented" (Denzin, 1981, p.150) structure of CIS, those able to provide this perspective might be past or present ECIS/CIS employees and physically located outside the immediate Berlin-Brandenburg region.

Relatedly, Miller and Rice (1967) point out that position in a hierarchy, or the way "a constituent system defines its primary task" could differ from or conflict with the way a "superordinate system defines it" (p.26). While schools are not subdivisions of CIS, as stated in the CIS Mission and Vision Statement, they are part of "a membership community" that works in tandem with CIS "to shape international education" (CIS, 2020g). CIS provides commercial services (ibid) to affiliated schools in return for membership dues and other fees. Member schools vote in Board of Trustee Elections, peruse, and endorse Annual General Meeting (AGM) reports and motions, and have the opportunity to attend the AGM (CIS, 2019d). In this sense, school governors and leaders who have the right to vote, or designate voters in elections, and others working in schools to facilitate aspects of CIS accreditation might be considered *constituents* who have a distinctive, hierarchically imprinted picture of CIS' work and primary task. By contrast, CIS Board members, past ECIS Board members, those providing the professionalized services of CIS' School Support and Evaluation (Green, 2020) wing—historically, ECIS Accreditation Services—and

volunteer school visitors, all of whom are involved in decisions related to recommending, granting, withhold, or delaying accreditation, could be characterized as participants in a *superordinate* system. Ostensibly, given their vantage point in the systemic hierarchy, these individuals might also have characteristic perspectives on CIS' work and primary task. Other frames of reference could be fashioned involving students and parents in member schools, actors in non-accredited school communities, or other stakeholders in CIS' extended ecosystem, with each likely to have a divergent outlook on primary task due to their position within or outside the membership network.

Collectively, therefore, recalling Simons' (2012) definition of the case study, these illustrations demonstrated the value of exploration into the work of CIS accreditation relative to Berlin-Brandenburg, and the location of its primary task "from multiple perspectives" (p.21), drawing on data from different levels in a "fragmented" (Denzin, 1981, p.152) system. Also illuminated was the importance of using the years 1989– 2019 to loosely-bind (Fink, 1999) the case study, what Denzin (1981) calls a "historical baseline" (p.152) to keep its parameters clear, focused (Stake, 1978), and realistic in scope (Baxter and Jack, 2008), but still broad enough to capture change over time.

It should be recalled, however, that the case study is a "design frame" (Thomas, 2011, p.512) and not in itself a research tradition: It must be positioned and applied within one. In this sense, the apparent challenges of studying a "fragmented organization" (Denzin, 1981, p.152), locating the primary task of one of its units, and examining institutional processes over time helped me appreciate that my study would require attention to a multiplicity of realities that had been "socially constructed" (Hallberg, 2006, p.141) and would need to be deciphered. These insights, and the lack of a preexisting model of accreditor legitimacy 'building' and 'maintenance' guided my implementation of a qualitative approach.

5.1.4. Adopting a Research Tradition – Rationale and Challenges

Educational research can be conducted in different ways (Siegel, 2006) with each having a distinct purpose. However, relative to the phenomenon being investigated in my project there was not a preexisting hypothesis (Bertaux, 1981) or theory (Sonpar, Pazzaglia, and Kornijenko, 2010) to be tested. As a result, in the case study context I could not verify a "predetermined idea" (Sherman and Webb, 1988, p.5) in the spirit of the positivist tradition (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2007). Descendent from this

tradition is the quantitative research paradigm, characterized as the practice of "adding or multiplying" experiences together that are "indirect and abstract," in effect, "'quantifying' them" (Sherman and Webb, 1988, p.7) to generalize or verify. This often involves reliance on "mathematics and statistics" (Queirós, Faria, and Almeida, 2017, p.370) in order to develop laws (Stake, 1978) or prove hypothesizes. While findings in my study might be applied to "subsequent studies for theory building" (George and Bennett, 2004, p.75) relative to accreditor institutionalization and legitimacy, calculating generalizable behavior across contexts (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2007) based on knowledge and understanding of one region would prove tenuous.

Ultimately, then, I sought to discover and understand (Sherman and Webb, 1988; Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2007) the phenomenon of institutional legitimacy 'building' and 'maintenance' in one context, a world of many participants, both individual and organizational "as nearly as possible" (Sherman and Webb, 1988, p.7). In this sense, I would be studying "phenomena and processes" in an authentic setting (Hallberg, 2006, p.141), perhaps best appreciable from "the point of view of the actor" (Bryman, 1984, p.77), and arguably most appropriately investigated using the qualitative tradition. In contrast to the quantitative approach, this paradigm reflects "a direct concern with experience as it is 'lived' or 'felt' or 'undergone'" (Sherman and Webb, 1988, p.7). Rather than a focus on the discovery of laws, it takes "an interpretative approach to the world" (Hallberg, 2006, p.141), emphasing "subjective experiences" and human meaning making (Starman, 2013, p.30). Given the diversity of phenomenon in the social world, qualitative studies can be creative and artistic enterprises (Houghton, at al, 2013) and are generally characterized by "relatively open-ended" strategies of "data collection, and analysis" (Madey, 1982, p.225) that are more "fluid and flexible" (Bryman, 1984, p.78).

As highlighted already, awareness of CIS' "fragmented" organizational structure (Denzin, 1981, p.152) and the inherent challenge of locating one of its units' primary task relative in a specific context to appreciate institutional processes over time underscored the need to glean insights into CIS' accreditation related work "from multiple perspectives" (Simons, 2012, p.21). In effect, I required data that enabled understanding of how CIS accreditation was experienced, lived, and felt relative to the Berlin-Brandenburg context "within and across hierarchical levels" (Martin and Turner, 1986, p.141) during the time period that bound the study. Ultimately, this understanding led me to assume the position that, "Many of the variables that

interest social scientists" (George and Bennett, 2004, p.19)—in my study, for example, organizational purpose, or primary task, institutional dynamics, and cultural factors across time and space in a "fragmented organization" (Denzin, 1981, p.152)—would be "difficult to measure" (George and Bennett, 2004, p.19); and, consequently that the flexibility, open-endedness, and creative possibilities (Madey, 1982; Houghton, at al, 2013) of the qualitative tradition could best capture facets of reality relative to my project that could not be easily quantified (Queirós, Faria, and Almeida, 2017). In this sense, taking a qualitative approach would allow me to explore a broader range of possible strategies for appreciating and embracing the complex organizational nature (Martin and Turner, 1986) of CIS relative to the historical evolution of its institutionalized accreditation work in Berlin-Brandenburg.

However, as Sandelowski and Barroso (2002) point out, a qualitative study does not collect a range of ingeniously assembled data and present it to others for them to decipher. It is a process of description and interpretation that is "fundamentally about telling and taking a view" (ibid, p.216). While critics of qualitative work have pigeonholed this approach as "inherently exploratory" (Bryman, 1984, p.84), in educational studies, Sherman and Webb (1988) reference the value of "*judging* or *appraising*," not in the sense of approval or disapproval, but judgement as "*appraisal* of the qualitative situation" (p.7). This requires the researcher, supported by data, to provide a justification for an interpretation, or judgement related to the value or significance of the matter being investigated, which can serve to inform educational professionals (ibid) regarding the benefits or limitations of the object, program, or process being investigated. While quantitative approaches, in contrast, may provide a wealth of information about a topic and effectively demonstrate relationships, their limitation in educational studies might be their ability to "tell," provide, or constructively propose alternatives for practitioners who "have the obligation *to do something*" relative to situational contexts (ibid, p.8). As my study also sought to make contributions to professional understanding, the potential to better inform practitioners about accreditation was another advantage of the qualitative approach, one that moved my study beyond a purely exploratory mode (Bryman, 1984).

This said, I would be remiss not to point out several notable challenges to structuring a case study within the qualitative tradition. As my project would be framed retrospectively, and loosely-bound (Fink, 1999) by the years 1989–2019, some impreciseness was predictable (Nunan, 1992). While Stake (1978) has argued that case studies can be a highly relatable, "epistemologically in harmony with the

reader's experience" (p.5), historical reports and/or studies may not entirely reflect lived realities (Simons, 2012). The researcher has the obligation to address this by acknowledging "the partial nature of interpretations and the conditions of their construction so readers can make their own judgements about their relevance and significance" (ibid, p.24). As part of this process, the time periods being sampled can be made explicit, and care can be taken to give proportionate attention to events (Yin, 2018), processes, and the influence of key people (Simons, 2012) or groups, which can result in a high level of understanding and contextual validity regarding a particular phenomenon (George and Bennett, 2004).

In qualitative studies, furthermore, data produced to support findings, what Sandelowski and Barroso (2002) call the "raw data of qualitative research" are "interpretive products" (p.214); they are chosen and/or created through a process within which the researcher has played a significant role. In a qualitative case study, as a consequence, researcher subjectivity "is an inevitable part of the frame" (Simons, 2012, p.24). As Woods' (1986) points out, while the researcher might hope to nullify their perspectives, "opinions, knowledge and biases," it is difficult (p.9). Similarly challenging is accounting for a myriad of other issues in qualitative studies for example, language, class, culture, and identity (Siegel, 2006). The challenge for researchers, as a result, becomes ensuring the rigor of our methods (Woods, 1986).

5.2.   Rigorous Application of a Characteristic Method of Data Collection

With a research tradition identified, determining a method of data collection within this paradigm was the next step. Given the relative sparsity of accounts in professional and academic literature related to both the case study context and the phenomenon being investigated, "a characteristic method" of collecting empirical material (Gough, 2002, p.2) that could be rigorously implemented was required.

5.2.1. A Primary Method of Data Collection within the Qualitative Tradition: Interviewing

Data collection via a passive role whereby phenomenon were observed in the more traditional spirit of qualitative social science research (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2007) would be complicated by the retrospective nature of my study, the "fragmented" (Denzin, 1981, p.152) organizational characteristics of the historic ECIS and CIS accreditation systems, and the periodic, confidential nature of accreditation cycles. Moreover, while the use of surveys might support awareness of mindsets,

conduct, and social dispositions at particular points in time, I was not convinced this approach could capture the broader historical portrayal (Bertaux, 1981) of CIS' institutional journey and shed light on the complex nuances of primary task required to activate the Scott (2014) framework enabling it to be used as a tool to understand accreditation provider institutionalization and legitimacy.

Ultimately, Scott's (2014) sentiment that "actors create and modify meanings" in the short term, while "in the long run, meanings create actors, both organizational and individual identities" (p.223) moved me towards the possibilities of interviewing as a primary approach to data collection. If "personal, subjective, and unique" (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2007, p.7) insights from stakeholders in Berlin-Brandenburg's international schooling community *or* other nearby communities *and* players involved with ECIS and CIS at large who had adequate awareness of the case study context could be accessed via a well-designed approach to interviewing, authentic insights could be obtained from a variety of perspectives. Ideally, participants would be individuals with deep historical knowledge—held to be the attributes of worthy informants (Denzin, 1981) when studying "fragmented" (p.158) systems—relative to the Berlin-Brandenburg context and ECIS/CIS accreditation. These informants would enable the richness and complexity of CIS' historical accreditation processes to be analyzed and interpreted relative to the specific setting where these programs were being enacted (Simons, 2012).

Nevertheless, determining and locating informants who could participate equally would require introspective consideration of my researcher identity, and the capacity to link this awareness to group selection and interview design. If this could be achieved, participant involvement presented the opportunity to helpfully and judiciously develop knowledge through "relationships and joint understanding" (Simons, 2012, p.23). Essentially, the chance to connect directly with a variety of key actors and appreciate their depictions of reality from various points of activity relative to the case study context and phenomenon being studied (Hallberg, 2006).

This said, as Houghton, et al (2013) point out, while qualitative case studies are flexible and can be used with interviewing or other methods, "strategies to ensure the rigor of such studies need to be in place (p.16).

5.2.2. Strategies to Ensure Rigor

Drawing on the work of Lincoln and Guba's (1985), Houghton, et al (2013) have examined rigor in qualitive case studies. They focus on several aspects of rigor, namely **credibility**, **dependability**, **confirmability**, and **transferability** (ibid; see also: Lincoln and Guba, 1985; 1986). Lincoln and Guba (1986) themselves have presented the word "trustworthiness" as "a parallel to the term *rigor*" (p.77). Thinking of rigor in this way helps one appreciate the importance of the concept to qualitative studies (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) that involve social constructs that are difficult to measure (George and Bennett, 2004). Strategies that would be used to enhance my study's credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability will be discussed in turn.

Credibility

Study **credibility** can be enhanced by extended engagement in the field (Houghton, et al, 2013); I was fortunate to be able to travel outside of Germany, and conduct project-specific interviews in Berlin-Brandenburg over a period of three months (highlighted in **Chapter 8.0**) in the Spring/Summer of 2019.

Credibility can also be augmented by triangulation (ibid). As already established, I would seek to obtained data from a variety of perspectives allowing "multiple facets of the phenomenon" being studied "to be revealed" (Baxter and Jack, 2008, p.544). As Houghton, et al (2013) point out, this can help the researcher verify the completeness, validity, and consistency of patterns in data. To effectively facilitate this, I would borrow several strategies from Glaser and Strauss' (1967) "seminal work" (Douglas, 2003, p.47), *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). When working with Glaser and Strauss' ideas, researchers should be clear if they are adapting or adopting their approaches (Cutcliffe, 2005), and if they are, in fact, developing grounded theory, or using grounded theory methods (Robbins, 2015). Ultimately, rather than developing theory, I would adapt several of their strategies to support interviewing as a qualitative method. As the subtitle of Glaser and Strauss' (1967) work suggests, I would be applying their ideas as *Strategies for Qualitative Research*.

To develop contextual understanding, Glaser and Strauss (ibid) echo the importance of social researchers drawing insights from more than one perspective or group when using interviews. This can provide "a proportioned view of the evidence" that

reduces individual biases (ibid, p.68). In addition to relying on heterogeneous groups, or sub-groups to add deepness of perspective when studying a phenomenon, they encourage researchers to take advantage of complementary "*slices of data*" (ibid, p.65), organizational documents, professional and academic resources, and other media when and where appropriate to provide "different views or vantage points" (ibid, p.65). This type of supplementary media can feature conversations where individuals "announce positions, argue… and describe events or scenes in ways entirely comparable to what is seen and heard during field work" (ibid, p.163).

I was well-aware that the historic ECIS and CIS eco-system contained an abundance of resources that could be drawn on to broaden understanding: e.g., protocol documents, training materials, promotional and informational fliers, web resources, and corporate news briefs. Therefore, to ensure there was "enough data to describe what is going on in the context or situation under study" (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2007, p.492), I would utilize historic and "journalistic" (Denzin, 1981, p.153) sources, or other "*slices of data*" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p.65) where and when needed to strengthen understanding or fill potential gaps in interview material. In grounded theory's traditional form this is called "theoretical sampling" (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2007, p.492). Complementary material and new groups can be introduced during a study (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) because "one cannot know in advance" if there will be enough data to develop a theory "until one is actually doing the research" (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2007, p.492). While I was not seeking enough data to develop theory, per se, I would adapt this approach as it is was consistent with the view that interviews may be most effective when used with supplementary methods of data collection (Woods, 1986), equipping "the researcher with a well-rounded collection of information for analyses" (Turner, 2010, p.754). Moreover, as Lincoln and Guba (1995) remind us, it can be difficult to definitively clarify all aspects of qualitative design at the beginning of a project. In this case, having never worked with the Scott (2014) framework to understand CIS' institutional processes as an accreditor, I was uncertain at the onset of my study (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) how much data would be required to utilize this framework effectively for the purpose of my inquiry.

Also resonating "with the methodological notion of triangulation" (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2007, p.493) and adaptable to my study was Glaser and Strauss' (1967) approach of constant comparison to appreciate and identify similarity and difference in data being studied. A principle point here is that collecting and analyzing

"data is a simultaneous process" that can involve "memo-writing" and other forms of note taking (Hallberg, 2006, p.143-44) to enhance all-around understanding of data as it is being collected, reviewed, and analyzed. According to Suddaby (2006), constant comparison is a strategy that "contradicts the myth of a clean separation between data collection and analysis" (p.634). In Glaser and Strauss' (1967) words, it is the "systematization of the collection, coding and analysis of qualitative data" (p.18) and can be used to support a rich process of comparative analysis in qualitative studies. Again, in grounded theory's traditional form, the purpose of this approach is to support the systemic emergence of categories and their properties to develop theories grounded in the data (ibid). However, as Hallberg (ibid) writes:

> **Glaser and Strauss talk about guidelines rather than about fixed and constant rules for doing qualitative research, which indicates that guidelines can be used in a flexible and creative way (p.143).**

Therefore, here too it is helpful to be clear regarding how and why this approach was being adapted (ibid; Cutcliffe, 2005).

I would be utilizing the Scott (2014) framework with its pillars and carrier, which could be imagined together with the concept of primary task as categories with already defined properties, or conceptual features (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). To establish progressively more developed understanding of these concepts, and to mitigate forcing data (Hallberg, 2006), I would use the "constant comparative method" of analysis (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p.106) during and after interviews as I made notes related to emergent understanding of pillars, carries, primary task and other relevant insights that surfaced. This technique would also support making comparisons *"in the same and different groups"* (ibid, p.106) during and after coding, and when appropriating data to the Scott (2014) framework relative to the pillars and carriers. Relistening to interview recordings (Douglas, 2003) would also support deeper, analytical comparisons, interpretation and understanding, as would the process of describing the data that had been appropriated to the Scott (2014) framework in the project manuscript. Collectively, these, and several further aspects of constant comparison, which I did not initially anticipate, would help me think analytically early, often, and throughout the research process, giving me confidence (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) that the institutional patterns evident in the Scott (2014) framework that supported the identification of themes (Robbins, 2015) were "firmly grounded in data" (Sandelowski and Barroso, 2002, p.214) enabling them to be built on to reach reliable conclusions.

<u>Dependability and Confirmability</u>

Dependability and **confirmability** can be fostered by producing an audit trail (Houghton, et al, 2013) that openly highlights key choices (Ozga, 2000) made during the study. This helps readers understand the rationale for certain decisions even if they do not agree with an approach or interpretation (Houghton, et al, 2013). It establishes trustworthiness by making research propositions accessible. The audit trail can and should be supported by researcher reflexivity (ibid); the researcher is a fundamental part of a qualitative study and their "ability and willingness… to acknowledge and take account of the many ways" that they might have impacted the creation of knowledge is paramount (Sandelowski and Barroso, 2002, p.216). Sandelowski and Barroso (ibid) call reflexivity the "hallmark of excellent qualitative research" (p.216). The ability to reflect deeply and personally about ones role in the inquiry and its context brings credibility to the researcher and enables understanding of choices in relation to their identity (Houghton, et al, 2013). I would endeavor to leave a clear trail of decisions, showing reflexivity throughout the study.

<u>Transferability</u>

In addition to credibility, dependability, and confirmability, qualitative case studies can have transferable elements, or **transferability** (Houghton, et al, 2013). By presenting data openly, and providing detailed descriptions of contextual and other aspects of the inquiry, I would equip readers with ample material to determine (ibid) if insights in my study had transferability to further studies of accreditation or were relevant to international school practitioners.

Introducing rigor into their studies, qualitative researchers demonstrate to audiences that their projects and findings represent worthy contributions to a field (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) thereby supporting the researcher in leveraging the advantages of the qualitative case study's "more episodic, subjective" (Stake, 1978, p.6) nature to extend knowledge.

In this spirit, my next step would be crafting a trail of decisions (Houghton, et al, 2013) related to choices and approaches to interviewing as a form of qualitative data collection.

Chapter 6.0. – Approach to Interviewing: Identity, Group Selection, and Design

6.0.   Introduction

This chapter introduces my approach to interviewing as a form of qualitative data collection. Key choices are highlighted and explained, and the complexity of framing an approach to interviewing as someone with both "insider" *and* "outsider" membership status (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009, p.55) is examined. Then, building on understandings of researcher identity, a critical examination of comparative group selection is linked to interview design and interview question development.

6.1.   Examining Researcher Identity

Research is demanding, and "interviewing research is especially so" (Seidman, 2006, p.32). It requires motivation, and mitigation of passions and other factors that might inhibit the research process, leading Seidman (2006), as a form of reflexivity, to recommend a brief "autobiographical section explaining" ones' personal "connections to their proposed" study (ibid, p.32).

Creating this narrative requires awareness and exploration of the limitations and potential benefits of my member status vis-à-vis CIS and its accredited schools in Berlin-Brandenburg, bearing in mind that identity "in relation to those participating in the research, is an essential and ever-present" part of the study (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009, p.55). Given that in qualitative studies researchers play a "direct and intimate role in both data collection and analysis" (ibid, p.55), clarifying my researcher identity also supports "the reader to decide on its usefulness" (Fink, 1999, p.272).

6.1.1.   The Insider-Outsider Conundrum

As the Director of a CIS-accredited school in Berlin-Brandenburg from August, 2014– July, 2018, when I took a 12-month sabbatical, and again from August 2019, I was an insider familiar with the region and its international schooling landscape. However, being on sabbatical during the time all but one of the project interviews were facilitated enabled me to assume the disposition of temporary outsider. Though I was familiar with, and could use the German language—having previously worked as an international teacher in the FRG between the years 1997–2001—as a non-German resident of Berlin-Brandenburg, I was also, in some respects, a cultural outsider.

Moreover, since moving back to the FRG in 2014, I had participated in accreditation trainings and formal visits to other schools as a volunteer within the CIS community. Thus, I benefited from an inside perspective on CIS accreditation routines. My own school had also completed a 10-year reaccreditation process in 2018, and the Executive Director of CIS had been a formal visitor to our campus during my headship. This meant I was reasonably well-known inside CIS as a volunteer and school head. At the same time, as someone not employed by CIS, I was outside the professional corporate structure, giving me formal distance from the organization. Consequently, the best description of my unique identity, vantage point, and connection to my study was insider–outsider (Fink, 1999; Dwyer and Buckle, 2009).

Reflecting on the nuances of this identity, it was apparent that being an "insider" might affect my perspective, and being an "outsider" would not exempt me from partiality (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009, p.55). At the same time, identification with a group might not mean exact likeness, and lack of formal membership should not imply complete difference (ibid). Additionally, given my sabbatical's juxtaposition between my tenures as a school head in Berlin, my identity during the study was in flux, leading me to embrace the conceptualization of "positionality" (Kezar, 2002, p.96). This concept "resists a fixed, static, essentialistic view of standpoints" (ibid, p.96). As Mason-Bish (2019) suggests, "positionality is a transitory and dynamic situation" (p.264) whereby researchers can even assume new identities during parts of a study—i.e., professional educator on sabbatical—that may need to be integrated, if even temporarily, into our understandings of ourselves in relation to our research.

To mitigate the challenges inherent to being an insider–outsider (Fink, 1999; Dwyer and Buckle, 2009), therefore, I will explicitly take my researcher identity into consideration throughout the study (Mason-Bish, 2019). Notably, in this chapter, when selecting participant groups and specific participants, and when determining the type of interviewing to be utilized.

6.2.   Comparative Participant Groups

Identifying my status as both insider-outsider (Fink, 1999; Dwyer and Buckle, 2009) supported the selection of comparative groups for interview. How these groups were determined will be openly and transparently illustrated (Ozga, 2000).

6.2.1. Setting Group Parameters

Awareness of CIS' "fragmented" (Denzin, 1981, p.150) organizational structure, the perceived challenge of identifying the construct of primary task, and the need to understand the development of institutional processes over time informed my intent to seek out heterogeneous participant clusters from Berlin-Brandenburg *or* neighboring areas *and* the CIS' historical ecosystem to provide a "proportioned view of the evidence," reducing—but not eliminating—the "biases of particular people" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p.68), providing a wider avenue for understanding the phenomenon being investigated in relation to the Berlin-Brandenburg context. However, as Oakley (1981) suggests:

> **finding out about people through interviewing is best achieved when the relationship of interviewer and interviewee is non-hierarchical and when the interviewer is prepared to invest his or her own personal identity in the relationship (p.41).**

The challenges of participant selection were thus locating appropriate clusters, limiting hierarchical difference, and working within a frame of reference whereby I could safely invest myself, with my interrelated identities (Kezar, 2002), while also protecting others.

6.2.2. Identifying a Local Cluster – Constituent Actors

While interviews with students, parents, and teachers in Berlin-Brandenburg schools might yield a variety of local and intercultural perspectives on CIS accreditation, given my professional role, inviting participation from these groups could have obscured relationships, leaving participants vulnerable (BERA, 2018). This meant what Vidovich (2007) has called "a micro focus," or "giving more voice to teachers, parents and students" (p.294) through research was untenable. So, too, was involving individuals who had been section principals in CIS-accredited schools in and around Berlin-Brandenburg. My supervision of two such individuals and more senior status relative to similar post-holders in the region rendered this inappropriate. However, at the level of Director/Head of School, Executive Director/CEO (*Geschäftsfürer*), and/or Business Manager/CFO in Berlin-Brandenburg's CIS-accredited schools and neighboring regions, there was a group of *Constituent Actors* whose status and roles, past and present, were relative to my own.

Working within this cluster accorded me the opportunity to present myself as a researcher with diminished hierarchical constraints. Moreover, the acquisition of legitimacy in schools is said to require "those with responsibility for leadership and governance" to have a "sound and cogent understanding" of the pressures in the surrounding environment (Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2015, p.7). Many of these individuals would have been active for meaningful stretches of the period that bound the study, and were likely to be familiar with the external environment and the interconnected decision to utilize ECIS or CIS accreditation. It was also posited that they would have a grasp of teacher, parent, and student perspectives, as well as insight into the professional outlook of principals whom they may have hired, supervised, or collaborated with during accreditation cycles. Furthermore, I was aware that in Berlin-Brandenburg this group was amply populated by host-nationals, local Germans who could be considered "educational workers who… lived through periods of transition" (Ozga, 2000, p.128). As such, it presented an opportunity to utilize interviewing as a form of interaction (Woods, 1986) to access the richness of the indigenous perspective, supporting awareness of the phenomenon being investigated in the study's local context.

6.2.3. Locating a Cluster within CIS – Superordinate Players

Having identified a constituent cluster, a heterogeneous comparative group in the CIS superordinate network was sought. Possible participants at CIS who held lower-level administrative positions within the School Support and Evaluation wing were ruled out. These roles perform a variety of tasks such as processing volunteer applications, building volunteer teams for site visits, and communicating day-to-day matters regarding accreditation-related issues to school heads on behalf of their more senior colleagues. Given my service as a CIS volunteer, and professional role as head of an accredited school, I was knowledgeable of these functions, and recognized the potential for conflict of interest and hierarchical imbalance. However, International Advisors, School Support and Evaluation Officers (SSEOs), Associate Director/Director level, and other senior post-holders whose role descriptions and profiles were accessible on the CIS corporate website also performed tasks directly related to accreditation. This was a possible participant base likely to be familiar with the work of their less-senior administrative colleagues, but also one rich in experiences across time and place: ECIS/CIS board-level involvement, international school leadership experience, and participation as accreditation volunteers. Given the characteristic confidentiality of the accreditation process, which can be traced in

writing to the initial ECIS (1970) framework, singling out random volunteers for interview would have been questionable; however, tapping into this vantage point via advisors and executives who held, or had held, more senior leadership positions seemed viable.

Furthermore, at the time, this cluster of *Superordinate Players* did not appear to contain any German nationals. Rather, it was comprised heavily of Anglo-American educators, making it a uniquely juxtaposed comparative group to the potentially more local *Constituent Actors*.

6.2.4. *Elite Perspectives and an Open Door*

With comparative groups taking shape, attention could be turned to interview design. First, however, it is important to clarify two matters: The quasi-elite nature of the clusters identified; and, the potential for discovery of other perspectives.

Constituent Actors in Berlin-Brandenburg, ECIS/CIS *Superordinate Players*, and myself, as researcher, could be considered advantaged members of global civil society: Primarily ethnically European persons holding managerial roles from wealthier European and/or New World nations, and generally in possession of university degrees from Western countries. We could be grouped into Kellecioglu's (2017) classification of "the managerial quasi-elites," or key players in "academia, polity, bureaucracy, the staff of international organizations, transnational corporations" and "other upper middle-class individuals" (p.4), whose clout and influence does not exist in isolation. As Fricker (2007) suggests, "power is… dependent on practical coordination with other social agents" (loc.184 of 2672). Hence, we might imagine "the managerial quasi-elites" existing in close proximity to "the dominant economic elites" (Kellecioglu, 2017), who in a direct or less direct sense are their clients and patrons, and "the dominant political semi-elites" (p.4), whose support and partnership their roles are dependent. When exploring a narrative in which they have participated, elites may be knowingly, or unintentionally, adept at image preservation (Ozga, 2000). This amplified the importance of triangulating interviews with complementary data sources to strengthen viewpoints (ibid; see also: Glaser and Strauss, 1967), fill gaps, and/or mitigate perspectives of participants and the researcher.

Moreover, it can be challenging for the researcher to predict the precise number and composition of groups they will involve at the onset of a study (ibid); nor can they

know who or what might emerge as valuable and appropriate data, or what problems will be encountered that necessitate new thinking, or reconsiderations. Consequently, I would leave the door open for discovery of other perspectives, participation groups, or additional data that might support understanding (ibid). To make this possible, interview materials would be designed to allow flexibility (ibid) should groups change, develop, be difficult to access, or if it were determined that emergent data was insufficient to answer the study's research questions.

6.3.   Interview Design

The prospect of working with heterogeneous groups gave rise to awareness that individuals in the *Constitute Actor* and *Superordinate Player* clusters would be functioning under different "structural conditions" (Glaser and Strauss, 2006, p.65). Everything from individual availability, to location of interviews, associated cultural and organizational pressures, and relationships to the researcher would vary both within and across groups, potentially impacting on data collection (ibid). Anticipating this, and to create scope for other possible developments, a style of interviewing would be required that offered some degree of flexibility. However, this would need to be balanced with an approach structured specifically to ascertaining the type of knowledge required (Gough, 2002), and to the relationship of the expected contributors to the researcher and the problem being investigated.

6.3.1.   Style of Interviewing

When utilizing interviewing as a means to data collection, Knox and Burkard (2009) encourage an overt explanation of application to the study. To provide this, I explored life history approaches to interviewing (Bertaux, 1981; Thompson, 1981), "in-depth, phenomenologically based interviewing" (Seidman, 2006, p.ix), which embraces elements of the prior tradition, ethnographic (Woods, 1986), less-structured (Knox and Burkard, 2009), open-ended (Turner, 2010), and other classic approaches (McNamara, n.d.)

Given my researcher identity, and limited experience with academic interviewing, I was concerned that less-structured interviews could deleteriously influence the "the language used, questions asked" and thus the interpretations drawn (Mason-Bish, 2019, p.265). The potential also existed for quasi-elite (Kellecioglu, 2017) participants to wittingly or unwittingly dominate a rather free-flowing discussion (Ozga, 2000). Moreover, less-structured approaches did not seem suitable for

extracting the required range of *specific*, "in-depth information pertaining to participants' experiences and viewpoints" (Turner, 2010, p.754) on 'international' accreditation through CIS and its forbearer, ECIS.

On the other hand, standardized open-ended interviewing where "the same open-ended questions are asked to all interviewees" (McNamara, n.d.) could be structured to extract specific knowledge regarding primary task, pillars, and carries, while still being supple enough to embrace strategies emanating in other approaches to interviewing. This technique enables "faster interviews that can be more easily analyzed and compared" (ibid), allowing questions to be constructed in advance and ordered to extract analogous evidence at various points, supporting evaluation of data (Turner, 2010). Hence, it was an approach well suited to applying a strategy of analysis by constant comparison to establish progressively more developed understanding (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

Further, designing interviews in this way allows "participants to contribute as much detailed information as they desire," and permits researchers to pose follow-up questions to seek clarity or obtain further insights (ibid, p.756). This accords the flexibility "to move the interview forward as much as possible by building on what the participant has begun to share" (Seidman, 2006, p.81), while ensuring all pre-prepared questions—effectively, the knowledge sought—are covered. Given sensitivities of researcher identity, this approach would also make interview content more explicit, ensuring those involved in the study fully understood what they would be contributing (BERA, 2018).

6.3.2. Writing Interview Questions

With a style of interviewing chosen, the next step was developing questions. As Turner (2010) writes:

> **Creating effective… questions for the interview process is one of the most crucial components to interview design (p.757).**

It is said questions should enable researchers "to dig dip into the experiences and/or knowledge of the participants in order to gain maximum data from the interviews" (ibid, p.757). With this in mind, ten sequentially designed questions were developed.

Insights from Bunnell (2016c), who has linked Scott's (2014) framework to questions intended to probe institutionalization and locate primary task in international schools were drawn on:

- **What *should* an IS[1] do? (Regulative Pillar)**
- **What would we expec*t* an IS to do? (The Normative Pillar)**
- **What would we like an IS to do? (The Cultural-Cognitive Pillar)**
- **What is the official task of an IS? (The Primary Task) (Bunnell, 2016c).**

It was conjectured that these questions could to be retooled and utilized to 'dig' into the institutionalization of CIS as an accreditation provider in the Berlin-Brandenburg context, and to extract evidence of its primary task in this setting. All four questions were modified so their focus was on CIS as an accrediting body (Questions 2., 3., 4., and 5. – Appendix C). Next, a question (Question 1. – Appendix C) was constructed to precede these and immediately involve participants in interviews (McNamara, n.d.). This background/warm-up question would 'dip' into each informant's more general experiences related to CIS and ECIS before interviews progressed to 'dig' deeper, extrapolating more particular details (Seidman, 2006) related to the case study context in Questions 2.–5. (Appendix C). Mason-Bish (2019) highlights the utility of such an approach when working with elite groups: Acknowledging an individual's "particular role and expertise before moving on to more specific questions" can be a strategy for building unthreatening interview relationships (p.268). Following on from this, an open-ended question pertaining to key players and roles in the delivery of CIS' primary task (Question 6.a. – Appendix C) was constructed. This question was intended to broaden insights into institutional pillars, carriers, and primary task relative to the Berlin-Brandenburg setting.

Collectively, Questions 1.–6.a. (Appendix C) were more factual, open-ended background, knowledge- and experience-related 'digging' and 'dipping' (Turner, 2010) questions intended to build understanding of key concepts and affinity with participants. Taking researcher identity into consideration, this was judged to be a useful strategy before proceeding with potentially more complex questions about accreditation (Questions 6.b.–10. – Appendix C) (McNamara, n.d.). To texturize understandings of legitimacy 'building' and 'maintenance,' Question 6.b. (Appendix C) would provide informants the opportunity to reflect on factors that *helped* or *hindered* the delivery of CIS' primary task in Berlin-Brandenburg. Turner's (2010)

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[1] IS = International School.

advice on negating assumptions by offering dichotomous avenues for discussion—
i.e., *helped* or *hindered*—was utilized in this question, and others that followed.
Subsequently, two questions were structured to draw out understandings of other
accreditation providers, and the IB, in relation to CIS in Berlin-Brandenburg
(Questions 7. and 8. – Appendix C). These, and the final two questions (Questions 9.
and 10. – Appendix C) were designed to extract insights related to the inquiry's sub-
questions, which, it was hoped, would elicit other peripheral or central themes
pertaining to CIS' institutionalization in Berlin-Brandenburg that could be evidenced
in the pillars and carriers.

Finally, the entire question battery was audited for the word 'why,' a potentially
deleterious device that can infer a meaningful "cause-effect relationship that may not
truly exist," or load a question stirring defensiveness and impeding openness
(McNamara, n.d.). All 'why' constructions were reworded, and questions were divided
into two sub-sets, each slightly tailored for the respective project clusters: Questions
for Sub-Group 1, appropriate *Superordinate Players* (Appendix C)*;* and, Questions
for Sub-Group 2, suitable *Constituent Actors* (Appendix C). This paved the way for
trialing these questions in two pilot interviews.

A rationale for, and learning from pilot interviewing is explored next, including a
detailed overview of ethical considerations.

Chapter 7.0. – Pilot Interviews and Ethical Considerations

7.0.   Introduction

This chapter details the purpose and planning of the study's pilot interviews, including an overview of ethical considerations to prioritize participant safety (Knox and Burkard, 2009). Learning from pilot interviews is discussed with a focus on how they supported researcher training and proficiency (van Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001). The development of techniques and tools stemming from these experiences is clarified.

7.1.   Why Pilot Interviews?

Seidman's (2006) reminds us that interviewing obliges researchers to:

> **keep our egos in check. It requires that we realize we are not the center of the world. It demands that our actions as interviewers indicate that others' stories are important (p.9).**

As I had limited experience with research interviewing, including strategies of ego minimization to enable "the hard work of listening" (ibid, p.81), I would need to cultivate these and other soft skills, while also developing the technical proficiencies of simultaneous transcription, coding, and analysis to progressively understand data (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Consequently, pilot interviews would be employed to confirm research tools were well-suited for the collection of desired data (van Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001), and to ensure my lack of prior experience did not weaken the study (Seidman, 2006).

Instructional (van Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001; Turner, 2010) and practical articles (McLafferty, 2004) and books (Seidman, 2006; Woods, 1986) assisted in ascertaining the purpose and application of pilot interviews: To refine skills, tools, and questions, ensuring all were sufficient for implementing research design. Piloting also enables evaluation of methodology and provides opportunities to identify and resolve problems that might arise in the actual inquiry (Knox and Burkard, 2009). Accordingly, the position is adopted that researchers should report the entirety of their study, including piloting (Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001).

7.2. Ethical Considerations, Informed Consent, and Pilot Participants

The quintessential ethical challenge of interviewing is ensuring a conversation "yields rich and meaningful data while simultaneously helping participants feel safe enough to explore in-depth often difficult experiences with a relative stranger" (Knox and Burkard, 2009, p.566). Consequently, planning of pilot interviews began by developing a comprehensive ethical perspective.

7.2.1. Ethical Considerations and Informed Consent

All project interviews would adhere to the British Educational Research Association (BERA) "tenets of best ethical practice" (McCulloch, 2018, p.iii). The BERA (2018) tenets reflect ethical standards and practices that have supported an extended "community of researchers well in the past and" should "continue to do so in the future" (McCulloch, 2018, p.iii). Guided by these principles, a comprehensive *Letter of Introduction* (Appendix A) was drafted. In addition to serving as a formal introduction to participants, this letter made them aware of the project's statement of *Ethical Considerations/Informed Consent* (Appendix B), which all participants would be asked to co-sign with me. This document stated the **Research Title**, and included an introduction to myself, the **Research Lead**. My personal contact details were shared and participants were assured they could contact me at any time. Also clarified was my most recent professional role, and the years I had worked in the field. It was specified the study was being carried out in my academic capacity at the University of Bath. **Supervision** information was provided, pointing out who at the university was overseeing my work.

Next, the project's **Aims/Purpose** were addressed, and background readings that had been influential were cited. It was made clear that while the project would be facilitated as a case study specific to one context, it aspired to "extend knowledge and understanding in all areas of educational activity" (BERA, 2018, p.3). Following on from this, **Ethical Standards** were introduced. This included an overview of BERA and a web-address. It was highlighted that the most recent revision of the BERA guidelines reflected "the rise of social media and online communities, new legislative requirements, and the growing impact… of internationalisation and globalization" (McCulloch, 2018, p.iii). Recognizing the pluralistic social nature of international schools and 'international' accreditation, it was also made clear that BERA guidelines may not address every situation in "different cultural contexts" (ibid,

p.2); therefore, the researcher, in coordination with his supervisors, would make the most appropriate contextual judgments possible (ibid).

A statement regarding the type of **Participants** (Appendix B) sought followed. This preceded an explanation of the **Pilot Interviews** (Appendix B), leading to clarification of the project's qualitative **Methodology** (Appendix B) and reliance on insights shared by participants via standardized open-ended interviews. This type of interviewing was explained and defined. An expected time commitment (60–90 minutes), the number of questions to be answered, modes of participation (in person or via Skype), and a statement committing to a mutually agreed interview time and place, with priority being interviewee comfort (Seidman, 2006) were provided in a section entitled **Requirements**.

Under the heading **Data Storage** (Appendix B), participants were informed that, with their consent, interviews would be recorded and they were invited to request the digital file. It was clarified that names of interviewees would not be stored digitally and that the researcher was specifically aware of the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) guidelines. Reassurances were provided that data would only be used for this project and any explicitly related publications. Transcribed and coded data would not be shared beyond the researcher and his supervisors, and no stored data would be shared with third persons. Recordings would be stored digitally until after the candidate's viva voca and any corrections stemming from this were made.

A statement of **Confidentiality** discussed anonymity and disaggregation of names from data. The issue of **Discomfort/Risk** was also made explicit. It was clarified that should a participant show signs of discomfort, "the interviewer… has the responsibility to pull back" (Seidman, 2006, p.108). Interviewees were assured that recording devices would be turned off, specific interview questions could be skipped, and the interview would be paused or concluded if a participant felt in any way unsettled. Right of **Withdrawal** was also accorded at any time, without explanation (BERA, 2018). Assurances were provided that any information contributed by a participant who had withdrawn would be redacted from the study.

A declaration on **Results** confirmed that participants would receive a summary of key findings and the project manuscript would be made available to them, as would any publications that were explicitly related to the study. A "modest statement" of **Participant Benefits** was also incorporated to "justify the risk" inherent to

participation (Seidman, 2006, p.69). Lastly, drawing on BERA (2018) guidelines, **Concluding Thoughts** were provided:

> **all educational research should be conducted within *an ethic of respect* for: the person; knowledge; democratic values; the quality of educational research; and academic freedom (p.5).**

My project's *Ethical Considerations/Informed Consent* (Appendix B) statement exemplified a deliberate intent to uphold these expectations. In addition to this document, and the *Letter of Introduction* (Appendix A), an overview of *Interview Questions* (Appendix C), and a *Glossary of Key Terminology* (Appendix D) were produced. These would introduce participants to project specific questions, language, and terminology (McNamara, n.d.). Collectively, this quartet of materials would "ensure that all potential participants" understood to the fullest what the study entailed (BERA, 2018, p.9).

7.2.2. Pilot Participants

In selecting participants, the concept of purposeful sampling would be applied: I would identify individuals who could maximize understanding fundamental "to the purpose of the research, thus the term *purposeful* sampling" (Patton, 1990, p.169). Within this tradition I sought intensity samples, or able interpreters of the "phenomenon of interest"—the institutionalization and legitimacy of 'international' accreditation as facilitated by CIS and ECIS in Berlin-Brandenburg—who were well-informed, "but not unusual cases" (Patton, 1990, p.171). For piloting, it was also essential that possible participants held professional roles comparable to those whom would later participate in the study (Turner, 2010).

Two suitable individuals taking part in a conference that I would attend in the Spring of 2019 were identified: 1) the CEO of an organization in "the 'traditional' supply chain" (Bunnell, 2014, p.13) of international schools who was familiar with the accreditation work of ECIS and CIS and had some knowledge of the Berlin-Brandenburg educational landscape; and, 2) the head of a state-run school in Berlin-Brandenburg utilizing a US-based regional accrediting agency. My prior interactions with these individuals had been peripheral, but I was familiar enough with them and their organizations to be confident they were representative samples. Both received introductory emails highlighting the general nature of my research. Each replied showing interest, and agreed to receive a digital portfolio containing the *Letter of Introduction* (Appendix A), the *Ethical Considerations/Informed Consent* form

(Appendix B)*, the *Interview Questions* (Appendix C), and the *Glossary of Key Terminology* (Appendix D). After review of these materials, the two agreed to participate. The Questions for Sub-Group 1 (Appendix C), designed for participants who were *Superordinate Players* would be piloted by the CEO of the organization in "the 'traditional' supply chain" (Bunnell, 2014, p.13); the Questions for Sub-Group 2 (Appendix C), tailored for suitable *Constituent Actors* (Appendix C), would be piloted by the head of the state-run school in Berlin-Brandenburg.

While these individuals were not perfectly identical to those who would later participate in the study, and neither were German, their insights reflected those of an executive in "the 'traditional' supply chain" (Bunnell, 2014, p.13) and a school leader in Berlin-Brandenburg, dichotomous vantage points that could be analyzed to appreciate the effectiveness of the tools I had developed and inform the next phase of my work.

7.3. Reporting of Pilot Interviews

If the conference setting was unsuitable, the option of facilitating interviews over Skype (Appendix B) at a later time was given. Both agreed to conduct interviews at the conference. The order and arrangement of interviews was determined by participant availability and individual comfort (Appendix B), which was reinforced in face-to-face communication at the conference leading up to appointments. Elucidating how interviews were conducted and highlighting relevant learning reflect a commitment to "increasing the transparency of the interview process" (Knox and Burkard, 2009, p.572).

7.3.1. Before, During, and After Interviews

Balancing interviewee comfort with tight windows of availability, potential lack of privacy, and possibility for disruption or excess noise (Seidman, 2006) at the conference were concerns. Arriving early for both appointments provided time to address these matters, setting the tone for an open, trusting relationship (ibid). One interview took place in a discreet lounge area; the second commenced off-site in a small café. Both interviews were facilitated in English.

Before each interview, to clarify the nature of the project and their involvement, participants could ask questions about the portfolio of materials received (McNamara, n.d.). Out of respect, and to underscore that a record of the conversation would exist should discrepancies arise (Seidman, 2006), consent to

record the interview was also obtained in person (McNamara, n.d.). Participants were shown the recording device, an unobtrusive one (Seidman, 2006) with backlighting that shutdown after several minutes. Permission to take notes was sought (McNamara, n.d.).

During interviews, when posing purposely-designed questions, the varied conditions (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) of each interview required slight rephrasing. Questions were asked one at a time (McNamara, n.d.). If a topic emerged earlier than scripted, the sequencing of questions was varied (Knox and Burkard, 2009). This progressed conversations. The phrase 'thank you' was also found to be a respectful way to move on when a question had been saturated.

A philosophy of "LISTEN MORE, TALK LESS" (Seidman, 2006, p.78) was applied. Notes consisting primarily of key words and brief phrases were made discreetly to support active listening, construct follow-up questions (ibid), and support a process of constant comparison (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Hallberg, 2006). Careful attention to tone and phrasing of follow-up questions was utilized to limit researcher impact (Seidman, 2006). At one point, however, a participant was asked to tell a story to illustrate their experience, a follow-up strategy that can broaden understandings (ibid); this approach was met with a friendly reminder that accreditation visits are facilitated within a culture of confidentiality, something that I was well aware of, but still a valuable reminder that in research there will be matters arising that may not be appropriate to discuss (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

Given my identity in relation to the groups being studied, and the concern that this could affect both researcher and participant perspectives (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009), when the recorder was turned on (during formal data collection), I was deliberately neutral (McNamara, n.d.). However, at the end of both interviews, when the recorder was turned off, participants were given the opportunity to ask questions. This seemed an ethically balanced approach preferable to leaving the participant "to guess what use the researcher will make of his or her lengthy descriptions and narratives after the interview has taken place" (Brinkmann, 2013, p.165). It was made clear that opinions shared before and after the recorded conversation were not part of data collection (Seidman, 2006). After participants departed, notes were made pertaining to the suitability of the interview locations and anything else regarding the interview as a learning experience and data collection exercise that would aid understanding, or support analysis and the making of comparisons (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Hallberg, 2006).

7.3.2. Transcribing, Coding, and Data Appropriation

To know the data as well as possible, I transcribed interviews myself (Seidman, 2006). Considering that, "Interpretive accounts are grounded in the language of the people studied" (Maxwell, 1992, p.289), and that researcher "consciousness must interact with the words of the participant recorded as fully and as accurately as possible" (Seidman, 2006, p.114), I develop a transcription protocol (Appendix L). This would guide my work, clarifying the precision with which participant responses would be documented and how identities of specific individuals, organizations, and non-public figures would be protected in transcripts. Transcription and coding would proceed in the order interviews had been carried out: Sub-Group 1, leader in "the 'traditional' supply chain" (Bunnell, 2014, p.13), followed by Sub-Group 2, school head in Berlin-Brandenburg. This proved a useful approach and an unplanned element of what would become a process of synchronized, on-going constant comparison (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Hallberg, 2006). It enabled the case study region to gradually come into focus; differences in perspective could be seen as participant geographical distance receded.

Initial coding was done during transcription (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) with interesting, surprising, and unclear content annotated, including commentary on emergent similarities and differences in the conversations. This act of memo-writing during coding supported awareness of emerging data as each transcript developed, enabling a record of ideas that could be comparatively analyzed during the next phases of coding to elicit deeper understanding (ibid).

The second phase of coding was completed by hand using a printout of the transcript. Evidence of primary task was highlighted, and specific marks were developed to indicate content that could be ascribed to the Regulative, Normative, or Cultural-Cognitive pillars of institutionalization (Scott, 2014). Annotations were also used to denote apparent carriers of each pillar. These marks too could be compared and analyzed as they developed across transcripts, furthering awareness of patterns in the data (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

Next, relevant data (Seidman, 2006) was moved manually from transcript printouts into two separate hand-drafted templates, one for each interview, adapted from the Scott (2014) framework; these templates also included space for a summative description of each participant's characterization of CIS' primary task. Bearing in mind that the pillars—and the carries running through them—play a role in shaping,

and at the same time are shaped by primary task (Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2016a; Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2017a), data points were appropriated to specific pillars and carriers in the hand-drafted templates relative to each participants characterization of primary task. During this process, I critically reexamined memo-writing and annotation done during initial coding (Hallberg, 2006). This supported the appropriation of data to the pillars and carriers relative to understandings of primary task and provided further opportunity for comparative analysis of emergent similarities or divergence (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) between the two interviews.

Content was then moved into two digital versions of the adapted Scott (2014) framework template (Appendix M – exemplar). This resulted in additional rethinking of data, evidencing the value of blending media (Seidman, 2006) in the process of comparing accounts (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

Notes taken during interviews (Woods, 1986) and the original recordings (Seidman, 2006) were then revisited and considered in relation to data points embedded in the digitalized templates. This ensured these memos and the interview recordings (Douglas, 2003) were also part of the process of on-going comparison (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The end result was two representations of CIS' primary task, the pillars supporting CIS' institutionalization, and the carriers flowing through them from complementary perspectives, a *Supply Chain Participant* and a *Berlin-Brandenburg Participant*.

7.4.   Insights Arising and Resulting Modifications

A process of constant comparison (ibid) during transcribing, coding, and data appropriation developed understanding that enabled data appropriated to the two adapted Scott (2014) framework templates (Appendix M – exemplar) to elicit insights that could be reported. These were useful in informing the study's next steps.

7.4.1. Primary Task and its Validation

Descriptions of CIS' primary task as an accreditation provider in Berlin-Brandenburg varied slightly:

> **Benchmarking the institution against an externally defined set of international standards as evaluated by peers to determine the school worthy of the kitemark 'international' school (*Supply Chain Participant*).**

An outside, impersonal audit of the school curriculum—in a broad sense, including teaching and learning practice—with respect to international standards (*Berlin-Brandenburg Participant*).

Illustrating the value of analyzing dichotomous vantage points, the *Berlin-Brandenburg Participant* showed acute understanding, appropriated as Activities in the Normative Pillar, related to the institutional arrangement of social processes (Scott, 2014) within accredited schools; this contrasted with the *Supply Chain Participant*'s awareness of similar repetitious routines and habits from the perspective of accrediting agencies. Where the Cultural-Cognitive Pillar was carried by Symbolic Systems, the *Berlin-Brandenburg Participant*'s formation of categories according to their beliefs and understandings (ibid) revealed pragmatic typifications of accreditation as a method for facilitating school effectiveness, while the *Supply Chain Participant* conveyed an idealized perception of accreditation as a process of internationalization. In both cases, perspectives appeared informed by, and to be informing, characterizations of primary task. Hence, methodology was delivering a "proportioned view of the evidence" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p.68) activated by and aligned with understandings of primary task. Taken collectively, a holistic picture of CIS' institutional conventions and systemic flows were emergent.

However, a noticeably higher volume of data points was attributable to the Normative and Cultural-Cognitive pillars, particularly where conveyed by Symbolic Systems, Relational Systems, and Activities as carriers. Far less data was appropriable to the Regulative Pillar and Artifacts as carriers. Was this indicative of a pattern to be understood, or the by-product of interview question design? The emergence of this data arrangement, and other insights and experiences from piloting resulted in further development of tools and techniques.

7.4.2. Modification and Further Development of Techniques and Tools

The piloting process proved helpful on several fronts. Valuable experiences in interacting with participants, facilitating interviews, transcribing, coding, appropriating, and analyzing empirical materials were gained. The process also demonstrated interview design could yield significant data that, when appropriated to the adapted Scott (2014) framework, would support understanding of CIS' institutionalization that could be used to unlock awareness of its institutional legitimacy in a specific context. However, piloting had also elucidated the need to revise and enhance techniques and research tools to maximize the study's final phase.

For example, the project sought to answer how CIS had 'built' and 'maintained' institutional legitimacy in a specific context, Berlin-Brandenburg, with which both pilot participants were familiar. Later participants, particularly those *inside* the CIS constellation, might have less specific contextual awareness. Resultingly, a description of the case study region, **Berlin-Brandenburg**, was embedded into a revised *Glossary of Key Terminology* (Appendix H). Furthermore, having interview recordings in my possession led me to password-protect them in a safeguarded file on my computer (Kelly, 2017). Explicit reference to this practice in the **Data Storage** section of the *Ethical Considerations/Informed Consent* (Appendix F) document was added. When given a chance to ask questions after formal conversations, pilot participants had inquired into a research completion date. This too was embedded into my *Ethical Considerations/Informed Consent* (Appendix F) materials and added to the revised *Letter of Introduction* (Appendix E). By this point, I had also begun to recognize the plausible vulnerability of a potentially smaller pool of local participants in and around Berlin-Brandenburg. Consequently, I revised the project's statement of **Confidentiality** in my *Ethical Considerations/Informed Consent* (Appendix F) form so it more explicitly pointed out that while anonymity is a priority, it is difficult to fully guarantee (Seidman, 2006).

The battery of questions itself was also revised. Critically relistening to recordings provided benefits that transcended constant comparison (Douglas, 2003); this exercise also helped maximize my competence as an interviewer (Seidman, 2006) by supporting the identification of questions that were hard to articulate, perhaps due to over-scaffolding (a., b., c. components). This had slowed interviews, and complicated comprehension. Most of these questions were reworded and decoupled. Italics and bullet points were incorporated to enhance structure and add emphasis. Next, anticipating varied conditions (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) in later conversations, a note inviting participants to follow along while the interviewer posed questions was incorporated into a revised *Interview Questions* (Appendix G) document.

Relistening also revealed that perspectives elicited by the participants focused primarily on CIS accreditation, and in some cases accreditation more generally, with intermittent mention of ECIS. Given that until 2003, ECIS had facilitated the accreditation work CIS would inherit and develop, it was determined that more specific insight into the years prior to agency partition would support understanding of how CIS had 'built' and 'maintained' institutional legitimacy. Consequently,

preexisting questions were reworded to enable reflection on both CIS *and* ECIS as accreditation providers (Appendix G). Noting that organizational change can result in long-term or momentary shifts in primary task performance (Miller and Rice, 1967), a question was also incorporated that ascertained the extent to which the primary task of ECIS accreditation was perceived to be similar or different from that of CIS (Question 9. – Appendix G).

These considerations led to the installation of "a grand tour question" (Spradley, 1979, p.86) (Question 2. - Appendix G) to better capture the chronological scope of the years binding the study. This approach would require participants to give "a verbal description of significant features" pertaining to their involvement (Spradley 1979, p.87) on the ECIS/CIS accreditation scene between 1989–2019. The question was framed as a reconstruction, enabling participants to revisit matters of significance related to ECIS/CIS accreditation and value them in relation to the present context (Seidman, 2006) with reference, as much as possible, to Berlin-Brandenburg. Ideally, in the course of ensuing interviews, if vignettes spanning the 1989–2019 timeframe could be gathered using "grand tour" questions (Spradley, 1979, p.86), a picture of the institutional evolution of CIS as an accreditation provider would emerge that reflected proportionate attention to events (Yin, 2018), and the influence of key people (Simons, 2012) or groups over time.

The development of further questions addressed gaps identifiable in the data. In pilot interviews, asking what CIS *should* do for international schools in Berlin-Brandenburg (Question 2. – Appendix C), a question based on Bunnell's work (2016c), extracted some, but not significant data attributable to the Regulative Pillar. To better establish the importance of this pillar, or lack thereof, an additional question was added. It asked participants to consider "who or what" had granted "ECIS/CIS the privilege to do the things" they *should* do (Question 4. – Appendix G) as accrediting bodies. Also incorporated was a spontaneous follow-up question used with positive effect in a pilot interview. This question required consideration of anything ECIS or CIS *shouldn't have done* as accreditation providers (Question 7. – Appendix G). It was intended to support enhanced understanding of challenges associated with legitimacy 'building' and 'maintenance' in the case study context. Greater appreciation of other CIS services and their interconnectivity with accreditation emerged from piloting as well. This informed the addition of a question to illuminate additional services provided by CIS and their relationship to accreditation's institutionalization in Berlin-Brandenburg (Question 13. – Appendix G). This extended array of questions, moreover, would

offer greater scope for participants to discuss Artifacts as carries—another gap in pilot data.

Two-parts of one question were also omitted. Question 10., parts a. and b. (Appendix C), had asked about "past or present challenges" and "past or present opportunities" for CIS as an accreditation provider. While shedding some insight into the Regulative Pillar, these questions had led participants back to issues raised earlier in conversations. This repetition was time consuming. As additional questions had been added to broaden understanding of the Regulative Pillar, these sub-parts were removed.

As inquiry **Sub-Questions** had been used as stimulus for several interview questions, they were also more explicitly documented in the *Ethical Considerations/Informed Consent* (Appendix F) statement. This would better enable participants to discern the relationship between the questions guiding the study and those being asked in interviews.

Following on from this, though Knox and Burkard (2009) suggest "there is no empirical basis to support the assumption" (p.572) that informants who are primed prior to an interview provided enhanced data, the piloting experience indicated participants had taken time to preview the materials they were given. Therefore, to promote analytical and evaluative thinking, all of questions in the amended battery (Appendix G) were enhanced using "Bloom's Taxonomy Action Verbs" modified from Anderson and Krathwohl (2011). Then, given to an increase in the number of questions, the proposition of a 90-minute interview—long enough to give interviewees the feeling "they are being taken seriously" and for participants to work through all of the questions (Seidman, 2006, p.20)—was written into the project's updated *Letter of Introduction* (Appendix E) and *Ethical Considerations/Informed Consent* (Appendix F).

These modifications, together with general rephasing and streamlining in the materials that would be provided to participants, equipped me with structured and experientially informed tools for collecting project-specific data. The application of this set of resources is detailed in the next chapter.

Chapter 8.0. – Methods of Project-Specific Data Collection

8.0.   Introduction

Addressed in this chapter are methods of project-specific data collection. How participants were identified, located, contacted, and selected is reviewed. Profiles of participants are shared and interview processes are detailed. Challenges arising and how they were overcome are discussed, and approaches to transcription, coding, and data appropriation are explained.

8.1.   Methods of Data Collection

Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) characterize methods as the "range of approaches" ultimate employed "to gather data" for application "as a basis for inference and interpretation, for explanation and prediction" (p.47). With piloting completed, and relevant materials updated, attention could be turned to locating, contacting, and selecting appropriate participants and conducting standardized open-ended interviews (McNamara, n.d.; Turner, 2010) as a primary method of data collection.

8.1.1.   Sampling Methods: Identifying and Locating Participants

My intention was to identify knowledgeable, "information-rich cases" (Patton, 1990, p.181) or well-informed interpreters of 'international' accreditation as facilitated by CIS and its predecessor, ECIS, relative to Berlin-Brandenburg. As in pilot interviews, I drew on the principals of purposeful intensity sampling (ibid). The installation of "a grand tour question" (Spradley, 1979, p.86) (Question 2. – Appendix G), however, would require participants to provide descriptions of their involvement in the ECIS/CIS accreditation scene at various points during the years binding the study. This meant locating and selecting informants whose overlapping experiences could represent the years 1989–2019. Consequently, I would blend the concept of purposeful intensity sampling with operational sampling (Patton, 1990) of particular periods. The latter form of sampling seeks, at specific points in time, "incidents, slices of life… or people" relevant to what is being investigated (Patton, 1990, p.177). When pieced together, such samples could be "representative of the phenomenon of interest" (ibid, p.177) during the time ECIS/CIS had operated in Berlin-Brandenburg.

Three publications supported me in locating and identifying appropriate individuals

who had been active in the ECIS/CIS accreditation ecosystem over the last 30 years and might have adequate awareness of the Berlin-Brandenburg region: *International Schools Journal* (*ISJ*), *International School* (*IS*) magazine, and *The International Educator* (*TIE*) newspaper. Differentiating these titles from more traditional research journals is their coverage of achievements in the field, both personal and organizational; their detailed reporting of significant conferences, including captioned photos; articles and retrospectives about significant practitioners in the history of the international schooling movement; and, their treatment of professional transience and new appointments in the field. Given historical links between ECIS and two of these publications, *ISJ* and *IS*, there was ample coverage of developments in accreditation, highlights from ECIS conferences, details of ECIS and CIS appointments, considerable insights into the splitting up of the aforementioned agencies, as well as information and news about US-based accreditors. Print and digital versions of all three titles were perused spanning the period binding the study. This resulted in an extensive list of key players in international school accreditation, and individuals who had held leading roles in the FRG and Berlin-Brandenburg's international schools.

In Berlin-Brandenburg, I also consulted with "well-situated people" (Patton, 1990, p.176) in my professional network. This led me to an informant identified in *TIE* as an early *Constituent Actor* in the region. As I discussed my project with others involved in the Berlin-Brandenburg education scene, a process of snowballing, "*or chain sampling*" (ibid) revealed further possible participants as "a few key names" were frequently mentioned (ibid, p.176).

At CIS, I reached out to the Executive Director as an organizational "gatekeeper" (Seidman, 2006, p.45). They were happy to help. I was invited to the CIS headquarters in Leiden, the Netherlands, and was introduced to a small group of interested potential participants who were made aware of my work. Having acted as a gracious conduit, the Executive Director also recognized that they should not over-enthusiastically encourage employees to be involved. An understanding was reached that I would personally contact potential CIS participants and involvement would be at their confidential discretion. It was also agreed that I would respect periods of intense organizational activity, setting up interviews outside of these times. Thus, while imposing some controls, working through a "formal gatekeeper" (ibid, p.45) had helped frame the ethics of access.

Visiting the CIS headquarters in Leiden accorded firsthand learning about the

organization, and enabled the collection of documentation like the original ECIS accreditation protocol (ECIS, 1970). It was also an opportunity to cross-reference names of possible participants discovered in professional publications, and the name of an individual I had been introduced to through a fellow research student.

Using these varied strategies, I assembled a focused portfolio, including contact details, of potentially "information-rich key informants" (Patton, 1990, p.176) whose experiences spanned the years binding the study.

8.1.2.   Selection of Participants

Ideally, six participants would be selected, three per sub-group, who had in-depth experiences with ECIS and/or CIS as accreditation providers between 1989–2019 and were likely to have knowledge of the case study context. Focus would be on "the quality of information obtained per sampling unit" (Sandelowski, 1995, p.179) rather than the volume of samples. One participant per sub-group would be chosen who could represent each of the following decades: 1) 1989–1999; 2) 1999–2009; and, 3) 2009–19. Informants would be asked, as part of their interview, the "grand tour question" (Spradley, 1979, p.86) (Question 2. – Appendix G) pertaining to the decade they were selected to represent. This would ensure ample data spanned the years 1989–2019 and that the intensity of samples (Patton, 1990) was balanced throughout the time period being investigated. Ideally, this would present a notionally chronological picture of ECIS and CIS' institutional evolution as accreditation providers in the case study context, supporting understanding of how CIS' institutional legitimacy had been 'built' and 'maintained.'

The next challenge was identifying and making contact with priority participants. Prioritizing *Constituent Actors* was relatively straightforward. Contacts accorded priority were those who had been involved in founding their schools in Berlin-Brandenburg and/or making the decisions, in some capacity, as Director/Head of School or Executive Director/CEO (*Geschäftsführer*) to utilize and/or enact ECIS or CIS accreditation during the years binding the study. Such individuals were frequently German nationals. Secondary contacts were identified who had served as Business Managers/CFOs in Berlin-Brandenburg schools, or schools in neighboring regions between 1989–2019. My knowledge of the role of Business Managers/CFO in these schools suggested that these individuals were usually less involved in accreditation process, and therefore potentially weaker intensity samples (Patton, 1990).

Determining priority of *Superordinate Players* was more complex. Here, a balance of participants would be needed. Priority contacts would be individuals who had led or governed entirely within ECIS (1989–1999); participants who had led or governed within ECIS and CIS whose experience bridged "'the split'" (Ruth, 2015, p.71) (1999–2009); and/or informants who had performed their leadership or governance function solely within CIS (2009–2019). Ideally, these individuals would also have some awareness of the case study context. Fortunately, multiple individuals meeting these specifications were able to be identified. Secondary contacts were those who had held the more public role of Executive Secretary/Director at either ECIS or CIS. While theoretically excellent informants, it would be harder to assure anonymity to the latter, making them potentially more vulnerable participants (BERA, 2018)—hence their secondary designations.

Carefully facilitating the contact process can build a solid foundation for an interviewing relationship (Seidman, 2006). With this in mind, I reached out to seven individuals. Five people received introductory e-mails; one individual was contacted via text message; and, one person was introduced to the project face-to-face. When reaching out to individuals I did not know, how their contact details were acquired was clarified. An opportunity for a "contact visit before the actual interview" (Seidman, 2006, p.46) was also extended.

Six of seven individuals agreed to receive further information and several accepted the invitation for direct, personal contact before an actual interview. So much as possible, personalized explanations as to why each individual was important to my research were provided (Mason-Bish, 2019), and it was communicated that there was no obligation to be involved, nor would there be any consequences should one choose not to participate (Seidman, 2006). After follow-up exchanges, all six individuals considered taking part in the study. Each received an e-portfolio containing the *Letter of Introduction* (Appendix E), the *Ethical Considerations/Informed Consent* form (Appendix F)*,* the *Interview Questions* (Appendix G), and the *Glossary of Key Terminology* (Appendix H).

8.1.3. Facilitating Interviews – Part I: Logistical Arrangements and Challenges

All six individuals receiving the e-portfolio agreed to take part in the study (fortuitously, three participants in each sub-group, with enough collective experience to cover all decades). The participants universally preferred face-to-face conversations. Three interviews took place in Berlin, and three outside of the FRG.

Specific dates, times, locations, and venues for interviews were arranged in advance, with priority being settings where participants would "not feel restricted or uncomfortable" (Turner, 2010, p.757). Interviews were facilitated primarily in English, with German words or phrases used if and when appropriate to support conversations. Meetings took place in a variety of locations: Informant offices, mutually agreed cafés, a discrete hotel conference area, and a participant's private residence. Regrettably, one individual chose to leave the study the day after their interview was conducted. While Seidman (2006) advises not to take the ups and downs of interviewing personally, this was a disappointment, and a loss to the study; however, it evidenced declarations in the *Ethical Considerations/Informed Consent* (Appendix F) documentation had been clear and were effective. The right to withdrawal had been stated, understood, and was granted without question.

Four individuals were contacted as alternative participants, three via e-mail and one via text message. Several contact visits (Seidman, 2006) followed. While these expanded historical understandings of educational developments in Berlin-Brandenburg, they did not lead to participation; one of the four individuals, however, though unable to meet in person for a contact visit (Seidman, 2006), agreed to consider participation. Opportunely, this individual asked if a second person, the Director/CEO of their school, could join the interview, and participate with them. This was agreed as an assurance of comfort for the requesting party. To accommodate these participants, documents in the e-portfolio were modified slightly. Both individuals were sent the following: Glossary *of Key Terminology* (Appendix H), *Letter of Introduction* (Appendix I), *Interview Questions* (Appendix J), and the *Ethical Considerations/Informed Consent* form (Appendix K). An interview was planned and conducted in the office of one of the participants. Again, English was the primary language used, with German words or phrases interspersed if and when appropriate to enhance communication.

8.1.4. Facilitating Interviews – Part II: Processes

Every attempt was made to build on learning in the piloting phase, such as arriving early and adhering to the interview structure (Seidman, 2006). However, the individuals in both sub-groups receiving the "grand tour question" (Spradley, 1979, p.86) (Question 2. – Appendix G) for the years 1989–1999 were found to have considerable depths of historical information to share and it quickly became apparent these conversations would could run beyond 90 minutes. Graciously, both participants were enthused to tell their stories and agreed to answer all of the

questions.

As with the pilot interviews, participants could ask questions about the e-portfolio, the nature of the study, and their participation before starting; consent to record interviews was reconfirmed (McNamara, n.d.); participants were shown the recording device (Seidman, 2006); and, permission, to make notes was acquired (McNamara, n.d.).

Taking researcher identity into account (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009), I was again careful not to impose my "sense of the world" on participants (Seidman, 2006, p.39). Questions were posed one at a time (McNamara, n.d.). If a topic emerged earlier than planned, question order was differentiated (Knox and Burkard, 2009). While each participant answered the scripted questions, each interview presented its own insights. Follow-up queries varied as a result. In each case, appreciation of what informants shared was balanced with probing that brought clarity or took understanding further (Seidman, 2006). At the end of each interview, after the recording device was turned off, participants could pose further questions. Again, I was willing to engage in discussion of their "descriptions and narratives" (Brinkmann, 2013, p.165); it was clarified that this was not part of data collection (Seidman, 2006), but an opportunity to help them appreciate the nature of my work. Reflective notes were made as soon as possible after the culmination of each conversation to aid understanding, analysis, and to support the process of interpretive comparisons (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Hallberg, 2006).

8.2. Participant Profiles

Before detailing transcription, coding, and data appropriation, the profiles of the respective participants will be shared. As with discussions of sampling, participant selection, and the interviews themselves, these descriptions will be anonymized.

8.2.1. Superordinate Players

Superordinate Player data came from three interviews. Each informant answered a "grand tour question" (Spradley, 1979, p.86) (Question 2. – Appendix G) for a single decade. The decade 1989–1999 was assigned to an individual who had played a leading role at ECIS during these years and whose experience with accreditation predated this; their service to CIS continued after "'the split'" (Ruth, 2015, p.71). The participant accorded 1999–2009 had played a governance role within the ECIS/CIS ecosystem during this period. In this capacity, they had been involved in "'the split'"

(ibid, p.71). The individual given the study's final decade, 2009–2019, held a leadership role at CIS during these years.

This sample included significant involvement leading and participating in evaluation visits for CIS and other organizations; the collective accreditation experience of these participants could be traced back to the 1970s. One individual had facilitated visits in the Berlin-Brandenburg region. Respecting the confidentiality of these exercises, they were not asked to specifically elaborate.

Two of these individuals had held educational leadership roles in British, or British international school contexts, while the third had held positions of responsibility in American-themed international schools. This suggested a base of leadership and professional experience that could be characterized as broadly Anglo-American, reflecting the "dominance of English as the main 'international language'" (Hayden and Thompson, 2008, p.16) and the lingua franca of international schools. Given the "English-medium nature of most international schools," educational staff appointees have frequently come "from English-speaking countries" (ibid, p.54). In this sense, these were expatriate processionals whose professional lives and identities were likely to have been impacted by the various positions they had taken up abroad (Bailey and Cooker, 2019).

Only one of the participants had held a permanent role in a German-speaking country. However, all were able to demonstrate some awareness of recent German history, Berlin-Brandenburg, and its educational landscape. This included ample knowledge of Berlin's constellation of international-themed schools. Two of the three participants had held headships at ECIS/CIS-accredited schools. Before joining CIS, one participant had also played a leadership role in a meta organization that operated international schools. Other specific roles at ECIS/CIS held by the trio included: ECIS Board Member, CIS Board Member, ECIS Accreditation Committee Member (the ECIS body that read and had the authority to authorize accreditation reports), Chair of the CIS Board, Assistant Director of ECIS Accreditation Services, Director of ECIS Accreditation Services, Director of Accreditation Services at CIS, Associate Director of School Support and Evaluation at CIS, and CIS International Advisor. Other notable responsibilities and accomplishments included authorship of several CIS protocols, participation in the construction of the first CIS Board, management of a group of SSEOs, and oversight of CIS' schools in Europe.

One participant, furthermore, had done inspection work for Ofsted in the UK, indicative of understanding within this sub-group of the differences between the institutionalized patterns and routines of inspection and accreditation, while another was working as a consultant for an American-based accreditor at the time of their interview, injecting insight of other accrediting organizations into the study. Lastly, one individual in this sub-group had represented CIS on the International Task Force for Child Protection, suggesting awareness of CIS' interconnectivity and interaction within a broader framework of institutional activity (Jepperson, 1991).

8.2.2. Constituent Actors

Data from *Constituent Actors* also came from three interviews. Two participants were local, German professionals who had been founding heads of ECIS/CIS-accredited schools in Berlin-Brandenburg. One founding head handled the "grand tour question" (Spradley, 1979, p.86) (Question 2. – Appendix G) for the years 1989–1999. The second founding head was still active in the Berlin-Brandenburg international schooling scene when their interview was conducted. As one person had left the study before this individual's interview, this founding head represented two decades, 1999–2019. This would turn out to be chronologically useful, as the last sub-group participant was the Business Manager/CFO of a CIS-accredited school in a neighboring region (one that had been part of the GDR), who had, in this role, been through multiple accreditation cycles. This individual, also a local, German professional, had contact with colleagues in Berlin-Brandenburg through the AGIS network, and though not based in the immediate case study context, provided a useful perspective. As similarities had emerged in the interviews of the two founding heads in Berlin-Brandenburg, a participant just "outside the range of those at the center of the study" (Seidman, 2006, p.54) was valuable. The Business Manager/CFO was asked a modified "grand tour question" (Spradley, 1979, p.86) (Question 2. – Appendix J) inviting reflection on experiences with CIS accreditation during their years of international school activity, which also fell within the 1999–2019 timeframe. This afforded the unique perspective of a neighboring outsider who was part of a larger system of international schools in the FRG.

This group's present and past professional experiences could be characterized as broadly local. At the time of writing, one individual was an educational consultant in Berlin-Brandenburg, while another was the Executive Director/CEO (*Geschäftsfürer*) of a private school conglomerate in the region. Other past experiences included community organizing, tax and audit work in a German-setting, and employment as a

civil servant (*Beamter*) in a Berlin bilingual (English-German) school. Of the three, only one had experience with 'international' accreditation prior to founding or working in an international school. As such, this cluster could be said to reflect the perspective of non-expat international school professionals entering the field with a diverse set of previous, identity shaping experiences.

8.2.3. An Additional Perspective

The Business Manager/CFO was joined in their interview by the Director/CEO of their school, another professional well-connected to colleagues in Berlin-Brandenburg through the AGIS network. This informant brought international school and accreditation experience with a range of organizations in varied cultural settings to the study. They had been involved with international schools that had adopted ECIS as an accreditor in the 1990s, and had been trained as an accreditation volunteer by CIS and an American accrediting organization (having served as a volunteer with the American accreditor, but not CIS). This participant had also held the role of IBDP Programme Coordinator in an accredited international school. This brought detailed understanding of the working relations between ECIS/CIS and the IB to the study.

This individual's perspective would contribute helpfully. Their background and experience—having entered international schooling through a more traditional route as an expatriate professional with institutionalized accreditation experience in English-medium contexts—was similar to that of participants in the *Superordinate Player* sub-group; however, their current professional role as Director/CEO leading a school in a German context was more akin to that of *Constituent Actors* in the study, albeit reflected from a non-local vantage point.

The involvement of this individual accorded minimal challenges during the formal interview; although, it did problematize transcription, coding, and data appropriation, solutions to which are highlighted in the next section. Notwithstanding, this participant provided another distinctive and unexpected collection of data, benefiting the inquiry.

8.3. Transcribing, Coding, and Data Appropriation

The interview phase extended over a period of three months in the Spring/Summer of 2019. Predicated on participant and researcher availability, interviews proceeded in no particular order. Thus, transcription and coding began after all interviews had

been completed. Drawing on lessons learned in piloting, data was again unpacked purposefully using a process of synchronized, on-going constant comparison (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Hallberg, 2006). However, a larger number of participants, and other practical challenges, required some adaptation. Processes of transcription, coding, and data appropriation are again reported in full (van Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001).

8.3.1. Transcription

Guided by the project-specific protocol (Appendix L), I personally transcribed interviews. This ensured they were understood intimately and that I was working "with the words of the participant recorded as fully and as accurately as possible" (Seidman, 2006, p.114).

During piloting, the interview with the leader in the "the 'traditional' supply chain" (Bunnell, 2014, p.13) was transcribed first, followed by the school head in Berlin-Brandenburg. This enabled the case study region to gradually come into focus through the processes of transcription and coding. Differences in perspective could be seen as participant geographical distance receded, supporting awareness of patterns in the data relative to both groups (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). I would repeat this approach, transcribing the Sub-Group 1 interviews with *Superordinate Players* first. However, to draw out a chronological representation of the institutional evolution of ECIS and CIS as accreditation providers, the three interviews were transcribed according to the assignment of "grand tour" questions (Spradley, 1979, p.86) (Question 2. – Appendix G): The 1989–1999 interview first, followed by my discussion with the participant who represented the years 1999–2009, and culminating with the 2009–2019 conversation. Here too patterns in the data emerged that could be compared and analyzed relative to arrangements developing chronologically in the other sub-group (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

A modified approach was followed in transcribing *Constituent Actor* interviews. Observing the potency of allowing the case study region to come into focus, the interview with the Business Manager/CFO from a neighboring region, and the Director/CEO of their school was transcribed first. In this transcription, the Business Manager/CFO *Constituent Actor* was assigned the designation Participant 1 (the primary subject), and the Director/CEO was given the label Participant 2 (the secondary subject). This enabled their respective commentary to be easily discernable for coding. Following on from this, transcription preceded chronologically,

with the *Constituent Actors* who were founding school leaders. The interview with the participant who answered the "grand tour question" (Spradley, 1979, p.86) (Question 2. – Appendix G) for 1989–1999 was transcribed first, followed by the participant who had represented 1999–2019.

8.3.2. Coding

As with pilot interviews, coding began during transcription (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) with interesting, surprising, and/or unclear content annotated, including commentary on emergent similarities and differences in the conversations within and between groups. This memo-writing supported understanding of the emerging data as each transcript developed, enabling ideas to be easily compared and analyzed during the later phases of coding to elicit sufficient understanding (ibid). Interviews were then coded as separate cases (Osam and Balbay, 2004) to "make sense of each individual account" (Ayres, Kavanaugh, Knafl, 2003, p.873). This was done by hand with a printout of the transcript. Evidence of primary task was highlighted, and special marks were designated to indicate apparent reference to the Regulative, Normative, and Cultural-Cognitive pillars of institutionalization (Scott, 2014) with additional annotations used to denote possible carriers. These marks would be compared and reflected upon as transcribing progressed furthering awareness of patterns in the data (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Next, to "capture the commonalities of experience" (Ayres, Kavanaugh, Knafl, 2003, p.873), cross-case analysis was performed within each sub-group related to perceptions of CIS' primary task(s) as an accreditation provider in Berlin-Brandenburg. Data from respective interviews was collated to produce a statement that represented an approximate articulation of each sub-group's collective description of primary task.

8.3.3. Data Appropriation

Categorizing relevant data (Seidman, 2006) followed as it was moved manually from transcript printouts to hand-drafted templates, one for each sub-group, adapted from the Scott (2014) framework. These templates, as in piloting, included an area for recording each sub-group's approximate articulations of CIS' primary task. Recalling that the pillars—and the carries running through them—play a role in shaping, and at the same time are shaped by primary task (Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2016a; Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2017a), data points were appropriated to specific pillars and carriers in the hand-drafted templates relative to each sub-group's characterization of primary task. During this process, I reexamined memo-writing and

annotation done during initial coding (Hallberg, 2006). This supported awareness of analogous or contrasting patterns (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) within and between sub-groups. At this point, within sub-groups, similar data emergent in more than one interview was specifically tracked, and merged into common points of reference.

In piloting I had experienced the value of blending media (Seidman, 2006) in the process of comparing accounts (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Next, as a result, content was again moved into two separate digital versions of the adapted Scott (2014) framework template, one for each sub-group (Appendix M – exemplar). This facilitated additional rethinking of data. At this juncture, data points were also color-coded to indicate topics that had surfaced in multiple conversations.

Notes taken during interviews (Woods, 1986) and the original recordings (Seidman, 2006) were, as a final step, revisited and considered in relation to data embedded within the digitalized Scott (2014) templates. This enabled all notes and recordings (Douglas, 2003) to be part of the process of on-going comparison (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The result was two primary data sets exemplifying the pillars of ECIS and CIS' institutionalization and the carriers flowing through and supporting them—a *Superordinate Player* perspective and a *Constituent Actor* vantage point.

8.3.4. Working with the Supplemental Lens

It is necessary to clarify that the comments of the Director/CEO interviewed with the Business Manager/CFO were not represented in the *Constituent Actor* data set. While these words were transcribed and coded together with the commentary of the Business Manager/CFO in the *Constituent Actor* sub-group, they were incorporated into a separate template using the same strategy deployed for the single-perspective lenses in the pilot interviews.

This will be referred to as the study's *Supplemental Lens* as this participant's professional role as the leader of a school in a German context, albeit a non-local, **supplemented** the more local perspectives of the *Constituent Actor* sub-group; meanwhile, having entered international schooling through a more traditional route, as an expatriate professional with previous accreditation experience working in English-medium contexts outside of their home country, they shared similarities with participants in the *Superordinate System* cluster, **supplementing** these vantage points from the perspective of a constituent in the accreditation network.

In the next chapter, interview data from the *Supplemental Lens*, and the two sub-groups is presented together with complementary "*slices of data*" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p.65) that strengthened understanding and/or, following on from interviews, filled apparent gaps. This leads to the identification of themes in CIS' institutionalization as an accreditation provider that will be used to develop understanding of how CIS 'built' and 'maintained' institutional legitimacy in the case study context.

Chapter 9.0. – Data Presentation and Identification of Themes

9.0. Introduction

This chapter presents project specific interview data from the study's *Superordinate Player* and *Constituent Actor sub-groups*, and its *Supplemental Lens.* Understandings of primary task are shared, as it was these articulations that were used to activate data categorization and appropriation to the Scott (2014) framework. This is followed by a detailed description of additional empirical material from interviews that could be applied to the project. To "broaden, thicken, and deepen the interpretive base of the study" (Denzin, 1997, p.322)*,* interviews are triangulated with complementary "*slices of data*" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p.65). This sheds light on processes and patterns in CIS' institutionalization as an accreditor in the case study context and supports the identification of themes in CIS accreditation's institutionalization that, in the study's penultimate chapter (**Chapter 10.0**), will be used to develop understanding of how CIS 'built' and 'maintained' institutional legitimacy as a provider of accreditation in Berlin-Brandenburg.

9.1. Presentation of Data

Collection, coding, and appropriation of interview data were deliberately synchronized to support a rich process of comparative analysis, allowing progressive development of understanding (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Through gradual familiarization with empirical material examined "several times from a variety of perspectives" (Douglas, 2003, p.49), it became apparent where further resources from the ECIS/CIS and greater accreditation universe or the literature could be drawn on as complementary "*slices of data*" (ibid, p.65) to strengthen understanding and/or fill gaps in the interview data.

Openly highlighted (Ozga, 2000) in this chapter is where such supplementary material has been used to enhance understanding, substantiate participant perceptions of primary task, and augment the interview data that was appropriated to the Scott (2014) framework. Presenting all interview data and complementary source material in the manuscript supported evidencing the entirety of the study (van Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001) and provided a culminating opportunity for analytical review and comparison that aided the identification of themes in the data.

First, sub-group and *Supplemental Lens* articulations of CIS' primary task as an accreditation provider in Berlin-Brandenburg will be shared, as it was these understandings that were used to activate categorization and appropriation of data to the Scott (2014) framework. This will be followed by a description of the interview data points that were appropriated to the pillars and carriers of the Scott (2014) framework and the supplementary material that augmented this data.

9.1.1.   The Primary Task of CIS Accreditation in Berlin-Brandenburg

The primary task of CIS accreditation in Berlin-Brandenburg as articulated by *Superordinate Players* was:

> **To provide an evaluative structure that has internal and external aspects and an international/global dimension that helps schools continually improve, supporting their sustainability and continuity.**

This task depiction resonates with Crippen's (2008) view that CIS accreditation, in contrast to national systems of inspection where accountability is core, differentiates itself by making school improvement a chief objective. It can also be aligned with CIS' own promotional material that suggests:

> **Meeting and sustaining international standards is vital for your school (CIS, n.d.-c).**

Transcending school improvement, placing more focus on network access, benchmarking and signaling, was the *Constituent Actor* articulation of CIS' primary task:

> **To perform as a school development tool providing access to the knowledge and experience of an established network of international schools enabling— through dialogue with and feedback to the school—the attainment and maintenance of a quality similar to that of other international schools, acting as a sign to the school's external community.**

Here, too, similarities with CIS promotional materials were evident, suggesting scripts conveyed in these resources are broadly understood:

> **Going through the CIS International Accreditation process ensures your school's position among leading schools offering international education and supports your profile and standing (CIS, n.d.-c).**

Comparing these perspectives to the *Supplemental Lens*, and recognizing the limitations of this singular view, we gain another vantage point:

> **An externally mediated diagnostic tool used to enhance a school's self-awareness through triangulation of internal and external perspectives that inform change.**

Seen from this position, CIS accreditation has a remedial function. Challenges identified by the school can be appraised by external evaluators, leading to more informed choices about school development. In this respect, CIS accreditation is about more than external confirmation; it also assures the community that performance and trajectory are on target (Hayden, 2006).

Alignment with complementary data suggests the study's participants were well-aware of CIS' accreditation work, authenticating their articulations of primary task. Taking the position that the primary task has "a central legitimising role" (Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2017a, p.314) and the pillars and carriers are most faithfully communicated relative to this construct, this congruence helps to validate the processes and patterns observable within the Scott (2014) framework as institutionally legitimate ones in CIS' institutionalization.

9.1.2. *The Pillars and Carries of Institutionalization*

Activated by articulations of primary task, data points were appropriated to the pillars and carriers of the Scott (2014) framework in both sub-groups, and in the *Supplemental Lens*. However, one of the challenges of qualitative case study design is working with large volumes of data (Simons, 2012). To address this and support study dependability, Denzin (1981) has used the Woodward-Berstein (1975) verification principle when researching "fragmented" systems (Denzin, 1981, p.150):

> **Two independent sources had to validate or confirm an observation before we took it as social fact or as a common understanding (ibid, p.155).**

I have incorporated a modified version of this approach to tighten the focus and strength of my account.

When data points in the *Superordinate Player* and *Constituent Actor* sub-groups were moved to digital versions of the adapted Scott (2014) framework template (Appendix M – exemplar), they were tracked and color-coded to denote the

frequency of similar observations. In my modified approach to the Woodward-Berstein (1975) verification principle, only understandings *or* closely related ideas shared in two or more sub-group interviews that could be merged into common data points within a single sub-group, or independent perspectives emerging in one sub-group that were able to be aligned with understandings or closely connected ideas in the second, or vice versa, and/or with understandings emanating from the *Supplemental Lens* were incorporated into my study. The exception to this was that one interview was facilitated jointly and involved an informant in the *Constituent Actor* sub-group and the *Supplemental Lens* participant. Similar single data points provided by these contributors were not merged, as observations in a joint interview were not considered independent. In select cases, if understandings and closely related ideas were tenuous, interview data points were strengthened for application by the existence of dependable complementary sources. If data points failed to meet the modified-Woodward-Berstein (1975) principal, they were excluded from further analysis. This material might be considered a type of "not-yet data" (Benozzo and Ghererdi, 2019): Though stimulating and informative, it could not be confidently and reliably applied at this juncture.

The interview accounts shared in this section relative to the pillars and carries of Scott's (2014) framework is the data that conformed to the project's modified-Woodward-Berstein (1975) principle. Presented together with complementary "*slices of data*" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p.65), it is the empirical material that was used to support the identification of themes in CIS' institutionalization as a provider of 'international' accreditation. Before continuing, however, it is important to note that the retrospective timeframe that bound the study meant that certain interview questions required consideration of *both* ECIS and CIS as historic accreditation providers in Berlin-Brandenburg. This meant that participants could be reflecting simultaneously to both of these organizations as accreditation providers in the course of a single thought sequence. Thus, when describing the data and identifying and discussing themes, the conjoined acronym ECIS/CIS is often used implying collective continuity of accreditation provider institutional identity. It does not apply to ECIS' current identity. In places where data was clearly suggestive of one service provider or the other, the acronyms ECIS and CIS have been used. At the end of the study, a chronological narrative will be constructed dissevering organization identities to support findings.

The Regulative Pillar and its Carriers

As institutionalization is explored, it is helpful to illuminate the contextual backdrop, or characteristics, of each pillar (Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2016a) in relation to the inquiry.

When studying the Regulative Pillar relative to international school accreditation, the field's loosely-regulated context is essential understanding. Lack of a central governing body, or primary regulating system (Blaney, 1991; Hayden and Thompson, 2008; Bunnell, 2014; Bunnell, 2016b) created a gap that various forms of accreditation grew to fill (Eaton, 2016).

This pillar contained the least amount of appropriable data; it benefits from support of complementary "*slices of data*" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p.65).

Symbolic Systems

Symbolic Systems carrying the Regulative Pillar can be binding rules and laws (Scott, 2014).

However, *Superordinate Players* noted that state and national governments do not generally require schools to be accredited.

Relational Systems

Power structures and governing systems are relational carriers in this pillar (Scott, 2014).

Superordinate Players discussed the power and influence of leading individuals in the international schooling community who have endorsed and supported ECIS/CIS accreditation. *Constituent Actors* spoke specifically of international school heads and their influence in advancing ECIS/CIS accreditation.

Seeking support and outside input into their development as international schools, *Constituent Actors* expressed that schools themselves had chosen ECIS, and later CIS, as accreditation partners. ECIS, as the first provider of this service specifically for international schools, was perceived as possessing a powerful network and potent knowledge that private international schools in Berlin-Brandenburg needed to be competitive. *Superordinate Players* also described accreditation as a choice schools made, portraying it as a voluntary activity. Schools governed their own

involvement and were perceived to be free to disengage at any time. The *Supplemental Lens* participant also shared this perspective: Schools have a choice; they can use the process if they wish.

A unique contribution from *Constituent Actors* was emphasis placed on AGIS as a regulator of ECIS/CIS accreditation. To become an AGIS member, it was said international schools in Berlin-Brandenburg had to gain membership in an organization like ECIS/CIS and seek accreditation. Anticipating growth in the number of international schools in the FRG, accreditation was seen as a way of ensuring AGIS members had a standard, representative quality. The AGIS (2018) *Policy Handbook* confirms these observations. It notes that during the AGIS membership approval process, schools will be required to provide "proof of full or provisional membership of CIS/ECIS or similar" (ibid, p.3). School must also demonstrate that they are "committed to continuous improvement through evaluation, accreditation and professional development" as affiliates of "one or more AGIS approved accrediting agencies" (ibid, p.2). CIS headlines the list of approved agencies (ibid).

Activities

Activities carrying this pillar tend to be disruptive and involve monitoring and/or sanctioning (Scott, 2014).

Superordinate Players discussed the role played by the ECIS Board in restructuring to create CIS. In effect, this disrupted old institutional patterns (ibid). Members of this sub-group also discussed the roles NAIS, and later ICAISA played as accreditors of the accreditor in monitoring ECIS/CIS' practices.

Artifacts

Artifacts in this pillar are symbolic objects compliant with specifications related to rightful existence (Scott, 2014).

Superordinate Players explained the ECIS Board's decision to drop the 'E' in ECIS thereby creating a new organization, CIS. The new acronym symbolized a rightful international existence (ibid).

Drawing on complementary "*slices of data*" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p.65), the decision of the NAIS Board to phase out NAIS's Commission on Accreditation and replace its functions with the International Council Advancing Independent School Accreditation, or ICAISA, "as a nonprofit organization on July 2, 2018" (ICAISA, n.d.-

a) represented a similarly symbolic engineering of an international identity. CIS was a founding member of this new constellation (ibid).

The Normative Pillar and its Carriers

ECIS' initial accreditation device was said to be "very much based on existing American accreditation practice, adapted to take into account the varying and different circumstances of schools abroad" (Murphy, 1998, p.213). Consequently, the Normative Pillar is characterized (Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2016a) by the features that bind 'international' accreditation with traditional expectations of accreditation, but also those defining it as a unique process.

The volume of data points appropriated to the Normative Pillar in both sub-groups, and in the *Supplemental Lens* were notably greater than the number of points attributable to the Regulative Pillar.

Symbolic Systems

Here, from different perspectives, the expectations, values, and standards (Scott, 2014) participants associate with ECIS/CIS 'international' accreditation can be observed.

Superordinate Players communicated the expectation that ECIS/CIS accreditation would be an investment in time and money, but at the same time it is the procurement of a support methodology designed to accommodate a variety of educational approaches and schools internationally, verifying quality and competency. Accreditation is also anticipated to be a curriculum-neutral process undertaken in collaboration with a developmental partner. It will be less imposing than inspection and involve a distinctive method of Self-Study that is demanding and reflective. In particular, the process of CIS accreditation is expected to be international, and therefore able to foster the development of global citizenship.

Constituent Actors, comparably, expected ECIS/CIS accreditation to be an investment in organizational resources that brings international recognition and acceptance within the international school community. This was projected to have a marketing benefit, while also amplifying professional dialogue through regular contact and hands-on training within an extended network of international schools. Exchanges with those who have influence and authority in this system are expected.

The *Supplemental Lens* participant also articulated the expectation of accreditation-related financial costs and marketing benefits (it is a unique selling point).

Moreover, both sub-groups, and the *Supplemental Lens* expected ECIS/CIS accreditation to be a holistic school evaluation process: *Superordinate Players* described a comprehensive process involving a range of stakeholders that delivers developmental inputs transcending teaching and learning; *Constituent Actors* contrasted the breadth of ECIS/CIS accreditation with the more curricular focus of the IB; the informant in the *Supplemental Lens* also commented on accreditation's breadth, citing specific areas it addresses (i.e., mission and student welfare).

Intermittent feedback as well as formal results (pass, fail, etc.) were further expectancies of *Constituent Actors*. This was echoed by one *Superordinate Player*, while another pointed out a closely related idea: If standards of accreditation are not upheld, the school's recognition will be withdrawn. As the *Supplemental Lens* participant explained, accredited schools are in a privileged club; you follow the rules of this association, or risk exclusion.

The expectation also arose that ECIS/CIS accreditation would be facilitated in a normative language. *Superordinate Players* expected English as the language of international schooling, to be the language of 'international' accreditation. Similar expectations surfaced in conversations with the *Supplemental Lens* informant and *Constituent Actors*. The latter anticipated accreditation to have Anglo-American influences given the historic preeminence of these cultural groups in international schooling communities.

Participants in both sub-groups expected the ECIS/CIS system would feature internationally located staff and a global headquarters, and would provide additional services helpfully aligned with accreditation.

Relational Systems

How have conventional regimes and authority systems (Scott, 2014) carried the Normative Pillar?

Superordinate Players were particularly mindful of CIS' historic relationship with the ECIS regime and its pioneering 'international' accreditation structure (ECIS, 1970). *Constituent Actors* described ECIS' service provider relationship with early member schools in Berlin-Brandenburg: It had shared manuals and booklets, in addition to

offering consultation and school development advice. Accordingly, ECIS was a natural accreditation partner.

Also discussed by *Superordinate Players* were long-standing and successful partnerships between ECIS/CIS and traditional accreditation regimes in the US, such as NEASC, MSA, and the Western Association of School and Colleges (WASC). Such relationships were said to strengthen ECIS/CIS accreditation's position in the field. These participants reflected similar values regarding collaborative agreements with the IB regime, which today offers synchronized accreditation-authorization visits with CIS (CIS, 2016b). For *Constituent Actors*, meanwhile, ECIS/CIS accreditation facilitated in tandem with a US-based accreditor and the IB's programs brought expectation of network expansion and broader recognition.

Constituent Actors also accorded weight to meaningful relationships with already-established international schools, primarily those in the FRG modeling effective use of ECIS/CIS accreditation. Meanwhile, school heads were expected to forge relationships in the membership community, and schools were encouraged to support professionals who wished to act as ECIS/CIS volunteers. Such volunteers act as proxies of the ECIS/CIS regime in the field and were discussed as being diverse in experience and perspective.

As a *Superordinate Player* observed, accreditation also requires support from school governing bodies, who are expected to be involved in the process. The *Supplemental Lens* participant, too, commented on the need for school governors to take part in accreditation.

The role that research has played in nourishing ECIS/CIS accreditation over an extended period of time was a final point raised by *Superordinate Players*. Such research could also be considered an authority system conveying the international nature of system improvement, as evidenced by CIS communicating input from "across 116 countries" (CIS, 2019a) in developing their accreditation framework.

Activities

Analysis of activities as conveyers of the Normative Pillar involves scrutiny of the way social processes are institutionally arranged (Scott, 2014). This means unpacking organizational roles and jobs and their interconnectivity with repetitious routines and habits (ibid).

Superordinate Players articulated the importance of ongoing accreditation protocol development. The ECIS/CIS protocol was portrayed as the backbone of accreditation. Protocol review was said to have drawn on expertise from within and outside ECIS/CIS, including personnel from other departments in these organizations, peer visitors from the membership community, team chairs, school heads, and general feedback from schools. Revision was described as responsive to ongoing trends and credibly linked to the educational issues of the day, enabling ECIS/CIS protocols to be responsive to changes that might impede their effectiveness. Collaboration with US-based agencies was also suggested to play a vital role in protocol renewal, contributing to development of similar accreditation agency activities, while simplifying joint evaluations for schools and accreditors.

When discussing key roles at ECIS/CIS, *Superordinate Players* demonstrated in-depth understanding of the CIS Executive Director and ECIS Executive Secretary posts. These roles were said to have been instrumental to the birth of 'international' accreditation, and enacting accreditation-related procedures and traditions. Today, the CIS Executive Director is expected to play an important part in supporting and encouraging accreditation's further development. The Director of International Accreditation Services at CIS was another essential role discussed. This position has acted as the lead at CIS, and as Director of Accreditation Services within ECIS, for overseeing accreditation-related processes. Holders of this post gradually went into the field, making the role more than a desk job. Consequently, they are credited with having extended the global reach of accreditation. The position of SSEO, known as the Regional Accreditation Officer at ECIS, also surfaced with *Superordinate Players*. These field-based professionals collaborate with the School Support and Evaluation team, taking responsibility for respective schools, and overseeing their readiness for engagement with accreditation. SSEOs report to the Associate Directors of Accreditation Service and are supported by CIS International Advisors who perform some of their duties during periods of intensity. When past post-holders of leading roles were mentioned, they were often portrayed as respectable professionals whose contributions were admirable.

Constituent Actors and the *Supplemental Lens* participant reflected more school-specific vantage points. The fundamental role of school Self-Study committees in facilitating dialogue leading up to an ECIS/CIS visit was raised by *Constituent Actors*. The *Supplemental Lens* participant also mentioned the role of the Self-Study

committee—in particular, the significance of the individuals chairing these assemblages.

Another repertoire discussed by *Constituent Actors* was the expectation that a variety of staff members, in different roles, and a myriad of extended community members will be involved in the accreditation process. The need for broad consultation with diverse stakeholders during the accreditation process was also raised by the *Supplemental Lens* informant. However, as *Constituent Actors* cautioned, involvement in accreditation routines will be heavier for certain members of staff. For example, as *Superordinate Players* pointed out, school heads are essential curators and interpreters of accreditation within their school communities.

An influential responsibility mentioned by both sub-groups was the team chair. During the final accreditation visit (also known as the Team Visit), *Superordinate Players* expected this individual to act as chief mediator vis-à-vis the school. The role was depicted as a respected one. Historically, select team chairs were said to have distinguished themselves, becoming an unofficial elite corps that ECIS/CIS have called on to lead visits in special circumstances. Similarly, a *Constituent Actor* projected this role as central to the Team Visit process: To fully understand the school's context, the chair will go above and beyond. *Superordinate Players* also discussed the volunteers who comprise the Visiting Team (VT) itself, portraying them as esteemed role-players in activities fundamental to accreditation. They described the VT as collaboratively built by ECIS/CIS and the school, with the latter able to veto potential visitors. The involvement of peer volunteers in the accreditation process was also said to be a normative requirement monitored by ICAISA.

Superordinate Players were particularly aware of the routines associated with what is called the Preliminary Visit, which assures the school is ready to begin the Self-Study process. Generally, professional members of the CIS team, rather than volunteers, facilitate this exercise.

Another expectation was cyclical patterns of accreditation. These emerged in discussions with *Superordinate Players*, who reported that ECIS/CIS had historically utilized ten-year accreditation cycles, but these had recently been condensed to five-year phases. Dialogue and feedback during these activity cycles, as one *Constituent Actor* explained, is expected be critical, constructive, *but* non-threatening. Or, as the *Supplemental Lens* participant elucidated, feedback is to be couched in a manner that is appropriately sensitive to the local context.

This pillar is carried by normative objects that transmit conventions and standards (Scott, 2014).

Superordinate Players frequently mentioned accreditation protocol standards, and their indicators. In this respect, protocols might be seen as the normative objects transmitting the conventions and principles of accreditation (ibid), the standards and indicators, around which the dialogue of the process revolves. *Constituent Actors* also commonly referenced standards and indicators.

The *Supplemental Lens* participant, by comparison, mentioned the actual accreditation report recommendations sent by ECIS/CIS to schools. Similarly, a *Constituent Actor* discussed the written feedback schools receive from ECIS/CIS. Such recommendations and feedback reflect the school's performance against the standards and indicators. In effect, the standards and indicators have been the historic symbols that communicate how the school should continue to exemplify normative conventions.

The Cultural-Cognitive Pillar and its Carriers

The characteristics of this pillar are the habitualized dispositions (Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2016a) of individuals, or groups of institutionalized individuals toward accreditation.

Consistently, across both sub-groups, and in the *Supplemental Lens*, the Cultural-Cognitive Pillar contained the largest volume of appropriated data.

Symbolic Systems

Individuals construct categories according to beliefs and understanding, which lead to thought patterns giving rise to distinctive perceptions and unique versions of reality (Scott, 2014).

Superordinate Players did not believe ECIS/CIS accreditation was a license or badge, but rather something that contributed to humanity and civil society, fostered social justice, broke down barriers, and opened borders and minds. They imagined it as beneficial, a process that helped international schools frame their identities, a flexible form of evaluation, and the best way to support the needs of international

schools. The *Supplemental Lens* participant saw accreditation's identity framing capacity as particularly valuable for new schools.

Accreditation was also believed by *Superordinate Players* to support effective school governance, and foster safer schools via its well-being and child-protection components. It was accreditation's performance that was thought to attract schools: Improving learning and defining what schooling should look like in their specific contexts. Similar sentiments were recurrent in the account of the *Supplemental Lens* participant.

Beliefs of *Constituent Actors* about ECIS/CIS accreditation reflected prudence and pragmatism. Accreditation was thought to be highly bureaucratic, while its utility was considered to be the dialogue and feedback it generated. This was said to help schools gauge their standing and set future trajectories, thereby promoting school improvement and bringing meaningful change. However, accreditation providers were also imagined as engaging in a commercially-oriented business that was protective of its own interests and associated services. The *Supplemental Lens* informant felt choosing an accreditation partner had become market-driven.

Moreover, while *Constituent Actors* believed private international schools had contributed to Berlin-Brandenburg's development after reunification, considering the relatively small number of schools applying it, 'international' accreditation was believed to have had a limited impact on the Berlin-Brandenburg education scene and the surrounding regions; though its influence was thought to palpably benefit schools that had adopted it. At the same time, too many complicated standards and indicators were believed to have, more recently, blurred CIS accreditation's focus.

'International' accreditation was seen by *Superordinate Players* as something profitable for schools *and* educators. Given its perceived benefits and positive impacts, it was imagined as worth committing to, personally and vocationally. These informants expressed satisfaction with their professional lives and their service to ECIS/CIS was considered a privilege.

Superordinate Players also believed students gained from the accreditation process; it was thought to play a role in their future success, and to develop student leadership capacity. Notwithstanding, this sub-group felt evaluative aspects of CIS accreditation had yet to focus enough on student learning outputs. Even so, they believed ECIS/CIS accreditation had been a positive alternative to the less flexible

process of inspection. Resultingly, they felt there should be a unique accreditation mechanism for international schools. Though American in origin, the process was thought to have developed into an international structure for school improvement.

However, as *Constituent Actors* pointed out, ECIS/CIS accreditation is facilitated in English, and the inflexibility of this inhibits some from playing an active role in the process. Consequently, it was felt that select community members—notably non-teaching staff and non-native English speaking board members—were disadvantaged. This was believed to impact attitudes towards accreditation. The participant in the *Supplemental Lens* also saw language as a barrier to implementing accreditation. Still, *Constituent Actors* imagined dialogue and feedback from the process to positively influence individuals in their schools, helpfully expanding the perspectives of local stakeholders and long-tenured members of staff. Linked to this idea was the belief that the German education system could learn and benefit from certain aspects of accreditation. Nonetheless, it was seen as a secondary requirement; only once state recognition had been achieved was accreditation a realistic goal. Regardless, the belief of this sub-group was that ECIS/CIS accreditation should be available to those who wanted it and could afford it; or, as a *Superordinate Player* added, it should be accessible to any school it might help (including for-profit schools).

Relational Systems

Conveying the Cultural-Cognitive Pillar, this carrier illustrates how socially constructed representations present themselves as identity systems (Scott, 2014). As relational identities develop, organizations within certain systems take similar forms (structural isomorphism) as meanings are made by way of institutional interactions (ibid).

Superordinate Players communicated their belief that ECIS/CIS accreditation fosters a school's international identity; while the participant in the *Supplemental Lens* felt it enhanced a school's identity internationally *and* locally. *Constituent Actors*, meanwhile, believed ECIS/CIS accreditation played a role in bringing individuals with international school experience to Berlin-Brandenburg. This was seen to help foster school distinctiveness by, among other things, attracting a certain type of international teacher. *Superordinate Players* also believed recognition by national governments around the world had enhanced CIS' global standing, strengthening the international identity it brought to schools.

Furthermore, *Superordinate Players* believed ECIS/CIS accreditation functioned as a quality control index, benchmarking participating establishments against similar schools around the world. Or, as *Constituent Actors* rationalized, feedback received via accreditation helped schools appreciate their relational standing in the network. VT members, for example, were described as experienced educators with knowledge of international best practice who bring understanding of excellence to schools going through accreditation.

Constituent Actors also felt that ECIS/CIS accreditation's processes and tools were historically influenced by leading individuals and prominent discourses from Western, English-speaking countries. Linked to this view was the *Supplemental Lens* participant's observation that while female representation was on the rise, VTs could still be more diverse (non-white, non-Anglo-Saxon, non-native speakers of English). A similar belief surfaced in the *Superordinate Player* sub-group. In the past, individuals with Western, English-speaking identities were perceived to dominate the ECIS/CIS workforce; though recent strides to diversify were noted.

For the study's *Constituent Actors*, meanwhile, the relationship with ECIS/CIS accreditation was described as something new, challenging, and, at times, exciting, though they felt accreditation was more important to international parents than local parents. For German parents, authorization by the IB, a curriculum that unlocks access to the FRG's universities, was believed to be the paramount school partnership.

A high priority imagined by *Superordinate Players* was maintaining ECIS/CIS' relations with US-based accrediting bodies; when historical differences and challenges had arisen, there was believed to be a commitment to resolution and partnerships preservation. This was seen to reduce confusion and anxiety detrimental to jointly-accredited schools.

Moreover, for *Superordinate Players*, a leadership background in an international school setting was thought to be a beneficial professional identity for those seeking employment in the accreditation industry. Individuals with such experience and perspective were depicted as the globally-minded elder statesmen of the field. Interrelatedly, *Constituent Actors* believed ECIS/CIS accreditation facilitated school headship networking, while *Superordinate Players* supposed experience as an ECIS/CIS peer visitor built certain international leadership competencies valued by both schools and accrediting bodies.

Activities carrying this pillar are the scripts and tendencies of collections of actors who understand the way things are to be done and why, and what they think they should do and how (Scott, 2014). These beliefs become institutionalizing elements, and ultimately routines (ibid).

A *Superordinate Player* characterized the patters of IB authorization as curriculum reflective, while they believed that accreditation was a self-reflective developmental activity. In like manner, the *Supplemental Lens* participant imagined IB authorization to be curriculum-review focused, with accreditation having a stronger school-improvement component.

Connected to this was the belief of *Constituent Actors* that CIS should offer training/professional development linked to accreditation feedback. Perceived as good business, these routines were imagined to helpfully ensure things were done correctly, strengthening school quality. *Superordinate Players* also characterized the additional services provided by CIS to be enhancive; the accreditation process was seen to benefit from these services, and vice versa. However, to alleviate conflict of interest, this sub-group believed ECIS/CIS had been cautious about consultancy; it was viewed was something separate, not provided directly, but rather through affiliated partners.

Superordinate Players also felt schools should have the option to be jointly-evaluated by CIS and US-based agencies. The latter agencies were believed to work collaboratively with CIS via understood, albeit, not always seamless, processes and procedures. Similarly, it was thought that IB schools should be able to synchronize their authorization processes with 'international' accreditation. Having IB and CIS visitors working together was believed to be efficient, putting enhanced focus on learning. The *Supplemental Lens* participant's position was comparable. They imagined the activities of accreditation to be most effective when aligned with the goals of curriculum providers like the IB, maximizing input into future learning impacts. Similarly, a *Constituent Actor* suggested accreditation functions best when coordinated with the activities of other regulatory bodies, enabling resource concentration for maximum effectiveness. These beliefs aligned with the sentiments of *Superordinate Players* that accreditation, rather than being a stand-alone tool, should be aligned with other school developmental activities (i.e., strategic planning, IB authorization, etc.).

More cautiously, *Constituent Actors* suggested some less-helpful, often bureaucratic aspects of accreditation were felt to be disconnected from day-to-day operations. However, *Superordinate Players* suggested that the recent decision by CIS to compress the accreditation cycle (from ten to five years) was intended to enable more effective follow-up and support for schools, enabling accreditation to be more fluid and meaningfully connected.

This brings the conversation back to refining processes and developing accreditation protocols: One *Constituent Actor* felt that, when CIS took over accreditation from ECIS, accreditation-related activities had increased in complexity; this was believed to be the result of more acute emphasis on accreditation, resulting in further, very focused development of its processes. A *Superordinate Player* raised a similar issue, articulating their belief that added levels of complexity with each subsequent protocol had meant more time and energy spent on associated activities. This has led CIS to consider modular accreditation for schools, or a process with fewer, more focused targets. The *Supplemental Lens* participant, similarly, commented on an ever-expanding range of expectations associated with accreditation.

Artifacts

This pillar is carried by representative objects that are decidedly symbolic, but what they embody in symbolism "can outweigh their material essence" (Scott, 2014, p.104).

Superordinate Players objectified the 1st Edition ECIS (1970) protocol as a symbolically groundbreaking 'international' accreditation structure. CIS (2016c) International Accreditation, 2016, the first uniquely CIS accreditation protocol created without input from US-based accrediting agencies, was also referenced as symbolic.

Participants in both sub-groups and the *Supplemental Lens* also noted the symbolic 'stamp' of accreditation. *Constituent Actors* spoke of the 'stamp' of ECIS/CIS as representative of a school's membership in the network, the attainment of a certain level of international quality, and the achievements of its leadership team. For the *Supplemental Lens* participant, the 'stamp' was symbolic of the school's application of the accreditation process as a support structure. By contrast, one *Superordinate Player* used the term 'stamp' more purposely to imply the value of the ECIS/CIS logo on school letterhead. A *Constituent Actor* drawing further on the term 'stamp,' linked

it to the logo of a US-based accreditor alongside that of CIS, symbolic of a wider network created through accreditation.

A final point raised by *Superordinate Players* was the increasing number of non-white, non-male, non-Western employees at CIS who conveyed the organization's diversity while being symbolic of CIS accreditation's international/global dimension.

9.2. Identifying Themes

As Vaismoradi, et al (2016) have pointed out, analysis in qualitative studies can be "cyclic" requiring one to repeatedly revisit data throughout a study (p.103). My study benefited from systematic review, analysis, and constant comparison of data, which involved memo writing and notetaking from the time the interviews were conducted (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Hallberg, 2006) through to the presentation of the data in the manuscript. This enabled the identification of several recurring elements or themes (Sandelowski and Barroso, 2002; Vaismoradi, et al, 2016) in CIS' institutionalization as an accreditation provider in Berlin-Brandenburg relative to each pillar. These require explanation before being used to support understanding of how CIS 'built' and 'maintained' institutional legitimacy in the case study context (in **Chapter 10.0**).

9.2.1. The Regulative Pillar

The following themes were identifiable in the Regulative Pillar: 1) **coercive membership criteria**; 2) accreditation is not a state or national requirement in Berlin-Brandenburg and the FRG, making **expectations, values, and beliefs about 'international' accreditation** significant to its institutionalization; and, 3) the **symbolic manufacturing of internationalism**. This is a complicated triad. The second theme foreshadows the significance of the Normative and Cultural-Cognitive Pillars to ECIS/CIS accreditation's institutionalization and is a compelling starting point; however, the first theme has been given headliner status relative to tight correlation with the pillar itself.

In the Regulative Pillar, there is a pattern portraying ECIS/CIS' authority to have emerged in an authentic, bottom-up, fashion. If accreditation is not required by state or national governments, the refrain is schools have chosen to work with ECIS/CIS as an accreditation provider and the process in Berlin-Brandenburg is a voluntary activity. However, this characterization fails to capture the properties of AGIS' **coercive membership criteria**. As Hayden (2006) explains:

> **Membership of an organization for any individual, be it professional or social, says something about them to others, and this is no less the case for an international school (p.142).**

Being part of AGIS would have been a key "indicator of the school's acceptance by others" and a statement of aspiration (ibid, p.142). Thus, AGIS membership criteria, which requires schools to be accredited, can be seen as coercing (Scott, 2014) schools to join ECIS/CIS and utilize their accreditation tools. As this association advocates for "the educational and public interests of member schools and their communities" (AGIS, n.d.-b), affiliation might be particularly vital for new private international schools seeking acceptance in the FRG; emergent schools in Berlin-Brandenburg needed to appear equal to their more established cousins elsewhere in the country. The impact of AGIS memberships comes acutely into focus when we consider it may have been through this organization that schools in Berlin-Brandenburg came into contact with influential individuals who were supporters of ECIS/CIS accreditation, particularly other school heads in the extended community of German international schools. Through this contact they would have learned to appreciate the beneficial scope of involvement in accreditation.

We can now grasp the prospect that, in the absence of formal state or national requirements to be accredited, **expectations, values, and beliefs about 'international' accreditation** played a significant role in ECIS/CIS' institutionalization in Berlin-Brandenburg. Not only did regional stakeholders come into contact with influential figures in the AGIS community who were supporters of the process—presumably shaping their beliefs, expectations, and values about accreditation—its inclusion as a stipulation of membership reflects a specific set of educational principles and philosophies (e.g., school improvement is a reflective, holistic, community endeavor tailored to the individual school). While this theme portents further analysis of the Normative and Cultural-Cognitive Pillars to ECIS/CIS' institutionalization, it should also be noted that environmental conditions must be appropriate for expectations, values, and beliefs to be realized.

The **symbolic manufacturing of internationalism** is evident in two acronyms: CIS and ICAIS. When the Board of ECIS dropped the 'E,' fashioning CIS, an organization with a more rightful international existence was born. However, given that the two organizations went on to share office space until 2011 (Ruth, 2015), and CIS' first CEO/Executive Secretary oversaw "'the split'" (p.71) as Executive Secretary of ECIS (Duevel, 2002a), it could be argued that CIS' new, more international identity was, at

least initially, somewhat of a contrived one; nevertheless, this was an important part of an institutional journey. CIS now appeared to be internationally sanctioned to schools in Berlin-Brandenburg. In similar fashion, the conversion of NAIS' Commission on Accreditation into ICAISA represented a similar disruption (Scott, 2014) of a traditional institution, as the regulation of accreditation now appeared international too, further strengthening CIS' international identity as a founding member (ICAISA, n.d.-a).

9.2.2. The Normative Pillar

Three themes pertaining to ECIS/CIS accreditation were also extracted from the Normative Pillar: 1) **systemic philanthropy and symbiosis**; 2) **a unifying culture of honor and respect**; and, 3) **an expectation of something different**.

A powerful form of **systemic philanthropy and symbiosis** appears to underpin the Normative Pillar. Reflecting on the Berlin-Brandenburg context, participants understood that being ECIS/CIS-accredited has meant contributing to the membership community. School heads are expected to play their part, and professional staff should be enabled to participate as accreditation volunteers; these represent investments of time and human resources that schools accept. Involving school governors in the accreditation process helps them appreciate these and other costs and benefits. The normative requirements of ICAISA as an accreditor of the accreditor stipulate volunteer engagement in the accreditation process (ICAISA, n.d.-b) serving to further entrench and systematize these activities. Normative roles within ECIS/CIS monitor routines from which all involved—individuals, schools, the membership community, and the accrediting organization—symbiotically gain. It is speculated that accreditation's identity as a moral force (Cram, 2011a; Ranger, 2014a; Bradley, 2018a) contributes to the willingness of school stakeholders to commit themselves to the membership community and take part in the accreditation process within and outside their schools, but by doing so identities as international schools and international educators are also enhanced, and the CIS community grows.

This theme can be aligned with **a unifying culture of honor and respect**. Playing a volunteer role in the membership community, as participants explicitly discussed referencing VT members and team chairs, is venerated. After all, volunteers are contributing to "the continuous improvement of international education" (Larsson, 2011, p.10). This is thought to further motivate professionals in member schools like

those in Berlin-Brandenburg to be part of the process in their organizations and to seek volunteer experiences at large. Schools are also accorded deference by the superordinate system in the accreditation cycle. For example, they may veto site visitors who are deemed inappropriate, and throughout the process treatment will be non-threatening and respectfully sensitive to the school's local context. While this is part of what makes the process international, it is also a component in a larger, binding institutional framework whereby individuals and schools gain honor, respect, and other advantages by embracing systemic norms (Scott, 2014). Failure to do so will bring shame, and possibly exclusion (ibid).

A final theme in this pillar is simply communicated. Adopters and providers of ECIS/CIS accreditation relative to Berlin-Brandenburg seem to have **an expectation** that it is **something different**. Its holistic nature differentiates it from IB authorization. Its reflective Self-Study and support methodology are not imposing like inspection. Its curriculum neutrality distinguishes it from national systems of evaluation, while its global dimension could be seen as differentiating it from the products of some American accreditors.

9.2.3. The Cultural-Cognitive Pillar

At this juncture, it is germane to reflect on the reasoning of Bunnell, Fertig, and James (2016a) that the Cultural-Cognitive Pillar diverges from the others:

> **Arguably, many of the aspects of the regulatory and normative pillars are (real) objects in the institutional world and differ in essence from the nature of the cultural-cognitive pillar, which are the outcome of subjective interpretation (ibid, p.12).**

Such subjectivity also makes this pillar the most abstract and challenging to analyze. Themes emerging were: 1) belief in **an open system**; 2) **a flexible, comprehensible, and responsive activity**; and, 3) ECIS/CIS accreditation's **isomorphic potency**.

First, we observe a belief in **an open system**. Schools in Berlin-Brandenburg wishing to benefit from ECIS/CIS accreditation and can afford it are believed welcome. They may earn the 'stamp,' and reap the rewards of an international school identity. Neither schools nor individuals were portrayed as needing to be particularly international before adopting the accreditation process; in fact, it was supposed that a school should be locally recognized first. Being a founding head from outside the

traditional international school circuit was seen as acceptable and was common. ECIS/CIS accreditation's very presence in Berlin-Brandenburg suggests openness to new regions. In this case, one with a history of championing the humanitarian values participants associated with the process. Collaboration with the IB and US-based accrediting agencies was also something openly and actively sought and embraced by ECIS/CIS. Reference to an increasing number of non-white, non-male, non-Western employees at CIS suggests an organization perceived as increasingly cosmopolitan and open to diversity. This openness makes it appear truly international.

ECIS/CIS accreditation was also believed to be a **flexible** evaluative process; a positive alternative to the stiffness of inspection, making it particularly responsive to international schools in diverse contexts. Its ability to be adeptly applied in Berlin-Brandenburg after reunification and support the region's emergent schools backs this understanding. This flexibility is thought to help international schools frame unique identities—of particular salience for new schools of this type—while also helping them develop more generally. This aids accreditation's **comprehensibility** in the region, making it easier to accept elements that might be deemed less flexible, such as its normative language, English. Comprehension is supported by ECIS/CIS' willingness to reflect and act on issues that are distressing to stakeholders (e.g., its perceived disconnect from day-to-day school life, the heavy bureaucracy of the process, and its increasing complexity). Examples of specific action include implementing more tightly bound accreditation cycles, and consideration of modular accreditation. Hence, ECIS/CIS accreditation is a **responsive activity.** When relationships have been strained with other agencies, ECIS/CIS have also sought resolution to ensure continuity and mitigate concern, bringing us full circle to flexibility. Deployed flexibly together with support from US-based accrediting agencies, in tandem with the IB's authorization processes, or utilized with other school development tools, ECIS/CIS accreditation is believed to most potently support Berlin-Brandenburg's private international schools. This furthers stakeholder comprehension in a region where some perceive the IB to be of greater importance.

Additionally, ECIS/CIS accreditation was believed to have brought individuals with international experience to Berlin-Brandenburg, deepening international school identities. Volunteer visitors were described as veteran professionals with insight into international school excellence and practice. Conversations and interactions with these and others from ECIS/CIS throughout the accreditation cycle were imagined to

helpfully impact on the professional staff of schools, including long-timers and locals. Accreditation may even help Berlin-Brandenburg's schools attract a specific kind of international teacher. Through these exchanges, ECIS/CIS accreditation demonstrates **isomorphic potency**. As institutional meanings are shaped, Berlin-Brandenburg's accredited international schools begin to resemble other schools in the FRG and the extended membership community—in effect, structural isomorphism (Fertig, 2007). This potency may be invigorated by the benchmarking capacity ECIS/CIS accreditation is thought to possess as schools with exceptional standing in the network are mimicked. Sentiments that accreditation involvement develops a certain international school leadership style suggests schools engaged in the process may even be led similarly. Other services provided by ECIS/CIS, including affiliated consultancy, round out a communicated range of mechanism aligned with accreditation that have the potential to leave further isomorphic imprints.

In the next, and penultimate chapter, these themes in CIS' institutionalization as an accreditation provider are discussed relative to strategies of legitimacy 'building' and 'maintenance' (Suchman, 1995) in the case study context, and then examined in relation to the project-specific definition of institutional legitimacy. This culminates in a narrative, analytic explanation of how CIS 'built' and 'maintained' institutional legitimacy in Berlin-Brandenburg as a provider of 'international' accreditation to international schools.

Chapter 10.0. – Discussion and Conclusions

10.0. Introduction

This chapter engages in a discussion of how themes in CIS' institutionalization have played a role in legitimacy 'building' and 'maintenance.' It examines emerging understanding relative to the project-specific definition of institutional legitimacy and culminates in a narrative, analytic explanation of how CIS 'built' and 'maintained' institutional legitimacy in Berlin-Brandenburg as a provider of 'international' accreditation. Findings evoke critical reflections, and constructive feedback for CIS as an organization providing 'international' accreditation.

10.1. The Institutionalization of CIS Accreditation in Berlin-Brandenburg

Case studies can benefit from alternative presentation strategies that enhance understanding (Yin, 2018). As the nine themes identified relative to CIS accreditation's institutionalization in Berlin-Brandenburg will be discussed in relation to notions of legitimacy 'building' and 'maintenance,' and understanding of these themes is crucial to the study's culminating narrative, they have also been presented in tabular form in **Table 2**. Each theme has been accorded a short description that clarifies its essence (Morse, 2008). While these themes portray defining elements of CIS' institutionalization as an accreditor relative to one region, Berlin-Brandenburg, and have been developed to support understanding of the phenomenon under investigation in a particular setting, they may reflect institutionalized arrangements in the provision of accreditation that are relevant to contexts beyond this study (Dressman, 2008).

Table 2. Themes in the Institutionalization of CIS Accreditation in Berlin-Brandenburg

Theme – 1 (Regulative Pillar)	Theme	*Coercive membership criteria*
	Description	*Membership in ECIS/CIS and participation in their accreditation routines, while theoretically voluntary for schools in Berlin-Brandenburg, have been necessary to enter AGIS, an influential regional network in the FRG*

Theme – 2 (Regulative Pillar)	Theme	*Expectations, values, and beliefs about 'international' accreditation*
	Description	*In the loosely-regulated field of international schooling relative to Berlin-Brandenburg, where 'international' accreditation has not been a formal expectation of a state or national authority, ECIS/CIS' institutionalization has been contingent on shared expectations, values, and beliefs, and their capacity to be realized*

Theme – 3 (Regulative Pillar)	Theme	*Symbolic manufacturing of internationalism*
	Description	*The manner that ECIS/CIS' international disposition has been institutionally engineered to make it appear to schools in Berlin-Brandenburg that it is internationally sanctioned*

Theme – 4 (Normative Pillar)	Theme	*Systemic philanthropy and symbiosis*
	Description	*ECIS/CIS accreditation has been a morally grounded social activity; this inspires philanthropy within the ECIS/CIS membership community in which Berlin-Brandenburg schools take part, arousing individuals to contribute to accreditation in their schools and at large; commitment to accreditation's processes has benefited individuals, schools, the membership community, and ECIS/CIS as accreditors*

Theme – 5 (Normative Pillar)	Theme	*Unifying culture of honor and respect*
	Description	*Individuals involved in the ECIS/CIS accreditation process have been accorded honor and respect within the membership community, which involves Berlin-Brandenburg schools; ECIS/CIS will respect the school's local context when facilitating accreditation work; in turn, individuals and schools will honor and respect the norms of membership; failure to do so will bring shame or sanction*

Theme – 6 (Normative Pillar)	Theme	*An expectation of something different*
	Description	*Adopters and providers of ECIS/CIS accreditation relative to Berlin-Brandenburg share the expectancy that it is something different—it is not inspection; it is not IB authorization; it is not accreditation 'internationally;' it has a unique and divergent purpose*

Theme – 7 (Cultural-Cognitive Pillar)	Theme	*An open system*
	Description	*All schools in Berlin-Brandenburg who can afford and benefit from participation in the ECIS/CIS membership community have been invited to seek affiliation and pursue accreditation*

Theme – 8 (Cultural-Cognitive Pillar)	Theme	*A flexible, comprehendible, and responsive activity*
	Description	*ECIS/CIS accreditation is believed to be a flexible activity that can be applied in a variety of contexts; accreditor awareness of concerns, and responsiveness to feedback supports local comprehensibility in places like Berlin-Brandenburg; its flexibility also assists its alignment with other development tools, furthering its local applicability and benefit to schools*

Theme – 9 (Cultural-Cognitive Pillar)	Theme	*Isomorphic potency*
	Description	*Involvement in ECIS/CIS accreditation has, via shared understandings and culturally supported beliefs, made member schools like those in Berlin-Brandenburg think, act, and look similar to one another and other international schools, providing them with a sense of certainty and security through orthodoxy; CIS benefits from these mimetic process as members look to it to sustain their identity*

10.2. Discussion of Legitimacy 'Building' and 'Maintenance' in the Case Study Context

Next, to understand how CIS 'built' and 'maintained' legitimacy in Berlin-Brandenburg as an accreditation provider, we return to the premise that legitimacy and institutionalization are better imagined as codependent than synonymous: Legitimacy can contribute to institutionalization, or be an outcome of it (Jepperson, 1991). Accordingly, the themes identified in **Chapter 9.0** and presented in **Table 2** will be discussed in relation to the case study context and Suchman's (1995) characterization of legitimacy 'building' as largely "a proactive enterprise" (p.587), and legitimacy 'maintenance' as an ever-present reality associated with change and challenge that requires attention from even seemingly secure organizations. This illustrates how themes in CIS' institutionalization have played a role in deepening its institutionalization and legitimacy as an accreditation provider in Berlin-Brandenburg, helping to unlock understanding that sets the stage for the construction of a narrative, analytic explanation of the study's primary research question.

However, first we should recall that Scott's (2014) framework is not a blended one. Requiring the pillars to stand "analytically independent and separated" may have limitations (Hirsch, 1997, p.1709). Recognizing this, to maximize appreciation of how institutional legitimacy has been 'built' and 'maintained,' themes will be broadened by cross-walking them with understanding emergent in multiple pillars, consideration of the perceived primary tasks of CIS accreditation in Berlin-Brandenburg, complementary "*slices of data*" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p.65), and further understanding from the literature. Doing so provides a well-rounded illustration of each theme in relation to legitimacy 'building' and 'maintenance.'

Themes, therefore, will be discussed in clusters. Though parenthetically linked to the pillars in Scott's (2014) framework from which they were realized, ramifications of each theme relative to legitimacy 'building' and 'maintenance' may traverse multiple pillars and should be seen as dynamic. Finally, while it would be presumptuous to suggest the explanations provided herein represent deliberate and specific attempts or strategies employed by ECIS/CIS to 'build' and 'maintain' legitimacy in Berlin-Brandenburg, they are grounded in conversations and supplementary data relative to CIS' institutionalization that can be considered suggestive (Brown and Lauder, 2011).

10.2.1. Themes 1–3 (Regulative Pillar)

In the loosely-regulated field of international schooling where accreditation is not always formally sanctioned or required, its institutionalization can be seen as contingent on expectations, values, and beliefs; though this understanding emerged via analysis of the Regulative Pillar, it is reflected throughout the study (the limited volume of data appropriable to the Regulative Pillar, and the abundance of data accorded to the Normative and Cultural-Cognitive pillars is suggestive). *Constituent Actors* in this study, for example, imagined the primary task of accreditation to be performance as a "development tool" bringing "knowledge and experience" that supports the "attainment and maintenance" of an expected "quality similar to that of other international schools." Here, ECIS/CIS accreditation's practices can be seen responding to the beliefs and conforming to the expectations of constituents in the region (Suchman, 1995). Schools adopting accreditation in Berlin-Brandenburg would have been recognized by the education ministries of their state governments, an operational requisite, but these ministries could not fulfil stakeholder need for some form of international school recognition. ECIS/CIS accreditation could and did; moreover, it filled a gap created by the lack of state inspection or evaluative school development processes, while providing a device schools could use to measure themselves in relation to other international schools. Presumably, schools in Berlin-Brandenburg appreciated these services and their organizational values were aligned with those of the provider. Resultantly, ECIS/CIS accreditation's legitimacy in Berlin-Brandenburg was 'built' on compatibility and responsiveness to beliefs and expectations—collectively, the perceived needs and values—of constituents in the region, as well as its conformation to the local environment (Suchman, 1995). However, without adequate financial and other resources (e.g., political, human, physical, etc.), the expectations, beliefs, and values of these schools may not have been fulfillable.

In the absence formal tools meeting constituent needs, "systems of 'private regulation'" facilitated by "alternative regulatory regimes" like accreditation providers can hinge on an organization's willingness to comply (Scott, 2014, p.124). In Berlin-Brandenburg, such compliance and conformity has *also* been necessary to enter influential regional networks like AGIS, whose criteria of association stipulate participation in membership communities and engagement in accreditation routines, both of which ECIS and CIS have offered. Inclusion of these coercive stipulations reflects educational values that can be traced to AGIS' founders. In this way,

ECIS/CIS accreditation 'build' legitimacy in Berlin-Brandenburg via its preexisting reputation (Suchman, 1995).

Also visible on CIS' journey were "efforts to *manipulate* environmental structure" (Suchman, 1995, p.587). Legitimacy 'building' of this kind can produce "new legitimating beliefs" (ibid, p.587). The ECIS Board's decision to drop the 'E' in ECIS and create CIS exemplifies this approach. A symbolic acronym, or branding artifact was engendered, creating a representatively more international organization. CIS' internationalism appeared structured and sanctioned, giving it greater authenticity within the international school network, and in Berlin-Brandenburg. The NAIS Board's creation of ICAISA worked similarly. However, the assumption that organizations like ECIS and NAIS "insincerely manage symbolism in order to dupe naive audiences" (Suchman, 1995, p.588) may be misguided. As *Constituent Players* helped us understand, association with an accreditation provider can signal a desired international identity and developmental trajectory to the external community. As such, it could be reasoned that constituents in locales like Berlin-Brandenburg are attracted by symbolic artifacts (Suchman, 1995), contrived or not, as they too benefit from their capacity to substantiate "legitimating beliefs" (ibid, 587).

It could also be inferred that the Board of ECIS 'maintained' overarching legitimacy by rightly perceiving change (ibid) at "the start of the new millennium" (ECIS, n.d.-c). As Maybury (2003) noted, "the presence of a 'European' organization" servicing schools internationally was not universally embraced (p.3). By creating CIS as "a daughter organization" to focus on "worldwide services such as accreditation" (ibid, p.3), ECIS minimized negative perceptions of accreditation as a European colonial enterprise. This can be seen as a reactive process of restructuring, which repaired legitimacy (Suchman, 1995). By doing so, it enabled legitimacy to be 'maintained.'

However, a tension should be highlighted. While the manipulation of organizational arrangements can create the appearance of structured and sanctioned internationalism, legitimacy 'maintenance' requires fixed structures (Suchman, 1995). It might be argued, therefore, that beneath the cloak of internationalism, 'international' accreditation—and internationalized variants of accrediting the accreditor—have 'built' legitimacy and 'maintained' institutional vigor by performing like, and being structured and operating similarly to (ibid) traditional American accreditation tools, taken up further in the next sections. This includes being facilitated in the normative language of international schooling and accreditation, English.

10.2.2. Themes 4–6 (Normative Pillar)

As *Superordinate Players* acknowledged, accreditation is an American system fortified for use in the international school sector. Examining this group of themes, we see CIS accreditation performing a similar function to traditional US-based accreditation regimes in Berlin-Brandenburg. The mission of early American accreditation agencies was to provide what the US government did not, a measuring stick for which schools were producing university-ready graduates (Brittingham, 2009). Similarly, ECIS (1970) began providing a form of 'international' accreditation that was supposedly independent of national systems, and more flexible and adaptable to the needs of international schools (Murphy, 1998) who lacked formal regulators and had unique developmental requirements (Paterson, 1991). These eminences paved the way for ECIS/CIS accreditation to assume the distinction of morally grounded activity regulating a diffuse and varied international school system. It could thus be said that accreditation processes arrived ready-built for Berlin-Brandenburg. New international schools with specialized developmental and regulative needs were emerging in a city where the capacity of educational ministries was strained by reunification, further evidence of legitimacy being 'built' via environmental alignment/conformity (Suchman, 1995).

Study interviews also alluded to accreditation's humanitarian purpose—breaking down barriers, opening borders, opening minds, promoting social justice, and developing civil society. Given the history of Berlin-Brandenburg, it is suspected the aforementioned values resonated with the region's local inhabitants and expat communities. The moral character of accreditation has also been explicitly discussed in anecdotal writings from CIS insiders (Ranger, 2014a; Bhatt, 2016), and in relation to US-based accreditation providers (*TIE*, 2010; Cram, 2011a; Bradley; 2018a), whose promotion of the practice has likely contributed to ECIS/CIS' do-good identity. Meanwhile, CIS promotes accreditation's support of good teaching practices, impact on students, "family and community" (CIS, 2020h), alignment with emergent data and child protection themes (CIS, 2019c), and ability to foster global citizenship (Thompson, 2020). This helps 'maintain' its legitimacy by projecting and protecting its propriety (Suchman, 1995).

The articulation and marketing of accreditation's moral imperatives coalesce with the expectancy, as conveyed by this study's participants, and CIS itself, that schools and individuals should contribute to the membership community:

The international education community will value your participation in an active peer network motivated to preparing students for global citizenship (CIS, n.d.-c).

As Percy (2008) writes, CIS accreditation's "service operates so well because of the people involved" (p.25). A culture of friendly, good willed volunteerism and participative engagement benefits individual employees and member schools. School professionals assume new, valuable identities as like-minded international educators, and organizations can promote and imagine themselves as delivering "on the promise to make a difference in the life of a child and the future" (CIS, n.d.-b). These relationships enhance the membership community, making it more diverse, enriching volunteer resource stables as the organization grows into new regions like Berlin-Brandenburg, which gives CIS international gravitas. In effect, philanthropy in the accreditation system can be seen as a deeply penetrating norm, connected to the perceived moral purpose of accreditation, and sustained by ICAISA's requirement that volunteers will play a role in the accreditation process (ICAISA, n.d.-b). Though as illustrated above, this is not pure altruism.

Rather, the patterns illuminated *are* symbiotic; through a conventionalized cycle of giving back to the network community, all involved stand to gain, enabling ECIS/CIS accreditation to amass, or 'build' legitimacy resources by coopting local constituent involvement, thereby embedding itself in places like Berlin-Brandenburg, achieving rootedness and interconnectedness at the local level (Suchman, 1995). The repetition of this pattern elsewhere draws in accreditation volunteers from the extended international schooling community, some of whom become influential figures, often joining ECIS/CIS' professional cadre. Such interrelations help realize the expectations of the study's *Constituent Actors,* who seek knowledge and experience from more established international schools through accreditation. As CIS (n.d.-c) writes:

Our staff has experience in leading international schools and they understand the challenges faced in sustaining the school's development.

Additionally, for volunteers in Berlin-Brandenburg international schools, the enticement of honor and respect within their respective schools and the membership community is posited to have further incentivized involvement in ECIS/CIS accreditation, motivating these individuals to recurrently perform these acts, as the currency of experience, framed as professional development, is transferable to other contexts:

Opportunities to participate in school accreditation visits offer your faculty and staff valuable professional development and networking with colleagues in international education (CIS, n.d.-c).

Arguably, those professionals most involved in the membership community, frequently heads and school leaders, serve a poignant "stabilizing and meaning-making" (Scott, 2014, p.57) purpose within accredited schools as institutions, contributing to CIS' adhesiveness in new contexts. These ideas can be aligned with the understanding that 'building' legitimacy requires "a *relationship* with an audience" (Suchman, 1995, p.594)—audiences will be cognizant of what they get and what they must give in return. As it relates to ECIS/CIS accreditation in Berlin-Brandenburg, interviews suggest individuals understand what they receive, what they should contribute, and also what they should respect: The norms of membership. Failure to do so brings shame, and possibly reprimand (e.g., failure to be accredited or loss of accredited status). It is particularly important, therefore, that heads and school leaders, as essential curators and interpreters of accreditation, are well-integrated within the membership community.

ECIS/CIS will also respect the school's local context when facilitating accreditation, demonstrating understanding of each school's diversity, "fostering a sense of constituent control" (Suchman, 1995, p.596) that supports legitimacy 'maintenance.' An example emergent in project conversations was the right to veto proposed volunteers. Another illustration would be the school's freedom to draft and customize accreditation visit schedules, and propose dates for visits that do not conflict with operations or local customs (CIS, 2017b). As CIS explains, they are able to "focus on your school's unique cultural and situational lens" (CIS, n.d.-c). Supporting this are standards that "have universality" (Ranger, 2014a, p.36), but also, as interviews alluded, continue to evolve in response to changing circumstances helping protocols retain their relevance. By "perceiving future changes" (Suchman, 1995, p.594) in the field, the legitimacy of protocol processes, and by this virtue, accreditation itself are 'maintained' in locales like Berlin-Brandenburg.

Project informants also demonstrated reverence for ECIS/CIS accreditation's differences from other tools and services. It is not inspection, which is imposing; it is not IB authorization, which is curriculum specific; it is not accreditation 'internationally,' which might be imagined as overtly American. Rather, emerging in interviews was the expectation of a unique process, 'international' accreditation, which has a global dimension, is reflective, supportive, holistic, and focused on

student well-being. It is also curriculum neutral, and non-national, giving it manifest authenticity and attractiveness for international schools in Berlin-Brandenburg. CIS can be seen to have promoted this unique identity, particularly highlighting the "**rigorous evaluation** of all aspects of school life" and the program's independence from "country, government, funder or curriculum" (CIS, n.d.-c). It also lists numbers of accredited schools in adverts (ibid), and its membership density is prominently displayed online (CIS, 2020i). This demonstrates success. Advertising organizational image, and promulgating achievements 'builds' further legitimacy (Suchman, 1995).

Not only has today's CIS accreditation program come to be projected as unique, it is also believed to be open, malleable, and responsive, which supports rationalization of its essences across contexts, taken up next in relation to other themes.

10.2.3. Themes 7–9 (Cultural-Cognitive Pillar)

Berlin-Brandenburg was an expanding market for international and other forms of private schooling following German reunification and the capital's return to Berlin. The perceived openness of ECIS/CIS to new schools and local founders from non-traditional international school backgrounds, who were able to benefit from and could afford the process was salient. So too was the organization's willingness to engage in a newly expanding region, particularly one, as noted, that was historically synonymous with values associated with this form of accreditation. The first CIS Board meeting, which took place in Berlin (Duevel, 2002b), may have been indicative of interest in and the symbolism of this region's expanding importance. While these factors, and an increase in CIS-employee diversity can be couched as positive features, indicating responsiveness to environmental conditions and legitimacy 'building' by coopting of a diversity of constituents (Suchman, 1995), they also bring us to what Caffyn (2013) has referred to as the "dualist nature of quality assurance" (p.218) activities like accreditation. While they monitor quality and evoke conversations about school improvement, such as the *Supplemental Lens'* characterization of primary task—strengthening school "self-awareness through triangulation of internal and external perspectives that inform change"—they also create division (ibid) by determining what kind of group it will be, and by isolating, separating, and signaling who has been "accepted as a member of a particular 'club'" (Hayden, 2006, p.143). This is often those best resourced finically or otherwise, giving them enhanced access to the associated membership capital. This, in turn, demarcates who is outside the organization (Caffyn, 2013), and excludes others from its resources.

While a critical perspective with social justice implications, this phenomenon can also be seen as a natural course of sector-specific legitimacy 'maintenance,' or the CIS membership community collaborating "to channel competition and to protect the legitimacy of the sector as a whole" (Suchman, 1995, p.604). Once inside this protective network, member schools in Berlin-Brandenburg will be exposed to individuals with a specific type of international school experience, like their SSEO, or the VT that will interact with their organizations. These exchanges coalesce around shared understandings and cultural beliefs facilitated via accreditation protocol standards (Fertig, 2007), and through engagement and participation in other services provided or recommended by the accreditor. The implication is schools may begin systematically thinking, talking, acting, looking, being led, and even promoting themselves similarly to one another. In other words, involvement in ECIS/CIS accreditation is isomorphic (ibid); as schools engage, they begin to mimic others in the system.

DiMaggio and Powell (1983) have argued that this type of mimicry does not necessarily make organizations more efficient. Rather, given the FRG's already established network of international schools, ECIS/CIS accreditation's isomorphic prowess is speculated to have helped nascent Berlin-Brandenburg schools 'build' their legitimacy by conforming "to the dictates of preexisting audiences" (Suchman, 1995, p.587): The parents of prospective international school students, as well as international teaching and leadership professionals relocating to Berlin from within the FRG or elsewhere globally. It is thus asserted that ECIS/CIS accreditation has 'built' legitimacy by 'building' legitimacy for international schools in this region, *not necessarily* by enabling their more efficient performance as organizations (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). However, it has almost certainly helped them replicate orthodoxies in the field, which may lead to school improvement. To sustain their image, distinctiveness, and associated benefits, these schools are likely to continue utilizing 'international' accreditation, helping CIS 'maintain' legitimacy as the field's traditional provider.

Project interviews also revealed that ECIS/CIS accreditation was thought to be flexible. It is adaptable to a variety of settings, giving it a strong sense of appropriateness for use in a diversity of international schools—yet another example of its institutionalization conforming to its broader environment (Suchman, 1995). This, combined with on-going feedback into and refinement of accreditation protocols, willingness to reflect on and respond to concerns in the membership

community, and proactively alleviating disharmony in relationships with close partners, ECIS/CIS has mitigated disruptions and complications, supporting local comprehensibility. This responsiveness is particularly valuable in Berlin-Brandenburg, where *Constituent Players* have exhibited some circumspect regarding heavy bureaucracy, increasing complexity, and accreditation's predominance of English. While precarious commentary on accreditation has been quickly countered in print, Percy's (2005) sentiments that "CIS Accreditation Service is open to comments and constructive criticism from all interested parties" (p.77) seems to have been applied practice. When constituents are being heard and their needs are being responsively met, further legitimacy is 'built', while reassuring doubters helps legitimacy to be 'maintained' as uncertainties are minimized (Suchman, 1995).

ECIS/CIS' accreditation's processes have also been flexible enough to be aligned with US-based accreditation routines and IB authorization practices. Flexibility has been an area CIS promotes as inherent to all of its services (CIS, 2006). However, alluded to earlier, it could also be relatively static structural and operational similarities between 'international' accreditation and more traditional forms of accreditation facilitated by US-based agencies—and the similarities between these routines and those of IB authorization (i.e., preliminary reports, site visits, decision based on the recommendation of on-site visitors)—that have enabled them to function readily with ECIS/CIS accreditation. This does not to negate the significance of flexibility, broadly thematic in this inquiry's data, as it could be argued that elasticity and sameness *both* support performance with US-based accreditation agencies and the IB's curriculum authorization process. Together with these other tools, therefore, ECIS/CIS accreditation could be said to act as part of a locally applicable ensemble, or "collections of related policies" (Ball, 1993, p.14) and strategies that have been used to influence school development and direction, and/or resolve legitimacy quandaries for private international schools in Berlin-Brandenburg. This usage has been solution-oriented against the backdrop of complex historical processes (Ozga, 2000): The reunification of Germany, and the resulting revitalization of the region. As a consequence, via its utility in conjunction with other organizations, it could be argued that ECIS/CIS accreditation has played a relative role—using the characterization of primary task extracted from the study's *Superordinate Players*—in the "sustainability and continuity" of the several of the region's premier private international schools, protecting assumptions (Suchman, 1995) about its utility, and helping it 'maintain' legitimacy in a region where the IB may be seen by local families as a more important school partner.

10.3. Conclusions: How has CIS 'Built' and 'Maintained' Institutional Legitimacy as a Provider of 'International' Accreditation for International Schools in Berlin-Brandenburg?

Understandings advanced via a discussion of legitimacy 'building' and 'maintenance' strategies relative to themes in ECIS/CIS' institutionalization as an accreditation provider in Berlin-Brandenburg can now be applied to constructing a narrative, analytic explanation that uses the project-specific definition of institutional legitimacy to fuse and communicate the concept of an institution having legitimacy in one specific context. This narrative analysis, supported by supplementary material, answers the study's primary research question:

> **How has CIS 'built' and 'maintained' institutional legitimacy as a provider of 'international' accreditation for international schools in the Berlin-Brandenburg region of the Federal Republic of Germany?**

One of the advantages of a time-bound case study is the opportunity to trace developments, or in this instance, processes of legitimacy 'building' and 'maintenance' over time to demonstrate causal relationships (Yin, 2018). As a result, the culminating narrative will be presented chronologically. This supports the accordance of proportionate attention to events (ibid), processes, and the influence of key people (Simons, 2012) or groups over time, enhancing contextual validity relative to the phenomenon being investigated (George and Bennett, 2004). It also enables the historical organizational identities of ECIS and CIS to be dissevered, helping to elucidate and clarify how the latter 'built' and 'maintained' institutional legitimacy in Berlin-Brandenburg. Findings evoke critical reflections, as well as constructive feedback for CIS as an organization providing 'international' accreditation.

10.3.1. CIS' Institutional Legitimacy in Berlin-Brandenburg

To adjoin and convey understandings, the project-specific definition of institutional legitimacy has been broken into three parts; each segment includes narrative and contextual analysis.

1. ***The alignment of an organization's activities and repeated behaviors with basic legalities, prevailing standards, codes, customs, and mindsets—collectively, cultural components—at a particular point in time and place;***

Narrative: As private international school's proliferated in Berlin-Brandenburg post-

1989, they were not supported with inspection or holistic evaluation tools by their local education departments. ECIS accreditation's existing institutional patterns of school evaluation were environmentally responsive to this context, fulfilling stakeholder expectations and beliefs regarding how international schools develop, promote themselves, and demonstrate their standing in a network. After its founding in 1994, AGIS' criteria of association required membership in ECIS (or later CIS), and participation in accreditation routines. Presumably, at this point, AGIS's founders would have seen ECIS' values, processes, and international outlook aligned with their own, indicative of its strong existing reputation. ECIS, as the field's established provider of 'international' accreditation hereafter became a natural partner for schools seeking to affiliate themselves with AGIS. The Berlin-Brandenburg landscape was flush with educational entrepreneurs, including German locals from outside the traditional international schooling circuit. ECIS was perceived to be open, and welcoming to these newcomers.

Analysis: Here we see ECIS' activities and institutional behaviors aligning with basic legalities, or lack thereof formal regulative, developmental tools for private international schools. In the absence of prevailing local standards, tools, codes, and customs that international schools could use to be supported, evaluated, and measured against one another, early school founders in Berlin-Brandenburg, coerced by AGIS membership stipulations, turned to private regulators to address these issues. A notable mindset was that ECIS accreditation represented educational quality. This perspective appears to have traveled into Berlin-Brandenburg through the AGIS network via informal sharing and transmission of accreditation as an esteemed type of educational knowledge—drawing on Dove (1985), what Resnik (2012) has called: "The 'percolation effect'" (p.252). ECIS' institutional mores of openness to developing regions and newcomers were also aligned with the needs of the time and place.

2. *this gives the unit a potency that is strengthened via systematized, conventionalized, self-actuating reproductive practices that have developed into "strongly held rules" (Scott, 2014, p.93) highly responsive to the environment the entity inhabits, particularly to the potential yields and possibility of penalization therein;*

Narrative: By 2003, ECIS had been partitioned and CIS was born. It emerged with a wellspring of legitimacy inherited from its parent organization. This was carried into Berlin-Brandenburg literally and figuratively. In November of 2002, the still nascent

organization was showcased at an ECIS Conference in Berlin. The city was billed as "a new venue" (*International School*, 2003, pp.24-5). Here, an initial CIS Board meeting was held (Duevel, 2002b; *International School*, 2002). This was an opportunity to extol the virtues of CIS for local customers. By this point, the creation of CIS was mitigating negativity associated with a European association spearheading 'international' accreditation; in effect, the new organization assumed an identity beneficial to the future of accreditation practices. Existing and prospective clientele in Berlin-Brandenburg also stood to gain. While some schools no doubt saw accreditation as an opportunity to become more efficient learning organizations, CIS' newly institutionalized and theoretically, at least in name, even *more* international identity enabled further differentiation from traditional local schools with cosmopolitan essences, and others with bi-national or pan-European goals. In effect, adopting and remaining engaged in an accreditation cycle would make organizations appear similar to other international schools in the field imagined "to be more legitimate or successful" (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983, p.152).

However, below the waterline, CIS accreditation remained arguably similar in structure and institutional practice to traditional models of accreditation used by US-based agencies, albeit more flexible and drawing on volunteers based in other international schools. As in early America, CIS accreditation provided services and functions the local governments of Berlin and Brandenburg who were coming to grips with German reunification did not; though a school inspection program was in place in Berlin by school-year 2005/06 (Berlin.de, n.d.-a), for example, it was not imposed on private international schools. Simultaneously, CIS accreditation projected itself as morally guided, and humanitarian in character. This is likely to have resonated with local and international communities in Berlin-Brandenburg, giving the activity a respectability and unique identity that CIS has continued promoting.

Meanwhile, CIS accreditation's moral disposition nourished a philanthropic culture of systematized volunteerism mandated initially by NAIS' Commission on Accreditation, which CIS employed as an accreditor of the accreditor in 2005 (Tangye, 2010). This further empowered CIS accreditation, demonstrating it was willing to subject its own standards and practices to review (CIS, 2020b), rooting and legitimizing volunteerism as accreditation's virtues were extolled in the region by the most active of contributors, often school leaders. Volunteers benefitted from their association with CIS, as their professional identities were enriched, and involvement bestowed honor and respect. Schools, the entire membership community, and CIS gained. The

institutional pattern was symbiotic.

Schools were shown reverence too. They were given control over certain institutionalized process and their local contexts were appreciated during accreditation processes. These conventions have acted as the understood rules of 'international' accreditation as an activity in Berlin-Brandenburg. CIS has fostered relationships with schools and individuals in the region who have respected and benefited from the norms of accreditation. These players are aware of the implications of failing to play by the rules.

Analysis: CIS benefited from ECIS' legacy. ECIS had been visionary in creating a new, hypothetically more globally legitimate body, CIS, to manage its accreditation business. CIS' systematized and conventionalized practices now appeared more international to existing and future stakeholders in Berlin-Brandenburg, who drew on these patterns to develop international school identities enabling them to stand out locally and internationally, and possibly become more efficient learning organizations. Conventions and systems were descendent from, and worked and served Berlin-Brandenburg's school much like traditional American models, while reflecting uniquely internationalized elements. Perhaps the most self-actuating of these has been the philanthropic, systematized volunteerism of CIS accreditation institutionalized by accreditation of the accreditor. In effect, the value of volunteering, the importance of according respect to schools engaged in the process, and the salience of respecting the process itself, have developed into the understood institutional rules of CIS' practices in Berlin-Brandenburg. Stakeholders appreciate the benefits of being part of the accreditation process, and realize the consequences of not adhering to what is expected of an accredited school. Awareness of prospective sanctions for behavior outside of that institutionally understood to be acceptable serve to constrain aberrant conduct, enabling CIS accreditation to be utilized responsibly in Berlin-Brandenburg's private international schools, ensuring all reap maximum gain.

3. *in turn, this enables openness of operations, a perceived naturalness of being and thus comfortable immersion within "a framework of institutions" (Jepperson, 1991, p.151) resulting in "stronger relations and more entrenched resources" (Scott, 2014, p.93), empowering, and enhancing organizational fortitude.*

Narrative: The CIS accreditation process' modern form, "CIS 2019 International Accreditation" (Green, 2020), appears derived from CIS International Accreditation,

2016, a protocol "fully and entirely developed by CIS" (CIS, 2020j) and facilitated via "a cloud-based platform" (CIS, 2016d). While mirroring some aspects of traditional US-themed accreditation, its strong student well-being focus, overt links to child and data protection (CIS, 2019c), explicit global dimension (CIS, n.d.-a; Thompson, 2020), five-year review cycles (CIS, 2016a), and technological advances suggest it has evolved to stay relevant. Like earlier protocols, it is also imagined to be unique and flexible, applicable to a variety of international school contexts. This has made it a suitable component, given its similarities and differences to other tools, for use as part of an international school developmental policy ensemble together with US-based accreditation devices and the IB's curriculum authorization instruments. Synergistically, these instruments shape school direction and resolve questions of legitimacy, hypothetically supporting progress and improving the standing of international schools in their respective networks. "Partnerships are powerful" (Hill, 2005, p.39), and have certainly helped CIS flourish in a cosmopolitan region, Berlin-Brandenburg, with a competitive private education sector, and significant local educational challenges.

However, once inside the CIS accreditation community and membership network, Berlin-Brandenburg's CIS-accredited schools may become more homogenous, in some ways similar to one another and other schools in the network. The standards of the accreditation process, interaction with employees of CIS and experienced volunteers, as well as participation in CIS' activities and affiliated services have the potential to mimetically transform organizations into a specific type of accredited international school. These schools then rely on CIS to support the maintenance of this esteemed identity, protecting their own and CIS' accomplishments, serving to insulate and differentiate them from schools outside the network.

All the while, CIS has continually allied itself with formative organizations like ICAISA, growing out of NAIS in 2018, which it had a role in founding (ICAISA, n.d.-a). Immersion within these associations also advances CIS' overarching standing and stability. CIS' willingness to embrace and respond to feedback with action, while continuing to develop its protocols and practices, popularizing them and promoting their success within the membership community has further aided acceptance. When matters of significance or problems with key partners have arisen, they have been addressed, reassuring doubters, and decreasing ambiguity. Collectively, these patterns of institutional behavior aid local comprehensibility in Berlin-Brandenburg, where some express doubt and consternation regarding accreditation, and others

may see the IB as a more valuable partner. However, as explored at the beginning of the project, accreditation's somewhat informal character may also enable its patterns to be embraced more casually, and its doubters to feel relatively unthreatened, making its presence quite natural, and its future more sustainable.

Analysis: The informality, uniqueness, and flexibility of CIS' accreditation processes, as well as the manner CIS has addressed challenges with partners, and other matters arising, while continuing to develop its services, which keeps them current, minimizes resistance, and supports naturalness and openness of operations in Berlin-Brandenburg where CIS is comfortably immersed in a framework of institutions that provide school development services and resources to the region's private international schools. The sustained accreditation of its own institutionalized practices by ICAISA—a re-accreditation cycle was begun in September 2019 (CIS, 2020k)—further cement it within an institutional matrix that systematizes routines and demands some remain similar to those of traditional US-based providers (ISAISA, n.d.-b). This rigidity, too, is stabilizing, and ensures CIS accreditation retains key essences that have empowered it, a hegemonic language among them. Schools inside the CIS network assume a distinctiveness as accredited international schools and become part of a systemic framework that depends on accreditation to maintain aspects of identity and legitimacy (Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2015). This distinguishes these schools from competitors. Through this reliance, schools enhance their own and CIS' organizational fortitude.

10.3.2. Critical Reflections, and Constructive Feedback for CIS

CIS' institutional legitimacy in Berlin-Brandenburg's private international schools can be seen residing in a combination of local environmental factors and CIS' historically institutionalized characteristics coalescing in one region over the years binding the study. This gives CIS a potency, and also a taken-for-grantedness in this region's "'top-tier international schools'" (MacDonald, 2006, p.204) whereby its fundamental conventions have assumed levels of commonly held cognition in several leading organizations that alternative forms of school evaluative behavior may be difficult for stakeholders to comprehend (Scott, 2014). In effect, CIS accreditation has become part of social reality, effectively, an entrenched, meaning-making system (Scott, 2014) to which schools and professional identities are attached. It is helpfully interwoven into the fabric of school development, promotional and operational activity, and is essential to regional membership affiliation. While this may be indicative of an organizational process with institutional legitimacy, it can also shield

those providing and adopting CIS accreditation from being fully cognizant of its limitations.

In a loosely-regulated field where accreditation is not an expectation of local educational ministries, such as Berlin-Brandenburg, CIS' institutionalization has conformed meaningfully to the expectations, beliefs, and values of a collective audience within "a fragmented organization" (Denzin, 1981, p.152): It is done "because it is expected" by the community—the Normative Pillar (Bunnell, 2019c, p.194); and, it is done "because others are doing it" and must have good reason—the Cultural-Cognitive Pillar (ibid, p.194). The latter and prior, in turn, activate the Regulative Pillar—it is done "because we have to" (ibid, p.194) in order to take part in, and reap the benefits of AGIS membership. However, once inside these accreditation and membership networks, development becomes unidirectional as accredited schools begin to look like "an increasingly similar 'species' of international school" (Machin, 2019, p.110); their local and expat teachers become more like other international teachers "as educators move between jobs" (Bunnell and Fertig, 2016, p.60); and, their leaders and heads, who are particularly influential agents in this process, are networked into an institutional system that perpetuates a certain type of international school leadership. While some of these factors may be advantageous to the legitimacy of an international school (Bunnell, Fertig, and James 2015), they also foreshadow tension.

Some participants felt that Berlin-Brandenburg's local school system could benefit from something like CIS accreditation, yet CIS' protocols and processes are facilitated primarily in English. While it has been argued VTs are prepared to operate in other languages (Percy, 2005), professional educational experience "in an English language context" (CIS, 2020l) is required to become an accreditation volunteer. The intensity and technicalities of accreditation report writing— which is done in English— are also likely to give teachers and visiting educators fluent in English, and individuals from cultural backgrounds where accreditation is more familiar, a distinct advantage. This raises a critical question: To what extent have the language, expectations, values, beliefs, and interests of native English speakers, and those from Anglo-American educational communities where accreditation is more common been disproportionately represented and favored in the development and replication of international schooling as a consequence or the internationalization of accreditation?

On the one hand, then, schools invest in a program, 'international' accreditation, that

is informal, flexible, and continuous in nature, supporting the development of educational organizations across cultural frontiers, helping ensure that local essences are appreciated and imbedded in schools over an extended period of time in places like Berlin-Brandenburg; however, the irony is that, in many contexts, CIS accreditation does this by drawing heavily on outside competence, experience, and knowledge, as people and educational ideas traverse time and space in a manner that may induce "a kind of cultural and political dependency" that delegitimizes and limits "the feasibility of 'local' solutions" (Ball, 1998, p.123). In this sense, 'international' accreditation contributes to what Swanson (2013) characterizes as the "marginalization of local and indigenous (p.334)" knowledge systems brought on by the internationalization of education. When "local and indigenous knowledge" is forsaken for "global universal(ized/izing) forms as a normative condition of development" (ibid, p.334) dissonance can result. This suggests 'international' accreditation, by drawing on internationalized knowledge not universally accessible to *all* schools and students, may also have the potential to deepen perceptions of educational elitism in Berlin-Brandenburg's private international schools, engendering social justice questions rather than resolving them as several participants in this study imagined.

How should organizations like CIS and international school practitioners respond? While individuals enact institutions, "there is no assurance that they will produce what they intend" (Scott, 2014, p.39). Providers of all forms of international school accreditation, school practitioners themselves, and others who reap benefits from the current state of play should bear this in mind. Institutional systems emerge through collective activity, and will only be maintained *or* altered through social behavior (Scott, 2014). Recognizing this, as a leader in the field, 50-years removed from the release of ECIS' (1970) first school evaluation tool, CIS has a responsibility to shape policy and practice to ensure its accreditation programs provide space for the institutionalization of indigenous alternatives, while protecting and elevating local identities (Gundara, 1997), individuals, and educational ideals to serve more than the supposed "profile and standing" (CIS, n.d.-c) of financially and otherwise privileged schools, the dominant interests, language, culture, and systems of these spaces (Engel, 2020), and those fortunate to be employed by and attend them.

Chapter 11.0. – Epilogue

11.0. Introduction

The last chapter takes the form of an epilogue linking the study's sub-questions to primary findings, exploring avenues for further research and action, critiquing the completed study, and clarifying its contributions.

11.1. Revisiting Study Sub-Questions—What Next?

With primary findings distilled, they can be linked to study sub-questions and opportunities for further research and action.

- **Why is academic research on international school accreditation so sparse?**

It is conjectured international school accreditation research has been sparse in English-language literature due to preoccupation with the field's overarching landscape and growth (Bunnell, 2019a), and attention to more overt inequality fostered by the globalization of an international schooling system "in its infancy" (Lauder, 2007, p.442). Meanwhile, in the German-speaking world, 'international' accreditation remains a relatively niche phenomenon. In the city-state of Berlin, for example, where there are well over 100 *Ergänzungsschule* (Berlin.de, n.d.-b), only three are CIS accredited. In this region, and likely others, accreditation is a practice associated with a type of schooling that may still be concealed in an exclusive, yet "friendly community of educators and stakeholders" (Bunnell, 2014, p.146).

Hence, in professional publications, a scarcity of critical accounts may be the result of taken-for-grantedness, whereby accreditation has become part of social reality (Scott, 2014) projected to have a moral purpose that, in some contexts, operates as a "bottom-up" process of collaboration with the "aim of school improvement" (Jingqi and Ulmet, 2019, p.56). The coerciveness associated with network access alluded to in this study is a newer narrative and supports theorizing that the field's "'supply-chain'" is now "more complex, and sophisticated" (Bunnell, 2020, p.766), if not interconnected. Further, drawing on the work of Ball (1993), Eaton (2016) has suggested accreditation doctrines can "exercise power through a *production* of 'truth' and 'knowledge,' as discourses" (Ball, 1993, p.14). In the past, critical commentary on accreditation has been rebutted by authoritative accreditation agency voices. As this inquiry suggests, and is confirmed elsewhere (Larsson, 2012), these individuals were often influential international school leaders prior to serving the accreditation

sector. Their words, knowledge, and truths shape professional discourses and understandings.

This can be linked to Bunnell, Fertig, and James' (2017b) work on IB schools that suggests, "The institutionalising force of sharing a common 'lingo' and pedagogical discourse is significant" (p.16). There is scope for more attention in research and practice to the impact of institutionalization within accreditation ecosystems on teacher identity, from who and where lingo and discourses have emerged, and how this influences isomorphism in international schools, affects perspectives on truths, and is "institutionalised into particular ways of acting" (Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2015, p.15) that perpetuate 'international' accreditation and influence generally positive professional accounts of the practice.

- **What is international about international school accreditation?**

The term *international* can be interpreted in a myriad of ways in relation to international schools (Hayden and Thompson, 1995; Roberts, 2012) and accreditation. As historically practiced by its initiator, ECIS, and today, CIS, 'international' accreditation is international in that it serves schools and is recognized by governments throughout the world; the current framework has incorporated input from "across 116 countries" (CIS, 2019a), presumably helping it remain flexible and differentiable to support varied educational contexts (Ranger, 2014a); the process' platform is "cloud-based" (CIS, 2016d) enabling it to be implemented anywhere; the professional staff of CIS and its volunteer network are said to be increasingly diverse, working from an international headquarters in Leiden, or remotely across multiple continents; and—once critiqued for having "no references to international or intercultural learning" in their "description of characteristics of an accredited school" (Lewis, 2005, p.19)—CIS has made fostering global citizenship a driver of its accreditation routines (CIS, n.d.-a; Thompson, 2020).

However, more critically, it might be posited that international school accreditation is international in supporting the global transference of diplomas, and thus the economic interests of multinational (Allan, 2013) and local families (Engel, 2020) whose children attend international schools and will "go on to the most prestigious… tertiary educational institutions" in the world (Wilkinson, 2017). If international schools are indeed paving an advantageous pathway to higher education (Keeling, 2018b), accreditation may be contributing to globalizing processes that have "unwittingly"

fostered inequality (Wilkinson, 2017, p.5). At the very least, this too should be acknowledged in the accreditation narrative.

A practice with a uniquely American genesis (The Alliance, n.d.; Cognia, 2020a), accreditation has also been ingeniously transported and repackaged to serve international schools, and continues to be facilitated through English, a hegemonic language. This suggests its proliferation is linked to a period of globalization characterized by "the emergence of American hyperpower" (Coulby, 2005, p.279), which has been associated with cultural and linguistic imperialism. If the pendulum has swung and we have entered an era were international school teachers are no longer expected "to be globally mobile expatriates" (Hayden and Thompson, 2020, p.3)—English native speakers from developed Western nations—and if, as is suggested, international schools are serving "a higher percentage of local nationals than they have in the past" (Nordmeyer and Wilson, 2020, p.59), wider acknowledgement that accreditation "may not sit as comfortably with some as it does with others" (Hayden, 2006, p.142) will be needed.

A photo on the ICAISA (n.d.-a) website is telling in another respect. It shows over twenty individuals, none of whom are visibly people of color, toasting "the history and auspicious future of ICAISA" (ibid). It may also be time, as one CIS employee recently advocated, "to pause and reflect… about just how far our institutions may still have to go to eradicate structural racism" (Nyomi, 2020) and mirror the diversity of the international schooling community.

The extent to which the international accreditation system has advantaged those fluent in English, individuals from cultural backgrounds where it is familiar practice, and people of certain ethnicities are poignant questions. Practitioners and theorists should take them up vigorously.

- **What is/are the primary task(s) of international school accreditors?**

Interpretations of CIS accreditation's primary task varied: Enhancing school self-awareness from divergent perspectives; supporting sustainability and continuity through routines that facilitate on-going improvement; and, linking schools to a membership community that supports their development and signals their intention to be international schools. Differences in the way *Superordinate Players* and *Constituent Actors* defined primary task were apparent. The *Supplemental Lens* provided another outlook.

This study used heterogeneous perspectives on primary task to appreciate a single accreditation provider's institutional patterns and pursuit of legitimacy in one region. However, studies that seek to isolate and more acutely understand *why* perspectives on primary task differ in "fragmented organizations" (Denzin, 1981, p.150) providing accreditation to international schools could serve as a springboard for identifying differing cultural perspectives on the practice, or pinpointing supply and demand-side variance that shape expectations, values, and beliefs about accreditation. If, as Bunnell (2020) suggests, international schooling finds itself in "an uneasy 'transitionary phase'" whereby old structures have fragmented as participants "adjust to emerging, different, and problematic norms and values" (p.767), accreditation providers seeking to maintain or renegotiate legitimacy will benefit from research that develops understanding of audience heterogeneity (Suchman, 1995). This could support greater "*indigenization* or *glocalization*" (Scott, 2014, p.98) of accreditation practices internationally, sustaining their relevance at a time when there may be movement away from "the traditional network of suppliers and services" (Bunnell, 2016d, p.231).

- **Why do international schools with IB programmes pursue international school accreditation?**

When deployed together with the IB's curriculum authorization process and other development tools, this study suggests accreditation acts as one component in a developmental policy ensemble associated with "'top-tier international schools'" (MacDonald, 2006, p.204), influencing direction and resolving legitimacy questions, effectively part of a dominant discourse (Ball, 1993) in the field, making these schools more attractive to elite clientele. Understanding the association in this way is a reminder that, "'Eliteness' appears in a diverse array of constellations and spaces of practice" (Ball, 2015, p.235).

The turbulence of the COVID-19 pandemic, unforeseen at this study's onset, is also reason to contemplate whether building legitimacy in "'top-tier international schools'" (MacDonald, 2006, p.204), particularly in unstable contexts (Zammuto, 2008), means more efficient organizational performance (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). As Sonpar, Pazzaglia, and Kornijenko (2010) write, while "external actors may act as gatekeepers to key resources and legitimacy," they may also constrain "organizations to behave in certain ways" (p.3), limiting much needed flexibility. This may be especially compromising for organizations welcoming regulatory intervention from multiple agencies (Scott, 2014). While strategic embrace of a collective CIS/IB

isomorphic potency (Deephouse, 1996) may augment international school legitimacy, the work of Friedland and Alford (1991) might be drawn on to explore the extent that the institutionalized logics of CIS and the IB are truly compatible for developing schools as learning organizations, particularly in unstable environments. Is IB/CIS synergy real, or is it a deeply-embedded institutionalized myth that enables schools to be "more legitimate, successful, and likely to survive" (Meyer and Rowan, 1977, p.361)?

- **How influential or detrimental is the work of international school accrediting bodies?**

Young people "graduating from international and exclusive private schools may have access to prestigious global jobs that required multicultural skills" (Resnik, 2009, p.218); they will have earned "credentials that signal an educational experience different from that which has become increasing available to the masses" (Lowe, 2000, p.365); and, their diplomas will, in some cases, be 'stamped' by international accrediting organizations that are deeply imbedded in the tapestry of the field, signaling a certain type of experience and quality to elite universities (Ranger, 2016). Hence, this study's findings suggest accrediting bodies *are* influential, but perhaps not *only* in the morally-grounded way they are often imagined. As Resnik (2009) writes:

> **The relevance of multicultural skills in global management alongside the decay of multiculturalism in public education systems entails a growing educational disparity between lower class and higher class children. A new educational structure in which two differentiated systems—a national system and an international system—emerges and redefines the terms of inequality of opportunities (p.219).**

While international school accreditation may still be relatively niche in many locales, the role it plays in perpetuating educational inequality as it forsakes "local and indigenous knowledge" for "global universal(ized/izing) forms as a normative condition of development" (Swanson (2013, p.334) has been alluded to in this inquiry. The paradoxes and tensions associated with international-themed accreditation identified may prove to be "unsettling and disturbing" in the "'transitionary phase'" identified by Bunnell (2020, p.767). Whether or not these will be exacerbated or eased by the COVID-19 pandemic, school closures, shifts to virtual learning, and prolonged global economic hardship remains to be seen.

Meanwhile, CIS' discussion of visiting and evaluating schools virtually (CIS, 2020m), the subsequent release of a framework for this practice (CIS, 2020n), and a report boasting "102 educators from 71 schools in 39 countries across every continent" made time to participate in an online "accreditation team evaluator" training in the midst of the pandemic's complications (Green, 2020) are reminders that international schooling and its supply chain are markedly resilient. The field has faced and weathered economic downturn before (Brummitt, 2009; Pham, 2009; Beiber, 2010; Walker, 2015), with the "slump in the oil and gas market between 2014 and 2016" said to have actually contributed to accreditation becoming "increasingly valued by schools as an independent designation of quality" (ISC, 2020). Resultantly, proactive studies evaluating the response of international school accreditation providers to a post-COVID context are encouraged as a means of holding them accountable for their impact and/or lauding their ability to respond self-critically and socially responsibly to paradigm shift.

11.2.   Challenges, Limitations, and Last Words

The social researcher is challenged to transform "borrowed experiences into his own insights" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p.252). Interviewing research makes this particularly difficult. As Denzin (1997) writes:

> **Every method reveals a different slice of the social world. Every researcher sees different qualities (p.322).**

Recognizing this, I have embraced, explored, and acknowledged my researcher identity (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009) throughout the study (Mason-Bish, 2019), working "creatively within the tensions" (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009, p.62). I have left an audit trail indicating where I have engaged in reflexivity (Houghton, et al, 2013), and have openly highlighted decisions taken (Ozga, 2000) in an effort to make my study accessible and to allow readers the opportunity to appreciate my choices and, ultimately, my interpretations (Houghton, et al, 2013). Still, I am cognizant that meanings assigned were the product of my "interaction with the participants and their words" (Seidman, 2006, p.130) and unique identities. Likewise, embracing the concept of "positionality" as "a transitory and dynamic situation (p.264)," I am aware that who I have been professionally as a school head, personally while taking a sabbatical, what I have lived through during the study—a global pandemic that has transformed lives and perspectives— and my own elite identity, which mirrors that of my participants, have all played a part in meaning-making.

Furthermore, as Maxwell (1992) writes, drawing on Briggs (1986) and Mishler (1986), an "informant's actions and views could differ in other situations" (Maxwell, 1992, p.295), when being interviewed by another party, or in another language. To address this, and other challenges mentioned above, I have involved heterogeneous groups to provide a "proportioned view of the evidence," reducing—but not eliminating—the "biases of particular people" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p.68), including my own. Sonpar, Pazzaglia, and Kornijenko (2010), moreover, remind us, citing Golden (1992), that "biases of recall may occur when actors are asked to explain past events" (Sonpar, Pazzaglia, and Kornijenko, 2010, p.5). Recognizing this, individuals whose experiences could be staggered across three decades were invited to share their accounts. While time period scaffolding does not eliminate recall bias, it may reduce the totality of retrospective distance. These choices, the utilization of complementary "*slices of data*" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p.65), and the application of ongoing, constant comparison of data (ibid, Hallberg, 2006) were employed to strengthen the credibility of my account. Pilot interviews further ensured my methods were as "rigorous" as possible (Woods, 1986, p.9). I have also presented data openly, while providing detailed descriptions of contextual and other aspects of the inquiry, enabling readers to determine which insights in my project might be transferable to further studies of accreditation and/or be relevant for international school practitioners (Houghton, et al, 2013). This could assist work that reinforces (Starman, 2013) findings or support the subsequent development of theory (George and Bennett, 2004, p.75) related to international school accreditor institutionalization and legitimacy.

There were also disappointments along the way, but these too have been informative. Having a participant leave my study was discouraging. While this was their right, and no further questions were asked—demonstrating the clarity and effectiveness of my *Ethical Considerations/Informed Consent* tool (Appendix F)—the experience invited reflection on the appropriateness of interviewing as a method of data collection in post-communist societies. It is difficult in bustling, modern Berlin, or among the tranquil villas of old Brandenburg to imagine life pre-1989. Then, to put into perspective that many in this outwardly changed region were raised in the GDR and an interview facilitated via voice recorder for some could "be a cataclysmic 'critical' event" (Woods, 1986, p.70) drudging up memories and emotions connected to another time, place, and context. Hence, the human history of Berlin-Brandenburg should be carefully reflected by future researchers when selecting and developing research tools to study this context, and those similar to it.

Moreover, as Sandelowski and Barroso (2002) point out, qualitative researchers can be challenged to provide authentic portrayals of the individuals whose accounts are fundamental to their studies. In my project, for example, to protect identities, participant genders were not specified; and, reflecting on earlier sentiments, I did not divulge who might have disclosed an Eastern or Western German upbringing. This has disallowed analysis of uniquely masculine and feminine views, as well as specifically Eastern or Western German perspectives on accreditation. Nor did I directly quote participants, as I was concerned that requesting this privilege at the onset of the project would have discouraged participation from German, non-native speakers of English whose stories were crucial to capturing an accurate portrayal of the phenomenon being investigated in a natural setting (Hallberg, 2006).

In this sense, then, there was the disappointment of having deprived my participants of important aspects of their identities. While this was done out of an abundance of caution and respect for participant anonymity—and can be seen as part of the complex dilemma of confidentiality in qualitative studies (Baez, 2002)—I realize critical elements of voice and identity are missing from my account. Going forward, I would like to explore strategies of critical agency, giving more "'voice'" to those who may have been disadvantaged by the existing power structures (ibid, p.51) of accreditation and international schooling, notably women, people of color, and non-native speakers of English. This has the potential to provide contrasting and complementary descriptions of the work of accreditation providers in international schools, and could strengthen, or diversify existing perspectives. Accounts of accreditation from the perspective of other unheard voices (Modell, 1982) that, given my researcher identity, could not be captured—parents, teachers, and students—could elicit yet further understanding.

During my study, I also reflected on Oakley's (2000) sentiments that one should strive to "develop the most reliable and democratic ways of knowing" (p.3). While I endeavored to choose "the right method for the research question" (ibid, p.21), Oakley (1981) has also suggested interviewing to be a more masculine paradigm, characterizing "the idea of a 'one-off'" interview rather than a long-term affair as being "closer to the traditional masculine world view" (p.44). This left me contemplative. Had my methods disadvantaged any participants, and what impact, if any, did this have on data collection?

Resolutely, though, as a permanent resident of Berlin-Brandenburg, "rather than merely collecting data and leaving the community" (Knox and Burkard, 2009, p.571), I remain committed to using my learning for the betterment of this region: One beset with historic and complex educational challenges, and, as this study has shown, a context that is sometimes overgeneralized by international school service providers (a thorny issue worthy of further investigation in its own right).

My project, meanwhile, grounded in empirical data, has strengthened Fertig's (2007) hypothesis that accreditation can be both "empowering" and "constraining" (p.345), particularly in the manner that it replicates institutional routines. However, I have gone further by exploring how, in one undertheorized region beset with representative tensions, a historic accreditation provider has 'built' and 'maintained' institutional legitimacy. This reveals a novel range of conflicting issues, notably accreditation's potential to marginalize local identities and knowledge systems in favor of globalized, hegemonic alternatives, while concurrently being deeply, helpfully, and legitimately interwoven into the fabric of private international school development, promotion, and identity. This raises new questions:

Is international school accreditation producing legitimate outcomes for society? Who wins and who loses?

I invite discussion of these complex issues, and urge consideration of how accreditation's institutionalized contradictions can be unraveled in international schools. Debate of these questions and other findings in my study from a plurality of perspectives will benefit the field. To influence policy and practice befitting our "rapidly changing world" (Ellwood, 2020, p.7), there is need for a more critical and academically grounded narrative on accreditation in international schools.

This project moves a sensitive and still fresh conversation forward.

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Appendixes

Appendix A: Letter of Introduction, Pilot Round

_____ 2019

Re: Introduction and Invitation to Participate

Dear _____,

I, Richard Eaton, am a student at the University of Bath (www.bath.ac.uk) in the United Kingdom working towards an Educational Doctorate (EdD). My final dissertation will take the form of a qualitative regional case study that seeks to understand how the Council of International Schools (CIS) has 'built' and 'maintained' institutional legitimacy as a provider of international accreditation for international schools in the Berlin-Brandenburg region of the Federal Republic of Germany. CIS (www.cois.org) is aware of this project and has agreed to support its completion.

Relying heavily on insights shared by participants via standardized open-ended interviews, I will attempt to identify the primary task, or tasks, of CIS' accreditation work in relation to one geographic area (Berlin-Brandenburg). Understandings of this task, or these tasks, will then be applied to a framework: "The institutional pillars and carriers of instutionalisation" (Adapted from Scott, 2014) in Bunnell, Fertig, and James (2016). This framework will be used to illustrate how institutional carriers erect and stabilize institutional pillars (ibid) in order to understand how CIS may have established and preserved its institutional legitimacy as an accreditation provider in one specific region. Ultimately, the study seeks to learn from CIS' institutionalization journey, contributing to theoretical understandings and providing practical insights that may be more widely applicable.

As someone familiar with international accreditation and/or the manner that international schools utilize international accreditation routines in Berlin-Brandenburg, and/or beyond, I would like to invite you to participate in this study via interview. All interviews will be confidential and anonymous. Each interview will last approximately 60 minutes, and no more than 90 minutes. In this time, you will have the opportunity to respond to 10 open-ended interview questions, several of which have more than one part. There may be some follow up after each question. To ensure you are aware of these questions in advance, and to support your complete understanding of this letter of introduction and my project, several further documents have been shared with you: _Ethical Considerations / Informed Consent_ (Appendix B); _Interview Questions_ (Appendix C), and _Glossary of Key Terminology_ (Appendix D). Please take time to review them.

Kindly note:

> **You are participating in a pilot interview as explained in Appendix B.**
>
> **You will be asked the questions for Sub-Group _____ , participants who have_____ . These are found in Appendix C.**

This project will adhere to the guidelines of the British Educational Research

Association, BERA (2018) "tenets of best ethical practice" (McCulloch, 2018, p.iii). For more information regarding BERA guidelines visit www.bera.ac.uk and see Appendix B.

After I have completed my viva voca at the University of Bath and have made any required corrections to my manuscript, all participants will receive a summary of key findings. The entire manuscript will be shared upon request. Participants will also be made aware of all publications stemming from this project, and will be offered access to them.

Your interest in and support of my work is appreciated. Feel free to contact me at any time should you have any follow up questions or concerns.

Yours sincerely,

███████████████

Richard Eaton – Phone: ████████████ / Email: rde28@bath.ac.uk

References:

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Appendix B: Ethical Considerations / Informed Consent, Pilot Round

To the participant:

To ensure you are fully aware of what this project entails and the ethical considerations that will be taken into account, please read the information herein.

As a participant in this project, I kindly ask that you provide your name, as well as sign and date this form.

Your support and time are greatly appreciated.

Research Title:	Legitimacy Quandaries: A qualitative study of how the Council of International Schools (CIS) has 'built' and 'maintained' institutional legitimacy as a provider of international accreditation for international schools in the Berlin-Brandenburg region of the Federal Republic of Germany.
Research Lead:	Richard Eaton is leading this research project, which has been approved by the University of Bath. Approval was link to the researcher's completion of an on-line module in research ethics. Richard has worked in international schools since 1997 and has most recently served as the Director of Berlin International School, Germany (2014 to present, including release time – sabbatical – for his research). The researcher is carrying out this study in his academic capacity as a student at the University of Bath. As a participant, you may contact Richard at any time via phone or email ▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓▓ / rde28@bath.ac.uk .
Supervision:	This research is being supervised at the University of Bath by Michael Fertig and Tristan Bunnell.
Aims/Purpose:	Bunnell, Fertig, and James (2015; 2016a; 2016b; 2017) have published and presented several papers on the topic of international school institutional legitimacy, providing various perspectives on the theme; among other things, they point to international accreditation routines and accredited status as factors contributing to such legitimacy (Bunnell, Fertig, and James 2015; 2016b). Notwithstanding, what gives international school accreditation providers *their* institutional legitimacy has remained unexamined. Presumably, international school accreditation providers would need to have 'built' and 'maintained' institutional legitimacy to be accepted as 'legitimizers' of international schools as institutions. Given the continued expansion of international schools globally, there is no shortage of schools and accreditation suppliers to study; however, their widely dispersed geography can complicate research efforts (Canterford, 2009); one way to address this challenge is to engage in regional studies (ibid) that

could generate findings that are "indicative and worthy of further exploration" (Brown and Lauder, 2011, p.41). Resultantly, this project will explore the issue of international school accreditation provider institutional legitimacy in one region, and in relation to one accreditation provider. Its aim is to produce theoretical and practical insights of utility to both the researcher and practitioner, which might, as stated in the British Educational Research Association, or BERA (2018), guidelines introduced below, "extend knowledge and understanding in all areas of educational activity" (p.3).

Ethical Standards: This project will adhere to the BERA "tenets of best ethical practice" (McCulloch, 2018, p.iii). For more information regarding BERA guidelines, you may visit their website: www.bera.ac.uk . These tenets reflect ethical standards and practices that have supported an extended "community of researchers well in the past and" should "continue to do so in the future" (ibid, p.iii). While they are not "rules and regulations" per se, they provide a normative framework that aspires to meet the research demands of the times, with the most recent revision in 2018 reflecting the rise of "social media and online communities, new legislative requirements, and the growing impact… of internationalisation and globalization" (ibid, p.iii). The BERA guidelines may not cover every situation that emerges during research, particularly when facilitating research in "different cultural contexts" (BERA, p.2). Thus, the researcher, in close collaboration with his supervisors, all of whom are clarified above, aspire to make the best situational judgments possible (ibid). All the while, it is the obligation of the researcher to "do everything they can to ensure that all potential participants understand" the full nature of "what is involved in a study" (ibid, p.9).

Participants: As someone familiar with international accreditation past and present and/or the manner that international schools utilize international accreditation routines in Berlin-Brandenburg, you have been selected as a possible asset to this project and are invited to participate in a pilot – or project specific – interview with the researcher. You will participate as one of two possible sub-groups: Sub-Group 1, comprised of participants who have worked at / played a governing role at CIS or in historically related entities (i.e. ECIS) – interviewees from superordinate systems; or Sub-Group 2, participants who have worked in /governed schools in Berlin-Brandenburg – interviewees from constituent systems.

Pilot Interviews: The purpose of pilot interviews is to refine the researcher's interview skills, and the interview questions to ensure both are sufficient for implementing the project's research design and answering research

questions (van Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001; Hancké, 2009; Turner, 2010). They may also support the refinement of the actual research questions (Turner, 2010). Pilot participants have been chosen who, while having similar professional backgrounds and experiences to those who will later participate in the study (van Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001; Turner, 2010), might also extend the researcher's insights on the theme. The researcher takes the position articulated by van Teijlingen and Hundley (2001) that they "have an ethical obligation to make the best use of their research experience by reporting issues arising from all parts of a study, including the pilot phase" (p.4).

Methodology: This project is a qualitative regional case study. It will rely heavily on insights shared by participants via standardized open-ended interviews. In this format, interviewees will be asked the same questions, but the questions are structured to allow open-endedness (McNamara, n.d.; Turner, 2010). This is designed to permit participants to "contribute as much detailed information as they desire," while also giving the researcher, if necessary, the opportunity to follow up after each question to ensure clarity and/or obtain further insights (Turner, 2010, p.756).

Requirements: Each interview will last 60 – 90 minutes. In this time, you will have the opportunity to respond to 10 open-ended *Interview Questions* (Appendix C), some of which have more than one part. An appropriate time and place for the interview will be mutually agreed, with the priority being interviewee comfort. Two modes of participation will be made available – in person, or via Skype.

Data Storage: With your consent, interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Interviewees will receive a copy of the transcript, and may request a copy of the recording. Transcripts will be revised at the request of participants should they feel that the interview has been inaccurately documented. Participants may also ask for any data to be removed from a transcript. All such requests will be honored. Names of persons interviewed will not be stored digitally. The researcher is aware of the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which is embedded within the BERA (2018) guidelines. As a result, they provide the following reassurances to participants: data will only be used for this project and publications explicitly related to it; recordings will be stored digitally until after the candidate's viva voca and any corrections stemming from the latter process have been made; transcribed and coded data will not be shared beyond the researcher and his supervisors and will only be used for this project and associated publications; no stored data will be shared with other researchers or

third persons.

Confidentiality: All interviews will be confidential and anonymous. Individual names will be disaggregated from coded data, reported data, and project findings. Though you may be asked, for example, to discuss your professional role, you are not required to mention your title or any other information you feel might compromise your identity. The letter of introduction you receive will refer to you by first name only.

Discomfort/Risk: This study does not intend to cause any discomfort. Thus, to ensure the participant feels as comfortable and safe as possible, the researcher will try to honor suggestions for preferred interview time, place, and mode (in person or via Skype). Moreover, the researcher appreciates that reflecting on ones' professional experiences, challenges, and even opportunities, or those inherent or related to the field in which they work – or have worked – can be distressing. It is understood that these feelings might also be exacerbated for participants who have a prior relationship with the researcher. Therefore, it might be helpful to reiterate that this study is being facilitated in the researcher's academic as opposed to professional capacity. If at any time, however, the interviewee feels uncomfortable, they may request the interview to be paused or concluded. Similarly, if any discomfort emerges while information is being recorded, the interviewee may request that recording devices are turned off and the interview concluded, or continued without it being recorded. The interviewee may also choose to skip posed questions should they cause discomfort, or for any other reason. No explanations will be required. While the researcher does not foresee any risks for participants so long as their identity is protected, it is possible that the results of the study may accord new insights, some of which may conflict with views interviewees have previously held, resulting in cognitive dissonance: psychological stress or discomfort initiated by new information intersecting with previously held beliefs. Interviewees are welcome to contact the researcher at any time should problems present themselves.

Withdrawal: The right to withdrawal from the study at any time, without explanation, should be understood and participants should be made explicitly aware of this right (BERA, 2018). Should you choose to withdrawal, information you contributed will be redacted.

Results: Once the researcher has completed his viva voca at the University of Bath, and any changes to the manuscript stemming from this process have been made, all participants will receive a summary of key findings. The entire manuscript will be shared with

interested participants upon request. Participants will also be made aware of all publications explicitly related to this project and will be offered access to them.

Participant Benefits: Having access to the project's key findings, as well as any directly related publications will provide participants with insights that may be of practical value or theoretical interest. By exploring the interview questions, telling their stories, and sharing related insights, participants might also have the opportunity to connect and further appreciate their own perspectives on the theme, supporting the manner that they engage with their practice (Farrell, 2007).

Concluding Thoughts: As stated in the BERA guidelines, "all educational research should be conducted within *an ethic of respect* for: the person; knowledge; democratic values; the quality of educational research; and academic freedom" (p.5). The researcher aims to uphold these expectations and greatly appreciates your support with this project

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I have read the researchers statement on *Ethical Considerations / Informed Consent* and agree, with my signature to participate in this study as outlined in this document

---

Date:_____

Participant's Name:_____

Participant's Signature:_____

Researcher's Name: Richard Eaton

Researcher's Signature:_____

Appendix C: Interview Questions, Pilot Round

To the participant:

The interviewee will have the opportunity to freely express their views on the below questions.

If appropriate, the interviewer may ask follow up questions to ensure clarity or obtain further insights.

The interviewer primarily hopes to benefit from your knowledge, opinions, and professional values; however, one part of the final question also allows you to explore your possible feelings related to the theme.

- *Questions for Sub-Group 1; participants who have worked at / played a governing role at CIS or in historically related entities (i.e. ECIS) – interviewees from superordinate systems:*

1. Clarify and explain:

    a. your past and/or present role(s) at CIS or in any historically related entities (i.e. ECIS) – please start with your present role;
    b. how long were you in each role?

2. As an international school accrediting body, what *should* CIS do for international schools in Berlin-Brandenburg? (Regulative Pillar of Institutionalization) (Bunnell, 2016)

3. Beyond this, what would we *expect* CIS as an accrediting body to do for International Schools in Berlin-Brandenburg? (Normative Pillar of Institutionalization) (Bunnell, 2016)

4. What else would we *like* CIS to do for international schools in Berlin-Brandenburg in its capacity as an accrediting body? (Cultural-Cognitive Pillar of Institutionalization) (Bunnell, 2016)

5. What is/are the 'primary tasks(s)' of CIS as an international school accrediting body in Berlin-Brandenburg? What is it they are there to do; what is it that they do better than anyone else; what is/are the thing(s) that if they did not deliver they could not survive (Rice, 1963; Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2017)?

6. Are there:

    a. key players or essential roles that support CIS' delivery of its 'primary task(s)' in Berlin-Brandenburg?
    b. other factors that help or hinder the delivery of CIS' primary task(s) as you have described it/them in Berlin-Brandenburg?

7. Schools in Berlin-Brandenburg utilize other accrediting bodies in tandem with CIS. Are the 'primary task(s)' of these bodies similar or different from those of CIS?

8. It is common for school offering two or more IB programs in Berlin-Brandenburg to seek accreditation through CIS. As an international accreditation provider, does CIS help or hinder these schools?

9. What is and isn't 'international' about CIS as an international accreditation provider?

10. Reflect on:

    a. past or present challenges for CIS as an international school accrediting body;

    b. past or present opportunities for CIS as an international school accrediting body;

    c. how influential or detrimental international school accrediting bodies like CIS are in Berlin-Brandenburg and beyond;

    d. any other thoughts *or* feelings you have, or statements you'd like to make related to the topic.

- ***Questions for Sub-Group 2; participants who have worked in / governed schools in Berlin and Brandenburg – interviewees from constituent systems:***

1. Clarify and explain:

    a. your past and/or present role(s) in Berlin-Brandenburg schools – please start with your present role;

    b. how long were you in each role?

2. As an international school accrediting body, what *should* CIS do for international schools in Berlin-Brandenburg? (Regulative Pillar of Institutionalization) (Bunnell 2016)

3. Beyond this, what would we *expect* CIS as an accrediting body to do for international schools in Berlin-Brandenburg? (Normative Pillar of Institutionalization) (Bunnell 2016)

4. What else would be *like* CIS to do for international schools in Berlin-Brandenburg in its capacity as an accrediting body? (Cultural-Cognitive Pillar of Institutionalization) (Bunnell, 2016)

5. What is/are the 'primary tasks(s)' of CIS as an international school accrediting body in Berlin-Brandenburg? What is it they are there to do; what is it that they do better than anyone else; what is/are the thing(s) that if they did not deliver they could not survive? (Rice, 1963; Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2017).

6. Are there:

    a. key players or essential roles that support CIS' delivery of its 'primary task(s)' in Berlin-Brandenburg?

    b. other factors that help or hinder the delivery of CIS' primary task(s) as you have described it/them in Berlin-Brandenburg?

7. Schools in Berlin-Brandenburg utilize other accrediting bodies in tandem with CIS. Are the 'primary task(s)' of these bodies similar or different from those of CIS?

8. It is common for school offering two or more IB programs in Berlin-Brandenburg to seek accreditation through CIS. As an international accreditation provider, does CIS help or hinder these schools?

9. What is and isn't 'international' about CIS as an international accreditation provider?

10. Reflect on:

     a. past or present challenges for CIS as an international school accrediting body in Berlin-Brandenburg;
     b. past or present opportunities for CIS as an international school accrediting body in Berlin-Brandenburg;
     c. how influential or detrimental are international school accrediting bodies like CIS are in Berlin-Brandenburg and beyond;
     d. any other thoughts *or* feelings you have, or statements you'd like to make related to the topic.

References:

Bunnell, T., 2016. *International schools as 'institutions': the challenge of legitimacy* [PowerPoint presentation]. *Designing on Purpose: ECIS Leadership Conference*, 1-2 April 2016, Rome.

Bunnell, T., Fertig, M. and James, C., 2017. Establishing the legitimacy of a school's claim to be "international": the provision of an international curriculum as the institutional primary task. *Educational review*, 69(3), pp. 303-317.

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Appendix D: Glossary of Key Terminology, Pilot Round

To the participant:

The following terms are intended to support your understanding of the introductory material you have received, including the questions you will be asked as part of this project.

Should you require clarity regarding these terms, or any other terminology that has been used in the materials you have been provided, do not hesitate to contact the researcher: Richard Eaton – Phone: ███████████ / Email: rde28@bath.ac.uk.

Accreditation:	Accreditation is "an evaluative programme that ensures schools meet and sustain… standards through a process of continuous improvement" (CIS, n.d.).
Institutional Carries:	Scott (2014) has said that "institutions ride on various conveyances and are instantiated in multiple media" (p.58). Institutional conveyers, or 'carriers' differ "in the processes employed to transmit their messages," and can be seen as moving institutions along several avenues that intersect and steady institutional pillars (ibid, p.58). Use of the term 'carriers' can be traced back to Jepperson (1991), whereas Scott's (2014) framework highlights four varieties: Symbolic Systems, Relational Systems, Activities, and Artifacts (Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2016).
Institutional Legitimacy:	Drawing on the ideas of Dowling and Pfeffer (1975), Jepperson (1991), Suchman (1995), Koppell (2008), and Scott's (2014) institutional legitimacy can be defined as: the alignment of an organization's activities and repeated behaviors with basic legalities, prevailing standards, codes, customs, and mindsets – collectively, 'cultural' components – at a particular point in time and place; this gives the unit a potency that is strengthened via systematized, conventionalized, self-actuating reproductive practices that have developed into "strongly held rules" (Scott, 2014, p.93) highly responsive to the environment the entity inhabits, particularly to the potential yields and possibility of penalization therein; in turn, this enables openness of operations, a perceived naturalness of being and thus comfortable immersion within "a framework of institutions" (Jepperson, 1991, p.151) resulting in "stronger relations and more entrenched resources" (Scott, 2014, p.93), empowering, and enhancing organizational fortitude.

Institutional Pillars:	According to Scott (2014), there are three pillars of institutionalization: the Regulative, the Normative, and the Cultural-Cognitive. These pillars form a 'continuum' of "interdependent and mutually reinforcing" elements hypothesized by leading thinkers to be the fundamental components of institutions (ibid, p.59); hence, they are referred to by Scott (2014) as pillars because they prop up the foundations of institutionalization (Bunnell, Fertig, and James 2016).
International Accreditation:	An accreditation process for schools wishing to be explicitly differentiated, or be 'institutionalized' as 'international' (Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2015); this form of accreditation differs from tasks performed by accreditors using protocols created for domestic schools that are applied mostly unmodified outside the nation in which they were created. The latter form of accreditation might be referred to as 'Accreditation Internationally."
Primary Task:	According to Rice (1963), organizations are at all times engaged in a varied array of tasks. However, an organization (or a department within an organization) will also be engaged in, "at any given time a *primary task – the task that it must perform to survive*" (ibid, p.13)*.*

References:

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Appendix E: Letter of Introduction, Inquiry Round

_____ 2019

Re: Introduction and Invitation to Participate

Dear _____,

I, Richard Eaton, am a student at the University of Bath (www.bath.ac.uk) in the United Kingdom working towards an Educational Doctorate (EdD). My final dissertation will take the form of a qualitative regional case study that seeks to understand how the Council of International Schools (CIS) has 'built' and 'maintained' institutional legitimacy as a provider of international accreditation for international schools in the Berlin-Brandenburg metropolitan region (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Berlin/Brandenburg_Metropolitan_Region) of the Federal Republic of Germany. CIS (www.cois.org), represented by its Executive Director, is aware of this project and have agreed to support its completion.

Relying on insights shared by participants via standardized open-ended interviews, I will attempt to identify the primary task, or tasks, of CIS' accreditation work in relation to one geographic area (Berlin-Brandenburg). Understandings of this task, or these tasks and other insights emerging in these conversations will be triangulated with documentary materials available to schools and in the public sector and applied to a framework: "The institutional pillars and carriers of instutionalisation" (Adapted from Scott, 2014) in Bunnell, Fertig, and James (2016). This framework will be used to illustrate how institutional carriers erect and stabilize institutional pillars (ibid) in an effort to understand how CIS has established and preserved its institutional legitimacy as an accreditation provider in one specific region. Ultimately, the study seeks to learn from CIS' institutionalization journey, contributing to theoretical understandings and providing practical insights that may be more widely applicable.

As someone familiar with international accreditation past and present and/or the manner that international schools utilize international accreditation routines in Berlin-Brandenburg, I would like to invite you to participate in this study via interview. To the best of the researcher's ability, interviews will be confidential and anonymous. Each interview will last 90 minutes (Seidman, 2006). In this time, you will have the opportunity to respond to a series of open-ended interview questions. There may be follow up after some questions. To ensure you are aware of these questions in advance, and to support your complete understanding of this letter of introduction and my project, several further documents have been shared with you: *Ethical Considerations / Informed Consent* (Appendix F); *Interview Questions* (Appendix G), and *Glossary of Key Terminology* (Appendix H). Please take time to review them.

Kindly note:

> **You are participating in an inquiry round interview as explained in Appendix F.**
>
> **You will be asked the questions for Sub-Group _____ in Appendix G (the _____ set of questions), participants who have _____ .**
>
> **As it pertains to question 2 in Appendix G, I will ask you to specifically recall and reconstruct your experiences with international accreditation through CIS and/or with accreditation in Berlin-Brandenburg between**
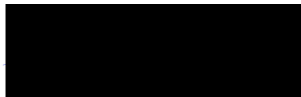
the years_____ . It is perfectly fine if this reconstruction briefly connects with other time periods in Berlin-Brandenburg illustrating the interconnectivity of these timeframes with the period denoted.

This project will adhere to the guidelines of the British Educational Research Association, BERA (2018) "tenets of best ethical practice" (McCulloch, 2018, p.iii). For more information regarding BERA guidelines visit www.bera.ac.uk and see Appendix F.

After I have completed my viva voca at the University of Bath (estimated to take place in June 2020) and have made any required corrections to my manuscript, all participants will receive a summary of key findings. The entire manuscript will be shared upon request. Participants will also be made aware of all publications stemming from this project, and will be offered access to them.

Your interest in and support of my work is appreciated. Feel free to contact me at any time should you have any follow up questions or concerns.

Yours sincerely,

███████████████

Richard Eaton – Phone: ███████████ / Email: rde28@bath.ac.uk

References:

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Appendix F: Ethical Considerations / Informed Consent, Inquiry Round

To the Participant:

To ensure you are fully aware of what this project entails and the ethical considerations that will be taken into account, please read the information herein.

As a participant in this project, I kindly ask that you provide your name, as well as sign and date this form.

Your support and time are greatly appreciated.

Research Title:	Legitimacy Quandaries: A qualitative study of how the Council of International Schools (CIS) has 'built' and 'maintained' institutional legitimacy as a provider of international accreditation for international schools in the Berlin-Brandenburg region of the Federal Republic of Germany.
Research Question:	How has the Council of International Schools (CIS) 'built' and 'maintained' institutional legitimacy as a provider of international accreditation for international schools in the Berlin-Brandenburg region of the Federal Republic of Germany?
Sub-Questions:	Why is academic research on international school accreditation so sparse? • What is international about international school accreditation? • What is/are the primary task(s) of international school accreditors? • Why do international schools with IB Programmes pursue international school accreditation? • How influential or detrimental is the work of international school accrediting bodies?
Research Lead:	Richard Eaton is leading this research project, which has been approved by the University of Bath. Approval was link to the researcher's completion of an on-line module in research ethics. Richard has worked in international schools since 1997, most recently serving as the Director of Berlin International School, Germany (August of 2014 – July of 2018). He is based in Berlin and is currently on sabbatical for his research. The researcher is carrying out this study in his academic capacity as a student at the University of Bath. As a participant, you may contact Richard at any time via phone or email ███████████ / rde28@bath.ac.uk
Supervision:	This research is being supervised at the University of Bath by Michael Fertig and Tristan Bunnell.
Aims/Purpose:	Bunnell, Fertig, and James (2015; 2016a; 2016b; 2017) have published and presented several papers on the topic of international school institutional legitimacy, providing various perspectives on the theme; among

other things, they point to international accreditation routines and accredited status as factors contributing to such legitimacy (Bunnell, Fertig, and James 2015; 2016b). Notwithstanding, what gives international school accreditation providers *their* institutional legitimacy has remained unexamined. Presumably, international school accreditation providers would need to have 'built' and 'maintained' institutional legitimacy to be accepted as 'legitimizers' of international schools as institutions. Given the continued expansion of international schools globally, there is no shortage of schools and accreditation suppliers to study; however, their widely dispersed geography can complicate research efforts (Canterford, 2009); one way to address this challenge is to engage in regional studies (ibid) that could result in findings that are "indicative and worthy of further exploration" (Brown and Lauder 2011, p.41) and/or that generate theory, which can be, in itself, "the end product of research" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p.234). Resultantly, this project will explore the issue of international school accreditation provider institutional legitimacy in one region, and in relation to one accreditation provider. Its aim is to produce theoretical and practical insights of utility to both the researcher and practitioner, which might, as stated in the British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2018) guidelines introduced below, "extend knowledge and understanding in all areas of educational activity" (p.3).

Ethical Standards:
This project will adhere to the BERA "tenets of best ethical practice" (McCulloch, 2018, p.iii). For more information regarding BERA guidelines, you may visit their website: www.bera.ac.uk . These tenets reflect ethical standards and practices that have supported an extended "community of researchers well in the past and" should "continue to do so in the future" (McCulloch, p.iii). While they are not "rules and regulations" per se, they provide a normative framework that aspires to meet the research demands of the times, with the most recent revision in 2018 reflecting the rise of "social media and online communities, new legislative requirements, and the growing impact… of internationalisation and globalization" (McCulloch, p.iii). The BERA guidelines may not cover every situation that emerges during research, particularly when facilitating research in "different cultural contexts" (BERA, p.2). Thus, the researcher, in close collaboration with his supervisors, all of whom are clarified above, will aspire to make the best situational judgments possible (ibid). All the while, it is the obligation of the researcher to "do everything they can to ensure that all potential participants understand" the full nature of "what is involved in a study" (ibid, p.9).

Participants:	As someone familiar with international accreditation past and present and/or the manner that international schools utilize international accreditation routines in Berlin-Brandenburg, you have been selected as a possible asset to this project and are invited to participate in a pilot round, or an inquiry round interview with the researcher. You will participate as one of two possible sub-groups: Sub-Group 1, comprised of participants who have worked at / played a governing role at CIS or in historically related entities (i.e. ECIS) – interviewees from *superordinate systems*; or Sub-Group 2, participants who have led or governed schools in Berlin-Brandenburg – interviewees who might be described as *constituent players*.
Pilot Interviews:	The purpose of the pilot interviews is to refine the researcher's interview skills, and the interview questions to ensure both are sufficient for implementing the project's research design and answering its research questions (van Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001; Hancké, 2009; Turner, 2010). Pilot processes can also support the refinement of actual research questions (Turner, 2010). Pilot participants were chosen who, while having similar professional backgrounds and experiences to those who will later participate in the study (van Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001; Turner, 2010), were also able to extend the researcher's insights on the theme. The researcher takes the position articulated by van Teijlingen and Hundley (2001) that there is "an ethical obligation to make the best use of their research experience by reporting issues arising from all parts of a study, including the pilot phase" (p.4).
Methodology:	This project is a qualitative regional case study. It will rely heavily on insights shared by participants via standardized open-ended interviews. In this format, interviewees in each sub-group will be asked the same questions, but the questions are structured to allow open-endedness (McNamara, n.d; Turner, 2010). This is designed to permit participants to "contribute as much detailed information as they desire," while also giving the researcher, if necessary, the opportunity to follow up after each question to ensure clarity and/or obtain further insights (Turner, 2010, p.756).
Requirements:	Each interview will last 90 minutes (Seidman, 2006). In this time, you will have the opportunity to respond to a series of open-ended *Interview Questions* (Appendix G). An appropriate time and place for the interview will be mutually agreed, with the priority being interviewee comfort (Seidman, 2006). Two modes of participation will be made available – in person, or via Skype.
Data Storage:	With your consent, interviews will be recorded, and transcribed by the researcher himself. No names or

initials will be used in these transcriptions (Seidman, 2006), which will be kept along with recordings in a password-protected file on the researcher's computer (Kelly, 2017). Interviewees will be offered a copy of the transcript, and may also request a copy of the recording (Seidman, 2006). Transcripts will be revised at the request of participants should they feel that the interview has been inaccurately documented. Participants may also ask for any data to be removed from a transcript. All such requests will be honored. The researcher is aware of the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which is embedded within the BERA (2018) guidelines. As a result, they provide the following reassurances to participants: data will only be used for this project and publications explicitly related to it; recordings and transcripts will be stored digitally only until after the candidate's viva voca (estimated to take place in June, 2020) and any corrections stemming from the latter process have been made; transcribed and coded data will not be shared beyond the researcher and his supervisors and will only be used for this project and associated publications; no stored data will be shared with other researchers or third persons.

Confidentiality:	In this type of project, participant anonymity should be made a priority (Seidman, 2006)**.** While it is difficult to fully guarantee anonymity (ibid), the researcher aspires to ensure interviews are confidential and anonymous to the very best of their ability. "Every step will be taken to adequately disguise the participant's identity" (ibid, p.68): this may mean using pseudonyms if appropriate, as well as seeking other strategies of disaggregating identities from coded data, reported data, and project findings. Though you may be asked, for example, to discuss your professional role, you are not required to mention your title or any other information you feel might compromise your identity. The letter of introduction you receive will refer to you by first name only.
Discomfort/Risk:	To amplify benefits while minimizing risk, this study seeks to ensure all possibilities for harm have been critically evaluated (BERA, 2018). To ensure participants feel as comfortable and safe as possible, the researcher will try to honor suggestions for preferred interview time, place, and mode (in person, or via Skype) (Seidman, 2006). Moreover, the researcher appreciates that reflecting on ones' professional experiences, challenges, and even opportunities, or those inherent or related to the field in which they work – or have worked – might be distressing. It is understood that these feelings may be exacerbated for participants who have a prior relationship with the researcher (BERA, 2018). Therefore, it might be helpful

to reiterate that this study is being facilitated in the researcher's academic as opposed to professional capacity. If at any time, however, the interviewee feels uncomfortable, they may request the interview to be paused or concluded. Similarly, if any discomfort emerges while information is being recorded, the interviewee may ask that recording devices are turned off and the interview concluded, or continued without it being recorded. The interviewee may also choose to skip posed questions should they cause discomfort, or for any other reason. No explanations will be required. While the researcher does not foresee any risks for participants so long as their identity is protected to the best of the researcher's ability, it is conceivable that the results of the study may accord new insights, some of which may conflict with views interviewees have previously held resulting in cognitive dissonance: psychological stress or discomfort initiated by new information intersecting with previously held beliefs. Interviewees are welcome to contact the researcher at any time should problems present themselves.

Withdrawal: The right to withdrawal from the study at any time, without explanation, should be understood and participants should be made explicitly aware of this right (BERA, 2018). Should you choose to withdrawal, information you contributed will be redacted.

Results: According to the BERA (2018) guidelines, the researcher also has "a responsibility to consider what the most relevant and useful ways are of informing participants about the outcomes of the research in which they were or are involved" (p.8). Once the researcher has completed his viva voca at the University of Bath (estimated to take place in June, 2020), and any changes to the manuscript stemming from this process have been made, all participants will receive a summary of key findings. The entire manuscript will be shared with interested participants upon request. Participants will also be made aware of all publications explicitly related to this project and will be offered access to them.

Participant Benefits: Having access to the project's key findings, in addition to any directly related publications will provide participants with insights that may be of practical value or theoretical interest. By exploring the interview questions, telling their stories, and sharing related insights, participants might also have the opportunity to connect and further appreciate their own perspectives on the theme, supporting the manner that they engage with their practice (Farrell, 2007). It is also hoped that this study benefits CIS' current and/or prospective membership community, and thus the next phase of CIS' institutional journey.

Concluding Thoughts: As stated in the BERA guidelines, "all educational research should be conducted within *an ethic of respect* for: the person; knowledge; democratic values; the quality of educational research; and academic freedom" (p. 5). The researcher aims to uphold these expectations and greatly appreciates your support with this project

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I have read the researcher's statement on ethical Considerations / Informed Consent and agree, with my signature, to participate in this study as outline in this document.

Date:_____

Participant's Name:_____

Participant's Signature:_____

Researcher's Name: Richard Eaton

Researcher's Signature_____

Appendix G: Interview Questions, Inquiry Round

To the Participant:

The interviewee will have the opportunity to freely express their views on the below questions.

If appropriate, the interviewer may ask follow up questions to ensure clarity or obtain further insights.

The interviewer primarily hopes to benefit from your knowledge, opinions, and professional values; however, one part of the final question also allows you to explore your possible feelings related to the theme.

Please feel free to follow along as we work through the questions, which the interviewer will read and elucidate as needed during the interview.

- ***Questions for Sub-Group 1; participants who have worked at /played a governing role at CIS, or historically related entities (i.e. ECIS) – interviewees from 'superordinate systems':***

1. Explain and clarify:

   a. your past and/or present role(s) at CIS, in any historically related entities (i.e. ECIS), and/or with any other accrediting bodies – please start with your present (if applicable), or most recent role;
   b. how long were you in each of these roles?

2. To the best or your ability, try to recall and reconstruct (Seidman, 2006) your experiences at ECIS/CIS and/or with accreditation during the years provided by the researcher (e.g., 1989-1999; 1999-2009; 2009-2019). If possible, also feel free to share any specific awareness, knowledge, activity, and/or insights on the development of relationships between ECIS/CIS and schools in Berlin-Brandenburg during this time (the researcher appreciates that this may be limited).

3. As an international school accrediting body, can you help me develop an understanding of what ECIS/CIS *should* have done – or what CIS *should* be doing – for international schools in Berlin-Brandenburg? (Regulative Pillar of Institutionalization) (Bunnell, 2016)

4. Can you assess or distinguish who or what has historically authorized, sanctioned, permitted, entitled, or continued to grant ECIS/CIS the privilege to do the things you have mentioned above in Berlin-Brandenburg?

5. Beyond this, in your opinion, what else would we *expect* ECIS/CIS as an accrediting body to have done – or *expect* CIS to be doing – for international schools in Berlin-Brandenburg? (Normative Pillar of Institutionalization) (Bunnell, 2016)

6. As an accrediting body, is there anything further you can imagine that we might *like* ECIS/CIS to have done – or *like* CIS to be doing – for international schools in Berlin-Brandenburg? (Cultural-Cognitive Pillar of Institutionalization) (Bunnell, 2016)

7. Can you identify anything that ECIS/CIS as international school accrediting bodies *shouldn't* have done, or that we wouldn't *expect* CIS to be doing, or that we wouldn't *like* them to doing in Berlin-Brandenburg today?

8. Can you discuss what you believe is/are the 'primary task(s)' of CIS as an international school accrediting body in Berlin-Brandenburg today? In making a judgment, you might consider:"

- What are they in Berlin-Brandenburg to do?
- What is/are the thing(s) they do better than anyone else?
- What is/are the thing(s) they could not survive without doing?
  (Rice, 1963; Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2017)

9. How *similar* or *different* would this/these task(s) be to the 'primary task(s)' of ECIS accreditation before accreditation services were taken over by CIS in the early 2000s (the researcher appreciates that this may be an area of limited knowledge for some participants)?

10. Can you distinguish key players and essential roles that supported or continue to support ECIS/CIS' delivery of their 'primary task(s)' as accrediting bodies in Berlin-Brandenburg?

11. Do you perceive there to be any other factors that have *helped* or *hindered* the delivery of ECIS/CIS' 'primary task(s)' related to accreditation work as you have described it/them in Berlin-Brandenburg?

12. Today, and historically, schools in Berlin-Brandenburg have utilized other accrediting bodies in tandem with ECIS/CIS. Can you identify ways the 'primary task(s)' of these bodies were, or are *similar* or *different* from those of ECIS/CIS?

13. From its inception, CIS has offered a range of services, can you explain how these services *interface* with, or *conflict* with accreditation provision?

14. Today, and in the past, it has been common for schools offering two or more IB programs in Berlin-Brandenburg to seek accreditation through ECIS/CIS. As international accreditation providers, have ECIS/CIS *helped* or *hindered* these schools and/or their communities?

15. What *is* and *isn't* 'international' about CIS as an international accreditation provider today, and, before CIS' inception, ECIS?

16. As international school accrediting bodies, how *influential* or *detrimental* do you think ECIS/CIS have been in Berlin-Brandenburg?

17. Are there any other thoughts *or* feelings you have, or statements you'd like to make related to this topic?

- ***Questions for Sub-Group 2; participants who have led or governed schools in Berlin-Brandenburg – interviewees who are 'constituent players':***

1. Explain and clarify:

   a. your past and/or present role(s) in Berlin-Brandenburg – please start with your present (if applicable), or most recent role;
   b. how long were you in each of these roles?

2. To the best or your ability, try to recall and reconstruct (Seidman, 2006) your experiences with international school accreditation through ECIS/CIS and/or with accreditation in Berlin-Brandenburg during the years provided by the researcher (e.g., 1989-1999; 1999-2009; 2009-2019). If possible, also feel free to share any

specific awareness, knowledge, activity, and/or insights on the development of relationships between Berlin-Brandenburg schools and ECIS/CIS during this time (the researcher appreciates that this may be limited).

3. As an international school accrediting body, can you help me develop an understanding of what ECIS/CIS *should* have done – or what CIS *should* be doing – for international schools in Berlin-Brandenburg? (Regulative Pillar of Institutionalization) (Bunnell, 2016)

4. Can you assess or distinguish who or what has historically authorized, sanctioned, permitted, entitled, or continued to grant ECIS/CIS the privilege to do the things you have mentioned above in Berlin-Brandenburg?

5. Beyond this, in your opinion, what else would we *expect* ECIS/CIS as an accrediting body to have done – or *expect* CIS to be doing – for international schools in Berlin-Brandenburg? (Normative Pillar of Institutionalization) (Bunnell, 2016)

6. As an accrediting body, is there anything further you can imagine that we might *like* ECIS/CIS to have done – or *like* CIS to be doing – for international schools in Berlin-Brandenburg? (Cultural-Cognitive Pillar of Institutionalization) (Bunnell, 2016)

7. Can you identify anything that ECIS/CIS as international school accrediting bodies *shouldn't* have done, or that we wouldn't *expect* CIS to be doing, or that we wouldn't *like* them to doing in Berlin-Brandenburg today?

8. Can you discuss what you believe is/are the 'primary task(s)' of CIS as an international school accrediting body in Berlin-Brandenburg today? In making a judgment, you might consider:"

- What are they in Berlin-Brandenburg to do?
- What is/are the thing(s) they do better than anyone else?
- What is/are the thing(s) they could not survive without doing?
  (Rice, 1963; Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2017)

9. How *similar* or *different* would this/these task(s) be to the 'primary task(s)' of ECIS accreditation before accreditation services were taken over by CIS in the early 2000s (the researcher appreciates that this may be an area of limited knowledge for some participants)?

10. Can you distinguish key players and essential roles that supported or continue to support ECIS/CIS' delivery of their 'primary task(s)' as accrediting bodies in Berlin-Brandenburg?

11. Do you perceive there to be any other factors that have *helped* or *hindered* the delivery of ECIS/CIS' 'primary task(s)' related to accreditation work as you have described it/them in Berlin-Brandenburg?

12. Today, and historically, schools in Berlin-Brandenburg have utilized other accrediting bodies in tandem with ECIS/CIS. Can you identify ways the 'primary task(s)' of these bodies were, or are *similar* or *different* from those of ECIS/CIS?

13. From its inception, CIS has offered a range of services, can you explain how these services *interface* with, or *conflict* with accreditation provision?

14. Today, and in the past, it has been common for schools offering two or more IB programs in Berlin-Brandenburg to seek accreditation through ECIS/CIS. As

international accreditation providers, have ECIS/CIS *helped* or *hindered* these schools and/or their communities?

15. What *is* and *isn't* 'international' about CIS as an international accreditation provider today, and, before CIS' inception, ECIS?

16. As international school accrediting bodies, how *influential* or *detrimental* do you think ECIS/CIS have been in Berlin-Brandenburg?

17. Are there any other thoughts *or* feelings you have, or statements you'd like to make related to this topic?

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Appendix H: Glossary of Key Terminology, Inquiry Round

To the Participant:

The following terms are intended to support your understanding of the introductory material and questions you have received.

Should you require clarity regarding these terms, or any other terminology that has been used in the materials or questions you have been provided, do not hesitate to contact the researcher: Richard Eaton – Phone: ███████████ / Email: rde28@bath.ac.uk.

Accreditation:	Accreditation is "an evaluative programme that ensures schools meet and sustain… standards through a process of continuous improvement" (CIS, n.d.).
Berlin-Brandenburg:	When the term Berlin-Brandenburg is used in this study it refers to: the Berlin-Brandenburg metropolitan region (*Metropolregion Berlin-Brandenburg*) of the Federal Republic Germany, one of the nation's eleven metropolitan regions, with a population of approximately 6 million, an area of just over 30,000 square kilometers, also know as the Capital Region (*Hauptstadtregion Berlin-Brandenburg),* which consists of the territory of Berlin, a city-state, and the surrounding region of the state of Brandenburg (Wikipedia contributors, n.d.).
Institutional Carries:	Scott (2014) has said that "institutions ride on various conveyances and are instantiated in multiple media" (p.58). Institutional conveyers, or 'carries' differ "in the processes employed to transmit their messages," and can be seen as moving institutions along several avenues that intersect and steady institutional pillars (ibid, p.58). Use of the term 'carriers' can be traced by to Jepperson (1991), whereas Scott's (2014) framework highlights four varieties: Symbolic Systems, Relational Systems, Activities, and Artifacts (Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2016).
Institutional Legitimacy:	Drawing on the ideas of Dowling and Pfeffer (1975), Jepperson (1991), Suchman (1995), Koppell (2008), and Scott's (2014) institutional legitimacy can be defined as: the alignment of an organization's activities and repeated behaviors with basic legalities, prevailing standards, codes, customs, and mindsets – collectively, 'cultural' components – at a particular point in time and place; this gives the unit a potency that is strengthened via

	systematized, conventionalized, self-actuating reproductive practices that have developed into "strongly held rules" (Scott, 2014, p.93) highly responsive to the environment the entity inhabits, particularly to the potential yields and possibility of penalization therein; in turn, this enables openness of operations, a perceived naturalness of being and thus comfortable immersion within "a framework of institutions" (Jepperson, 1991, p.151) resulting in "stronger relations and more entrenched resources" (Scott, 2014, p.93), empowering, and enhancing organizational fortitude.
Institutional Pillars:	According to Scott (2014), there are three pillars of institutionalization: the Regulative, the Normative, and the Cultural-Cognitive. These pillars form a 'continuum' of "interdependent and mutually reinforcing" elements hypothesized by leading thinkers to be the fundamental components of institutions (ibid, p.59); hence, they are referred to by Scott (2014) as pillars because they prop up the foundations of institutionalization (Bunnell, Fertig, and James 2016).
International Accreditation:	An accreditation process for schools wishing to be explicitly differentiated, or be 'institutionalized' as 'international' (Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2015); this form of accreditation differs from tasks performed by accreditors using protocols created for domestic schools that are applied mostly unmodified outside the nation in which they were created. The latter form of accreditation might be referred to as 'Accreditation Internationally.'
Primary Task:	According to Rice (1963), organizations are at all times engaged in a varied array of tasks. However, an organization (or a department within an organization) will also be engaged in, "at any given time a *primary task – the task that it must perform to survive*" (ibid, p.13)*.

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Appendix I: Letter of Introduction, Inquiry Round – Modified

_____ 2019

Re: Introduction and Invitation to Participate

Dear _____ ,

I, Richard Eaton, am a student at the University of Bath (www.bath.ac.uk) in the United Kingdom working towards an Educational Doctorate (EdD). My final dissertation will take the form of a qualitative regional case study that seeks to understand how the Council of International Schools (CIS) has 'built' and 'maintained' institutional legitimacy as a provider of international accreditation for international schools in the Berlin-Brandenburg metropolitan region (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Berlin/Brandenburg_Metropolitan_Region) of the Federal Republic of Germany from the perspective of those working within this region and those positioned outside of it. CIS (www.cois.org), represented by its Executive Director, is aware of this project and have agreed to support its completion.

Relying on insights shared by participants via standardized open-ended interviews, I will attempt to identify the primary task, or tasks, of CIS' accreditation work in relation to one geographic area (Berlin-Brandenburg). Understandings of this task, or these tasks and other insights emerging in these conversations will be triangulated with documentary materials available to schools and in the public sector and applied to a framework: "The institutional pillars and carriers of instutionalisation" (Adapted from Scott, 2014) in Bunnell, Fertig, and James (2016). This framework will be used to illustrate how institutional carriers erect and stabilize institutional pillars (ibid) in an effort to understand how CIS has established and preserved its institutional legitimacy as an accreditation provider in one specific region. Ultimately, the study seeks to learn from CIS' institutionalization journey, contributing to theoretical understandings and providing practical insights that may be more widely applicable.

As an individual with some familiarity regarding international accreditation past and present in a German international / IB school context working outside of Berlin as _ _____ , I would like to invite you to participate in this study via interview. To the best of the researcher's ability, interviews will be confidential and anonymous. Each interview will last 90 minutes (Seidman, 2006). In this time, you will have the opportunity to respond to a series of open-ended interview questions. There may be follow up after some questions. To ensure you are aware of these questions in advance, and to support your complete understanding of this letter of introduction and my project, several further documents have been shared with you: *Glossary of Key Terminology* (Appendix H), *Interview Questions* (Appendix J), *Ethical Considerations / Informed Consent* (Appendix K). Please take time to review them.

Kindly note:

> **You are participating in an inquiry round interview as explained in Appendix K.**
>
> **You will be asked the questions for Sub-Group 2 in Appendix J _____ .**
>
> **As it pertains to question 2 in Appendix J, I would appreciate you recalling and reconstructing your experiences with international accreditation through CIS during the years you have been active in the**
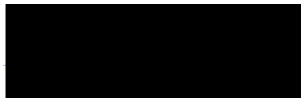
field of international / IB schooling, sharing any insights into how you see accreditation in your local context being similar or different to that of Berlin-Brandenburg. It is acceptable, and appreciated, if this reconstruction briefly connects with earlier periods that you might have insights into, or other professional roles you may have held in other contexts. If specific knowledge of Berlin-Brandenburg is limited, that is fine. It is your unique vantage point that matters.

This project will adhere to the guidelines of the British Educational Research Association, BERA (2018)"tenets of best ethical practice" (McCulloch, 2018, p.iii). For more information regarding BERA guidelines visit: www.bera.ac.uk and see Appendix F.

After I have completed my viva voca at the University of Bath (estimated to take place in June 2020) and have made any required corrections to my manuscript, all participants will receive a summary of key findings. The entire manuscript will be shared upon request. Participants will also be made aware of all publications stemming from this project, and will be offered access to them.

Your interest in and support of my work is appreciated. Feel free to contact me at any time should you have any follow up questions or concerns.

Yours sincerely,

███████████████

Richard Eaton – Phone: ███████████ / Email: rde28@bath.ac.uk

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Appendix J: Interview Questions, Inquiry Round – Modified

To the Participant:

The interviewee will have the opportunity to freely express their views on the below questions.

If appropriate, the interviewer may ask follow up questions to ensure clarity or obtain further insights.

The interviewer primarily hopes to benefit from your knowledge, opinions, and professional values; however, one part of the final question also allows you to explore your possible feelings related to the theme.

Please feel free to follow along as we work through the questions, which the interviewer will read and elucidate as needed during the interview.

- *Questions for Sub-Group 1; participants who have worked in/played a governing role at CIS, or historically related entities (i.e. ECIS) – interviewees from 'superordinate systems':*

1. Explain and clarify:

   a. your past and/or present role(s) at CIS, in any historically related entities (i.e. ECIS), and/or with any other accrediting bodies – please start with your present (if applicable), or most recent role;
   b. how long were you in each of these roles?

2. To the best or your ability, try to recall and reconstruct (Seidman, 2006) your experiences at ECIS/CIS and/or with accreditation during the years provided by the researcher (e.g., 1989-1999; 1999-2009; 2009-2019). If possible, also feel free to share any specific awareness, knowledge, activity, and/or insights on the development of relationships between ECIS/CIS and schools in Berlin-Brandenburg during this time (the researcher appreciates that this may be limited).

3. As an international school accrediting body, can you help me develop an understanding of what ECIS/CIS *should* have done – or what CIS *should* be doing – for international schools in Berlin-Brandenburg? (Regulative Pillar of Institutionalization) (Bunnell, 2016)

4. Can you assess or distinguish who or what has historically authorized, sanctioned, permitted, entitled, or continued to grant ECIS/CIS the privilege to do the things you have mentioned above in Berlin-Brandenburg?

5. Beyond this, in your opinion, what else would we *expect* ECIS/CIS as an accrediting body to have done – or *expect* CIS to be doing – for international schools in Berlin-Brandenburg? (Normative Pillar of Institutionalization) (Bunnell, 2016)

6. As an accrediting body, is there anything further you can imagine that we might *like* ECIS/CIS to have done – or *like* CIS to be doing – for international schools in Berlin-Brandenburg? (Cultural-Cognitive Pillar of Institutionalization) (Bunnell, 2016)

7. Can you identify anything that ECIS/CIS as international school accrediting bodies *shouldn't* have done, or that we wouldn't *expect* CIS to be doing, or that we wouldn't *like* them to doing in Berlin-Brandenburg today?

8. Can you discuss what you believe is/are the 'primary task(s)' of CIS as an international school accrediting body in Berlin-Brandenburg today? In making a judgment, you might consider:"

- What are they in Berlin-Brandenburg to do?
- What is/are the thing(s) they do better than anyone else?
- What is/are the thing(s) they could not survive without doing?
  (Rice, 1963; Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2017)

9. How *similar* or *different* would this/these task(s) be to the 'primary task(s)' of ECIS accreditation before accreditation services were taken over by CIS in the early 2000s (the researcher appreciates that this may be an area of limited knowledge for some participants)?

10. Can you distinguish key players and essential roles that supported or continue to support ECIS/CIS' delivery of their 'primary task(s)' as accrediting bodies in Berlin-Brandenburg?

11. Do you perceive there to be any other factors that have *helped* or *hindered* the delivery of ECIS/CIS' 'primary task(s)' related to accreditation work as you have described it/them in Berlin-Brandenburg?

12. Today, and historically, schools in Berlin-Brandenburg have utilized other accrediting bodies in tandem with ECIS/CIS. Can you identify ways the 'primary task(s)' of these bodies were or are *similar* or *different* from those of ECIS/CIS?

13. From its inception, CIS has offered a range of services, can you explain how these services *interface* with, or *conflict* with accreditation provision?

14. Today, and in the past, it has been common for schools offering two or more IB programs in Berlin-Brandenburg to seek accreditation through ECIS/CIS. As international accreditation providers, have ECIS/CIS *helped* or *hindered* these schools and/or their communities?

15. What *is* and *isn't* 'international' about CIS as an international accreditation provider today, and, before CIS' inception, ECIS?

16. As international school accrediting bodies, how *influential* or *detrimental* do you think ECIS/CIS have been in Berlin-Brandenburg?

17. Are there any other thoughts *or* feelings you have, or statements you'd like to make related to this topic?

- ***Questions for Sub-Group 2; participants who have led or governed schools in Berlin-Brandenburg** and/or in neighboring regions – interviewees who are 'constituent players':*

1. Explain and clarify:

   a. your past and/or present role(s) – please start with your present (if applicable), or most recent role;
   b. how long were you in each of these roles?

2. To the best or your ability, try to recall and reconstruct (Seidman, 2006) your experiences with international school accreditation through ECIS/CIS and/or your knowledge of such accreditation routines in Berlin-Brandenburg during the years agreed with the researcher (the study is bound by the years 1989-2019, so it will be a

frame of reference during which you were active within this timeframe). If possible, also feel free to share any specific awareness, knowledge, activity, and/or insights on the development of relationships between schools in your region and ECIS/CIS during this time (the researcher appreciates that this may be limited).

3. As an international school accrediting body, can you help me develop an understanding of what ECIS/CIS *should* have done – or what CIS *should* be doing – for international schools in Berlin-Brandenburg? (Regulative Pillar of Institutionalization) (Bunnell, 2016)

4. Can you assess or distinguish who or what has historically authorized, sanctioned, permitted, entitled, or continued to grant ECIS/CIS the privilege to do the things you have mentioned above in Berlin-Brandenburg?

5. Beyond this, in your opinion, what else would we *expect* ECIS/CIS as an accrediting body to have done – or *expect* CIS to be doing – for international schools in Berlin-Brandenburg? (Normative Pillar of Institutionalization) (Bunnell, 2016)

6. As an accrediting body, is there anything further you can imagine that we might *like* ECIS/CIS to have done – or *like* CIS to be doing – for international schools in Berlin-Brandenburg? (Cultural-Cognitive Pillar of Institutionalization) (Bunnell, 2016)

7. Can you identify anything that ECIS/CIS as international school accrediting bodies *shouldn't* have done, or that we wouldn't *expect* CIS to be doing, or that we wouldn't *like* them to doing in Berlin-Brandenburg today?

8. Can you discuss what you believe is/are the 'primary task(s)' of CIS as an international school accrediting body in Berlin-Brandenburg today? In making a judgment, you might consider:"

- What are they in Berlin-Brandenburg to do?
- What is/are the thing(s) they do better than anyone else?
- What is/are the thing(s) they could not survive without doing?
  (Rice, 1963; Bunnell, Fertig, and James, 2017)

9. How *similar* or *different* would this/these task(s) be to the 'primary task(s)' of ECIS accreditation before accreditation services were taken over by CIS in the early 2000s (the researcher appreciates that this may be an area of limited knowledge for some participants)?

10. Can you distinguish key players and essential roles that supported or continue to support ECIS/CIS' delivery of their 'primary task(s)' as accrediting bodies in Berlin-Brandenburg?

11. Do you perceive there to be any other factors that have *helped* or *hindered* the delivery of ECIS/CIS' 'primary task(s)' related to accreditation work as you have described it/them in Berlin-Brandenburg?

12. Today, and historically, schools in Berlin-Brandenburg have utilized other accrediting bodies in tandem with ECIS/CIS. Can you identify ways the 'primary task(s)' of these bodies were or are *similar* or *different* from those of ECIS/CIS?

13. From its inception, CIS has offered a range of services, can you explain how these services *interface* with, or *conflict* with accreditation provision?

14. Today, and in the past, it has been common for schools offering two or more IB programs in Berlin-Brandenburg to seek accreditation through ECIS/CIS. As

international accreditation providers, have ECIS/CIS *helped* or *hindered* these schools and/or their communities?

15. What *is* and *isn't* 'international' about CIS as an international accreditation provider today, and, before CIS' inception, ECIS?

16. As international school accrediting bodies, how *influential* or *detrimental* do you think ECIS/CIS have been in Berlin-Brandenburg?

17. Are there any other thoughts *or* feelings you have, or statements you'd like to make related to this topic?

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Appendix K: Ethical Considerations / Informed Consent, Inquiry Round – Modified

To the Participant:

To ensure you are fully aware of what this project entails and the ethical considerations that will be taken into account, please read the information herein.

As a participant in this project, I kindly ask that you provide your name, as well as sign and date this form.

Your support and time are greatly appreciated.

Research Title:	Legitimacy Quandaries: A qualitative study of how the Council of International schools (CIS) has 'built' and 'maintained' institutional legitimacy as a provider of international accreditation for international schools in the Berlin-Brandenburg region of the Federal Republic of Germany.
Research Question:	How has the Council of International Schools (CIS) 'built' and 'maintained' institutional legitimacy as a provider of international accreditation for international schools in the Berlin-Brandenburg region of Germany?
Sub-Questions:	Why is academic research on international school accreditation so sparse? • What is international about international school accreditation? • What is/are the primary task(s) of international school accreditors? • Why do international schools with IB Programmes pursue international school accreditation? • How influential or detrimental is the work of international school accrediting bodies?
Research Lead:	Richard Eaton is leading this research project, which has been approved by the University of Bath. Approval was link to the researcher's completion of an on-line module in research ethics. Richard has worked in international schools since 1997, most recently serving as the Director of Berlin International School, Germany (August of 2014 – July of 2018). He is based in Berlin and is currently on sabbatical for his research. The researcher is carrying out this study in his academic capacity as a student at the University of Bath. As a participant, you may contact Richard at any time via phone or email ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ / rde28@bath.ac.uk
Supervision:	This research is being supervised at the University of Bath by Michael Fertig and Tristan Bunnell.
Aims/Purpose:	Bunnell, Fertig, and James (2015; 2016a; 2016b; 2017) have published and presented several papers on the topic of international school institutional legitimacy, providing various perspectives on the theme; among

other things, they point to international accreditation routines and accredited status as factors contributing to such legitimacy (Bunnell, Fertig, and James 2015; 2016b). Notwithstanding, what gives international school accreditation providers *their* institutional legitimacy has remained unexamined. Presumably, international school accreditation providers would need to have 'built' and 'maintained' institutional legitimacy to be accepted as 'legitimizers' of international schools as institutions. Given the continued expansion of international schools globally, there is no shortage of schools and accreditation suppliers to study; however, their widely dispersed geography can complicate research efforts (Canterford, 2009); one way to address this challenge is to engage in regional studies (ibid) that could result in findings that are "indicative and worthy of further exploration" (Brown and Lauder, 2011, p.41) and/or that generate theory, which can be, in itself, "the end product of research" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p.234). Resultantly, this project will explore the issue of international school accreditation provider institutional legitimacy in one region, and in relation to one accreditation provider. Its aim is to produce theoretical and practical insights of utility to both the researcher and practitioner, which might, as stated in the British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2018) guidelines introduced below, "extend knowledge and understanding in all areas of educational activity" (p.3).

Ethical Standards: This project will adhere to the BERA "tenets of best ethical practice" (McCulloch, 2018, p.iii). For more information regarding BERA guidelines, you may visit their website: www.bera.ac.uk . These tenets reflect ethical standards and practices that have supported an extended "community of researchers well in the past and" should "continue to do so in the future" (ibid, p.iii). While they are not "rules and regulations" per se, they provide a normative framework that aspires to meet the research demands of the times, with the most recent revision in 2018 reflecting the rise of "social media and online communities, new legislative requirements, and the growing impact… of internationalisation and globalization" (ibid, p.iii). The BERA guidelines may not cover every situation that emerges during research, particularly when facilitating research in "different cultural contexts" (BERA, 2018, p.2). Thus, the researcher, in close collaboration with his supervisors, all of whom are clarified above, will aspire to make the best situational judgments possible (ibid). All the while, it is the obligation of the researcher to "do everything they can to ensure that all potential participants understand" the full nature of "what is involved in a study" (ibid, p.9).

Participants:	As someone familiar with international accreditation past and present and/or the manner that international schools utilize international accreditation routines in Berlin-Brandenburg, you have been selected as a possible asset to this project and are invited to participate in a pilot round, or an inquiry round interview with the researcher. You will participate as one of two possible sub-groups: Sub-Group 1, comprised of participants who have worked in/played a governing role at CIS or in historically related entities (i.e. ECIS) – interviewees from *superordinate systems*; or Sub-Group 2, participants who have led or governed schools in Berlin and Brandenburg and/or in neighboring regions – interviewees who might be described as *constituent players*.
Pilot Interviews:	The purpose of the pilot interviews is to refine the researcher's interview skills, and the interview questions to ensure both are sufficient for implementing the project's research design and answering its research questions (van Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001; Hancké, 2009; Turner, 2010). Pilot processes can also support the refinement of actual research questions (Turner, 2010). Pilot participants were chosen who, while having similar professional backgrounds and experiences to those who will later participate in the study (van Teijlingen and Hundley, 2001; Turner, 2010), were also able to extend the researcher's insights on the theme. The researcher takes the position articulated by van Teijlingen and Hundley (2001) that there is "an ethical obligation to make the best use of their research experience by reporting issues arising from all parts of a study, including the pilot phase" (p.4).
Methodology:	This project is a qualitative regional case study. It will rely heavily on insights shared by participants via standardized open-ended interviews. In this format, interviewees in each sub-group will be asked the same questions, but the questions are structured to allow open-endedness (McNamara, n.d.; Turner, 2010). This is designed to permit participants to "contribute as much detailed information as they desire," while also giving the researcher, if necessary, the opportunity to follow up after each question to ensure clarity and/or obtain further insights (Turner, 2010, p.756).
Requirements:	Each interview will last 90 minutes (Seidman, 2006). In this time, you will have the opportunity to respond to a series of open-ended *Interview Questions* (Appendix G). An appropriate time and place for the interview will be mutually agreed, with the priority being interviewee comfort (Seidman, 2006). Two modes of participation will be made available – in person, or via Skype.

Data Storage:	With your consent, interviews will be recorded, and transcribed by the researcher himself. No names or initials will be used in these transcriptions (Seidman, 2006), which will be kept along with recordings in a password-protected file on the researcher's computer (Kelly, 2017). Interviewees will be offered a copy of the transcript, and may also request a copy of the recording (Seidman, 2006). Transcripts will be revised at the request of participants should they feel that the interview has been inaccurately documented. Participants may also ask for any data to be removed from a transcript. All such requests will be honored. The researcher is aware of the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which is embedded within the BERA (2018) guidelines. As a result, they provide the following reassurances to participants: data will only be used for this project and publications explicitly related to it; recordings and transcripts will be stored digitally only until after the candidate's viva voca (estimated to take place in June, 2020) and any corrections stemming from the latter process have been made; transcribed and coded data will not be shared beyond the researcher and his supervisors and will only be used for this project and associated publications; no stored data will be shared with other researchers or third persons.
Confidentiality:	In this type of project, participant anonymity should be made a priority (Seidman, 2006)**.** While it is difficult to fully guarantee anonymity (ibid), the researcher aspires to ensure interviews are confidential and anonymous to the very best of their ability. "Every step will be taken to adequately disguise the participant's identity" (ibid, p.68): this may mean using pseudonyms if appropriate, as well as seeking other strategies of disaggregating identities for coded data, reported data, and project findings. Though you may be asked, for example, to discuss your professional role, you are not required to mention your title or any other information you feel might compromise your identity. The letter of introduction you receive will refer to you by first name only.
Discomfort/Risk:	To amplify benefits while minimizing risk, this study seeks to ensure all possibilities for harm have been critically evaluated (BERA, 2018). To ensure participants feel as comfortable and safe as possible, the researcher will try to honor suggestions for preferred interview time, place, and mode (in person, or via Skype) (Seidman, 2006). Moreover, the researcher appreciates that reflecting on ones' professional experiences, challenges, and even opportunities, or those inherent or related to the field in which they work – or have worked – might be distressing. It is understood that these feelings may be exacerbated for

participants who have a prior relationship with the researcher (BERA, 2018). Therefore, it might be helpful to reiterate that this study is being facilitated in the researcher's academic as opposed to professional capacity. If at any time, however, the interviewee feels uncomfortable, they may request the interview to be paused or concluded. Similarly, if any discomfort emerges while information is being recorded, the interviewee may ask that recording devices are turned off and the interview concluded, or continued without it being recorded. The interviewee may also choose to skip posed questions should they cause discomfort, or for any other reason. No explanations will be required. While the researcher does not foresee any risks for participants so long as their identity is protected to the best of the researcher's ability, it is conceivable that the results of the study may accord new insights, some of which may conflict with views interviewees have previously held resulting in cognitive dissonance: psychological stress or discomfort initiated by new information intersecting with previously held beliefs. Interviewees are welcome to contact the researcher at any time should problems present themselves.

Withdrawal: The right to withdrawal from the study at any time, without explanation, should be understood and participants should be made explicitly aware of this right (BERA, 2018). Should you choose to withdrawal, information you contributed will be redacted.

Results: According to the BERA (2018) guidelines, the researcher also has "a responsibility to consider what the most relevant and useful ways are of informing participants about the outcomes of the research in which they were or are involved" (p.8). Once the researcher has completed his viva voca at the University of Bath (estimated to take place in June, 2020), and any changes to the manuscript stemming from this process have been made, all participants will receive a summary of key findings. The entire manuscript will be shared with interested participants upon request. Participants will also be made aware of all publications explicitly related to this project and will be offered access to them.

Participant Benefits: Having access to the project's key findings, in addition to any directly related publications will provide participants with insights that may be of practical value or theoretical interest. By exploring the interview questions, telling their stories, and sharing related insights, participants might also have the opportunity to connect and further appreciate their own perspectives on the theme, supporting the manner that they engage with their practice (Farrell, 2007). It is also hoped that this study benefits CIS' current and/or prospective

membership community, and thus the next phase of CIS' institutional journey.

Concluding Thoughts: As stated in the BERA guidelines, "all educational research should be conducted within *an ethic of respect* for: the person; knowledge; democratic values; the quality of educational research; and academic freedom" (p. 5). The researcher aims to uphold these expectations and greatly appreciates your support with this project

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I have read the researcher's statement on ethical Considerations / Informed Consent and agree, with my signature, to participate in this study as outline in this document.

Date:_____

Participant's Name:_____

Participant's Signature:_____

Researcher's Name: Richard Eaton

Researcher's Signature: _____

Appendix L: Transcription Protocol

The transcriber – the researcher – will endeavors to carefully reconstruct all verbal and non-verbal signals in the interview as well as any significantly disruptive, or other major background noises. Punctuation marks will be used to give the written text a flow that, to the best of transcriber's ability, authentically reflects the spoken interview. Non-English phrases will be italicized in original and then translated in brackets, unless the speaker provider their own translation within the narrative. Any information that could compromise the identity of the interviewee that might have been shared unintentionally will be redacted. Mention of individuals who are non-public figures will be redacted. Names of specific schools discussed by the interviewees will be redacted as well. Authors whose publications were mentioned, and were traceable, will remain. Mention of authors and publications that cannot be located will be redacted. Periods where the recorder was turned off will be denoted, and what happened in this time will be clarified, as will the approximate length of time the recorder was switched off. The start and end of the interview will be clearly denoted.

Appendix M: Adapted Scott (2014) Framework Template (exemplar)

Description of CIS' Primary Task as an accreditation provider in Berlin-Brandenburg	Regulative Pillar of Institutionalization	Normative Pillar of Institutionalization	Cultural-Cognitive Pillar of Institutionalization
Symbolic Systems as Carriers			
Relational Systems as Carriers			
Activities as Carriers			
Artifacts as Carriers			

Reference:

Scott, W.R., 2014. *Institutions and organizations: ideas, interests, and identities* [Kindle Version 6.37]. 4th ed. London: SAGE.