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Transformations of Chinese and Danish Students' Perceptions of the Significance of Culture in Transnational Education in China

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Introduction

During the last three decades, the political interest of Western universities and nation-states in transnational higher education projects in the Asian region has increased significantly (Chen, 2015). Asia is the region with the strongest involvement in transnational higher education, and China is viewed as the most promising market for importing education (Caruana, 2016). In China, transnational higher education cooperation has been growing rapidly since the government allowed the establishment of transnational higher education programs in the mid-1980s (Chen, 2015). A new era was inaugurated in 1995, as the Chinese government now permits collaborative ventures, known as transnational education institutions (He, 2016). The Nordic countries have created new collaborative

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ventures and programs with China. In 2016, several higher education institutions in Sweden, Norway, Finland and Denmark operated jointly with Chinese universities to provide undergraduate and graduate programs in China. Also two jointly led university centers have been established as collaboration between Chinese universities and universities from Finland and Denmark (Ministry of Education in China, 2016a, 2016b). This chapter focuses on the case of Denmark and a newly opened university center in Beijing: the Sino-Danish Center for Education and Research (SDC),[1] where students and faculty are primarily Danes and Chinese. The SDC's raison d'être can be viewed as a set of ideas linked to the need to strengthen the nation-state through transnational education collaboration: the university promotes itself and is promoted by the Danish Ministry for Science, Innovation and Higher Education as *a form of education in innovative solutions to global challenges* for the nation-states of Denmark and China (www.sinodanishcenter.com).

Before discussing whether and how this kind of education can address global challenges, we have to raise a fundamental question about institutions like the SDC as an educational institution: How are student subjectivities shaped through the ways cultural meaning is transformed and created in the establishment of educational practices, given that the institutions' context is composed of students and faculty with different national education experiences and practices? Regarding subjectivity, this chapter relies on a Foucauldian concept of the subject as one possible position among others, dynamic and negotiable, instead of a static and essential entity (Foucault, 2002, 2008). Subjectivity is understood as differentiated possibilities for subject positions and identities (Buchardt, 2014); it is the individual's self-knowledge and identities, and thus the possibility for action and participation (Popkewitz, 2000). The concept will be expanded later in the chapter.

[1] The SDC is a partnership between all eight Danish universities and the Chinese Academy of Sciences, located in Beijing, where the students take their courses. The SDC offers seven master's programs: two in Social Science, four in the Natural Sciences and one in Engineering. The enrolled students are from either China or Denmark (with a few students being from another European Union country, enrolled through the Danish side). The language of instruction at the SDC is English.

Contextualization of the role of the university in China and Denmark is needed before focusing on the shaping of student subjectivity in new institutions like the SDC to grasp how these nation-states address state-building challenges through higher education. I will illuminate the historical and current function of higher education in (ongoing) nation-state building. The purpose of this article is to discuss how higher education has moved from being merely a national matter toward transcending the boundaries, thus becoming transnational cooperation, forming citizenry in order to comply with the political ideas of global challenges. I will first compare the historical and current role of higher education in the two nation-states in question, namely China and Denmark. Second, I will explore how Danish and Chinese student subjectivities are shaped through the ways cultural meaning is transformed and created by focusing on how students struggle to achieve acknowledgment in such a transnational education program. The degrees of change in the students' perceptions of the significance of culture bound to nationality in education will be elucidated. The students' narratives about their educational achievement at the SDC and their interactions with each other are guided by their descriptions of their changing perceptions of nationalized cultural diversity in education. I will present a theoretical framework for discussing the subjectivities formed in transnational educational practice and the methods before I analyze the students' narratives.

The Historical Relationship Between the Nation-State and Higher Education

The relation between higher education and the state in the nation-state building process in China and Denmark has differed in many ways, and yet the role of the university in both cases has been important in the formation of citizenry. In the Nordic countries, the close links that became formative for the university and nation-building grew as the need for education and expert training in several fields of society increased with the emergence of nation-states and the rise of bureaucratic governance.

For the Nordic countries in the twentieth century, universities gained significance by training civil servants and other experts on the needs of constructing the welfare state (Buchardt, Markkola, & Valtonen, 2013). The knowledge that experts acquired through education ensured them a role in building the welfare state as they became social engineers of the nation at all levels. The educational institutions are thus seen as part of the formation of the welfare policy (Antikainen, 2006; Telhaug, Mediås, & Aasen, 2006). In Valtonen's examination of the role of educators as professionals in the Finnish welfare state from the 1860s to the 1960s, she argues that the new educational institutions were not merely created to fulfill the requirements of educational policies by educating educators and "laypeople"; the new experts also won much societal influence and responsibility in civil society through shaping the new welfare policies (Valtonen, 2013). In the Nordic countries, the State expanded its role in education and welfare in general. In the case of Denmark, Hansen (2015) argues that the welfare state was a project based on scientific knowledge. The scientific knowledge applied by the social engineers in building the new institutions in the welfare state was gained from new university institutions and disciplines established in the 1960s and 1970s. Social engineers were also interested in creating a new cohesion in the whole society. Thus, education programs were developed to handle the needs of the gradually emerging welfare state and modern welfare expertise.

For the "modern" Chinese state (after the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949), the significance of higher education in building the nation-state is not as unambiguous as for the Nordic countries. However, as Hayhoe (2012) states, Chinese universities have always had a close interactive relation with the state. This arises from the strong tradition of civil service examinations and scholars' social responsibility. However, in a historical comparison of the role of the university in Canada and China for creating civil society, Hayboe points out that Chinese universities had obtained limited autonomy and participated in China's modern development after 1949, as academic freedom was seen as a threat to Chinese socialism (Hayhoe, 1992). She offers a more distinct interpretation of (the Western concept of) autonomy and academic freedom in later work (2012) in which she suggests a redefinition of Western interpretations of the terms "academic freedom" and

"autonomy" in a Chinese context. The term for autonomy in Chinese is "self-mastery" rather than "self-governance," referring to legal or political independence. Similarly, the notion of academic freedom must be revised. She argues that Chinese scholars have a broader notion of the term. It differs from the academic freedom of the medieval European university that was articulated in debates over theoretical issues in particular disciplinary fields. Zha (2012) emphasizes that the notion embraces action, as well as theory, but also points to an intellectual authority closely affiliated with structures of state power. One of Zha's findings in his study of policy processes in contemporary China is that scholars play a significant role, as individuals and through major state-funded research projects. This insight points to the persistence of a pattern long rooted in Chinese society of "establishment scholars" offering their expertise in direct service to the state, paralleling the role of scholar officials in "traditional" China. Hayhoe (2012) argues that Chinese universities have achieved a growing measure of autonomy in some areas, such as student enrollment, curricular development, research, international partnerships, mergers and property development after the 1998 Higher Education Law, the first law since 1949, was promulgated. However, certain political constraints are still clearly evident. They are linked to the role of the Communist Party Committee in each university, as the role of the chairman of council and the President who is responsible for all major academic decisions is almost always operated by the Party secretary.

The comparison of the historical role of the university in the Nordic countries and China shows that in both cases the university has been important in forming the citizenry. Popkewitz argues that in modern state-building education is about governing subjectivities to form desirable citizenry (Popkewitz, 2000). In the Nordic countries, scholars (e.g. Antikainen, 2006; Telhaug et al., 2006) draw upon a very significant bond between nation-state building and the need for (welfare) experts to cater to the needs of a growing bureaucracy. Scholars (Hayhoe, 2012; Zha, 2012) investigating the relationship between Chinese universities and the state do not directly attach to the relation a discussion concerning nation-state building. However, a discussion exists about the role of the university in society, such as the university as a player in cultural

identity-shaping, the role of intellectuals participating in policy-making and the university as an institution contributing to the formation of civil society. Thus, in China the university was educating "elite" scholars who could offer expertise to the state and—since the economic reforms (the late 1970s)—training skilled workers to enable economic development (Chan, Ngok, & Phillips, 2008).

Trends in Higher Education in China and in Denmark Since the 1990s

Since the latest expansion (from the mid-1990s to the present) in higher education in China and Denmark, the trends have a high level of similarity in terms of globalization and marketization, although at varied scales. Mok (2012) argues that the field of higher education in China has been affected by the growing influence of privatization and marketization, particularly as the State has reduced its role in providing and funding education. Mok (2005) notes that the latest university mergers in the field were effectuated to improve citizens' "global competence" and make the higher education system more efficient economically and academically. However, the investigations of the social consequences of privatization have shown the expansion of educational inequality, as university fees and tuition have increased so much that higher education is no longer affordable for low- and even middle-income families. Recent higher education policies suggest that the State intends to return to a more central role in order to tackle the issues of the growing social equality gap developed by the excessive privatization and marketization of social services in the last few decades, although questions about how the government will accomplish this remain unanswered (Mok, 2012).

The global focus has been maintained in Chinese universities since the mid-1980s when transnational higher education programs were allowed. In addition, in recent years the government has restated its pledge to the goal of bringing Chinese higher education up to international standards by allowing the establishment of jointly run universities such as the SDC (Mok, 2012).

Parallel tendencies can be observed in Denmark, as current higher education policies are presented as a globalization strategy that emphasizes educating citizens with a "global outlook" as a way to prepare them for the imagined global economic competition (Danish Government, 2006, 2013). In the strategy, internationalization appears to be unwavering faith in higher education, and no one seems to be against it. The launch of the Danish government's strategy for internationalization of higher education (Danish Government, 2013) did not generate much debate or many reactions from the public or education professionals. The current policies were analyzed by Andersen and Jacobsen (2012) as a paradigm shift, in which Danish universities have changed from being "free" and independent research and education institutions to becoming competitive international enterprises that obtain their main goal and legitimacy from the economic growth they generate in society. The shift of the universities from autonomous and "free" to dependent can be questioned as not entirely new, as the internal regulation reforms in university (e.g. in light of the demand for student participation on study boards) and the expansion of the disciplines in the 1960s had already put the university's autonomy in creating the curricula under pressure (Hansen, 2015). However, academic freedom understood as the university's liberty to choose research subjects remained intact during these reforms (Hansen, 2015). Thus, it would be more precise to reframe Andersen and Jacobsen's argument about the paradigm shift in autonomy as the autonomy of research now under pressure to dissolve. However, the transformation of universities into more competitive international enterprises (owned by the state) is currently very noticeable as these were not expressed in regulation policies for universities in previous decades. Competitiveness has become a driving force in the internationalization of higher education. Thus, higher education and research have been reoriented from being discipline-based to market-driven by policies motivated by the ideology of global markets (Langberg & Schmidt, 2010).

How do two nation-states embedding their state-building efforts in their universities in similar yet different ways merge educational practices in institutions such as the SDC? What consequences will this merger have for the universities' role in state-building? Will the practices in institutions like the SDC be under pressure to be determined by the current

ideology of a global market, where the main rationalities are to prepare students with imagined global competencies in the nation-states' fight for economic survival? The overall question is under which social circumstances the type of expertise that will be offered to the state is formed if—and only if—the university continues to be involved in state-building. These questions, raised through the historical contextualization of the role of the university in state-building, will be discussed in the analysis of how students experience the educational practices of institutions such as the SDC, where the educational practices are understood as the merging of the efforts of two nation-states' state-building through education.

Conceptualizing the New Emerging Transnational Educational Space

SDC can be conceptualized as a new and emerging *transnational educational space*, where national ideas of education are being transformed as the education programs at the SDC are no longer controlled by only one nation-state institution. Faist, Fauser and Reisenauer (2013) argue that the transnational space consists of new connections, and combinations can be made across national borders. Along with the emergence of transnational space, the relation between civil society and the state has changed, as the solid ties that used to connect civil society with the state are detached and redirected to cross national boundaries and create a global public sphere. New transnational universities like the SDC can be viewed as a transnational space of what Ong and Collier (2005) term "global assemblages," as these situations can be assumed to be ever-changing and not attached to the terrain of a nation-state.

Nevertheless, Burawoy (2000) emphasizes that the role of the nation-state has not been completely retracted, as the connections and flows are not autonomous but fashioned by a strong, attractive field of nation-states. Although nation-state performances continue, they now take place in a transnational arena with other performers where the plays/productions of the co-performances are new and yet unknown. Elucidating this process of the performances, Ong (1999) describes it as the idea of transnationalism

as it refers to the "cultural specificities of the global process, tracing the multiplicity of the uses and the conceptions of culture" (p. 4). Ong argues that new modalities in these global assemblages are emerging. She calls them *translocal governmentality* (Ong, 1999). The translocal governmentality in the global assemblages is viewed as "ideas and techniques for acting on the self and for reforming/reengineering the self in order to confront globalized insecurities and challenges" (Ong & Collier, 2005). These cultural specificities of the global process can thus be located through the political, economic and cultural rationalities that create (education) migration, relocation, business networks and state capital relations in all the transnational processes that are conceived through and governed by cultural meanings. Searching for the cultural specificities through the effects of translocal governmentalities in schooling is, in Popkewitz's sense, a search for how "reason" and "the reasonable person" are produced, as power operates through the circulation of knowledge, which is tied to political rationalities of the governing structures of our individuality (Popkewitz, 2000). The Foucauldian notion of power is refined in Popkewitz's approach to the study of schooling. To Popkewitz (2000), the notion of power "looks to the effects of knowledge in governing social practices, subjectivities, and possibilities" (p. 16). Power is located in the way social practices, subjectivities and possibilities are governed by the interactions and circulation of different instances of knowledge. In this, the concept of the subject becomes dynamic and negotiable, instead of a stable and essential entity, as one potential position among others (Foucault, 2002, 2008).

The educational space is thus seen as a socio-academic environment in which curriculum understood as different instances of knowledge is chosen and organized as an educational object in forming the subjectivities of future citizens as schooling is about governing subjectivities to create the desired citizenry (Popkewitz, 2000). Popkewitz argues that the "educated subject" in the modern world is also one that is subjugated by the political rationalities to govern the self (Popkewitz, 2000). Thus, through analyzing the ways in which schooling as governing practices produces truth (rules of reason) about the world, we are able to map how our relationship with the world and "our" selves is constructed.

Leaving the Dichotomy Between East and West Behind

Engaging in the study of subjectivity processes that occur in a transnational learning context goes beyond previous studies of subjectivity conceptualized within the boundaries of the nation-state (including Dale, 2003; Yan, 2010). The present study seeks to add new aspects to the research field inspired by the situated approach (e.g. Clark & Gieve, 2006). The approach does not look for differences and similarities between students based on an essentializing concept of nationality but rather seeks to understand how their meetings with different educational practices disturb and moderate the students' values and identities. To understand the complexities in the curricular requirements that occur in this new context, one must examine the education processes in the institutional setting instead of the "traditional" comparisons of differences in national state systems and cultures of education based on dichotomies (e.g. studies such as Bereday, 1964; Green, Preston, & Janmaat, 2006). In other words, this study seeks to move the focus from explanations of transnational issues that preserve the dichotomy between the West and East (as in Biggs, 1996; Singh & Sproats, 2005; Tan, McInerney, & Liem, 2008) to seeing the transnational learning context as a space that provides different possibilities for subject positions among the students on a micro-level.

In this perspective, the SDC's educational space forms subjectivities by allowing novel socio-academic negotiations between students and educators and between the students themselves through different instances of knowledge of cultural diversity (Staunæs, 2004). At the same time, the SDC becomes a space constituted by varied governance practices, as the negotiations express different possibilities of subjectivities—produced in the social process (Popkewitz, 2000). By way of this theoretical framework, then, the analytical question becomes the following: How does the SDC as governing practices produce and articulate truth about the world and thus the relationship between students' selves and the world, through the disruptions and moderations of students' values and identities in their meeting with different educational practices?

Thus, concrete analysis of the empirical materials, the strategy for analyzing the data, is guided by the following questions: What transformations of values and identities do students experience in their meeting with different educational practices when they strive for recognition at the SDC? In other words, how are reason and the reasonable student produced through the transformations? Which social categories become significant in the transformations of the students' personal and collective developments? How do negotiations of the contents ascribed to certain social categories take place?

Method

This analysis is based on qualitative interviews with 15 students[2] from Denmark and China. The interviews were conducted in Beijing (summer 2013) and in Copenhagen (summer 2014) and in the language preferred by the students. The Danish students preferred Danish. Most Chinese students preferred Mandarin, but two students (Lei and Ning) wanted to speak English for the sake of practice. At the time the students were completing their first or second year at the SDC. The interviews lasted between 30 minutes and 1 hour. The students' study experiences at the SDC were the primary focus of the open interviews. This interview type explores the multi-faceted and often contrasting enunciations of experiences and frames of orientation and interpretation. The interview is seen as a kind of social meeting and conversation between the interviewer and the informant. The goal is to create narratives about the informant's reality and the means by which she or he assigns significance to it. However, the power relation between the interviewer and the informant is asymmetric, as the theme for the conversation is prearranged by the interviewer. During the conversation, the interviewer also points at the themes to be followed and elaborated (Kvale, 2006). The interviews provided insights into how specific subject positions and identities are constructed in the SDC master's programs, as the storyline of a narrative is part of the construction, and as the narratives contain suggestions of subject positions, plots and imaginations

[2] To protect the anonymity of the informants, I have used pseudonyms.

of the normal and abnormal that one can pick up and make one's own (Staunæs, 2004). I interviewed three of the students twice, in their first and second year, as I was lucky that they agreed to talk to me one year later when they were doing their thesis work. These students were Ning, Lei and Eline. I use their experiences to foreground the analytical ideas. The way the empirical material has been analyzed is through readings of the interview transcripts led by concrete analytical questions stated in the above section. The first step of the analysis has focus on what students seem to have in common in their experiences. The second step is exploring how the students articulate these experiences differently and connect them to different social categories in which they explain their own transformations of values and identities. The examples in the following analysis show the variety of the students' experiences.

Decoding a New Educational Culture

The students' negotiations of their subject positions are depicted through student narratives about how their interactions at the SDC are led by their changing perceptions of nationalized culture diversity. "Prejudices" and "differences" connected to having a certain national and academic background were brought up by all the students in the interviews, whether the students talked about their experiences in the SDC learning environment in general, teamwork-based project assignments or after-class social activities. The students believe that their initial perceptions of differences between students with different national and academic backgrounds changed over time. The change in perspective leaned toward a more differentiated understanding of culture, social interactions and study skills in relation to nationality. The students take a retrospective approach to the subject, using terms such as "in the beginning" and "now after one year" or "after a while," creating a timeline that underscores how their ideas have developed.

Like many of the students I interviewed, Anna from Denmark does not frame the classroom as either Danish or Chinese but as something new. For example, she says that people are moving away from being competition-minded to being more into solidarity, as they encourage each

other to speak up and deliver arguments in the lectures as a way to help each other. This idea of the SDC as a hybrid institution and a different university frames how the students conceptualize the context of their education and the challenges of studying in an environment with profound national and academic diversity. They point out the emergence of a new educational culture through this hybridity, differing from the educational setting they are used to. The formation of the new educational culture develops concurrently with the students changing their ways of thinking and acting. The students see themselves in a process of enlightenment through being part of the new and hybrid culture. The need to change their understandings of cultural behavior bound to nationality in the context of transnational education is, in the students' experiences, connected to how the teamwork assignments function. The students emphasize the decreasing difficulties of working across nationalities in teamwork by contrasting the present with the beginning. Lei from China pointed out that in the beginning the study challenges contained many misunderstandings and prejudices because of the language barriers, as the Chinese students' English was not sufficient and the students assumed that they could continue with their old study habits in the new setting. The challenges the students experienced with communication between nationalities forced them to find novel strategies. In Lei's and Anna's experiences, we can capture a description of the need to learn a new system and a way of decoding the new "culture," as the SDC context is a place where "the old national skills" of communicating and working together no longer function optimally.

The students' study and communication skills from their national education experiences seem to be under dissolution, while a new culture for how to say things, how to discuss things in order to be (ac)knowledgeable, arises. Therefore, the techniques for reengineering the self in order to confront globalized challenges in this transnational academic context are to readjust beliefs in the significance of a nationalized cultural behavior, by which student behavior from respective countries can be explained. This seems to be the SDC's curricular requirements. The need to develop new strategies for communication and ways to form a common understanding in group work and during the lectures was described by second-year students as stabilized into a familiar everyday routine. What was necessary to create the stable and

familiar everyday routine and how and which common understandings of the needed skills are created to decode this new form of curriculum will be explored in the following section.

Creating a Common Understanding of the Needed Skills

Although the interaction challenges in the SDC classroom were connected to the perceived academic and national background differences, the students are more willing to and engaged in talking about the critical moments that created the needed common understanding in relation to the nationality categories than academic diversity. In the following examples from the student narratives about situations defined as "the turning point" or "the critical moment" for the interactions in their group work and in the classroom, the ways that common understandings are shaped become obvious. The examples demonstrate understandings regarding reasonable and recognizable skills in this educational institution and how the understandings are connected to certain embodied nationalities at stake. Thus, it is possible to illuminate the necessary ways of reasoning in the curricular requirements of the SDC and the ways these requirements are linked to certain embodied nationalities. The different degrees of tension in the struggles among the students to reach consensus can be viewed as three exemplary processes.

The first example features Ning, a student from China. She explains that the first year at the SDC taught her a different way to practice education than what she had expected. Her narrative displays a "peaceful" transformation in the "natural" process of becoming a reasonable SDC student:

> Ning: At least for me in my undergraduate school, if the teacher said something or wrote something on the blackboard that I thought was not correct, I'd go to her or him after the class, and then if there was something wrong with a formula, he'd say, oh yes. And then at SDC, in our class, the Danish guys'll raise their hand, and say, oh there's something wrong in the formula, and they'll point it out directly then. After this time at SDC, I

> now think that I'll point it out directly. In the very beginning, I'd think that it'd be embarrassing, but what I think now is that it's okay. I think that, okay, what *you* think is maybe different from the professors or other students. (Ning, first-year student in the Water and Environment program, from China)

In Ning's comparison of current and prior requirements, she finds that the ability to be direct (and have your own opinion) and non-hierarchal thinking of positioning are demanded in a SDC classroom. Further, she asserts that she has been acquiring these skills as the year progressed. She perceives it to be a positive dimension of the SDC which is derived from the way the Danish students act in the SDC classroom. Ning interprets these skills as attached to a specific Danish education practice, as the Danish students perform it naturally. Although the abilities are attached to the imagined Danish-ness, they do not seem to be fixed and available only to the Danish students in the SDC classroom. The abilities are also available to Chinese students who are willing to adapt to obtain scientific knowledge. In Ning's narratives of her development toward becoming a more recognized student by performing the valued skills of the SDC, the national categories are very strong. In that way, Ning experiences that her own resources from her Chinese education are not acknowledged as useful.

The second example plays out in Eline's narrative about the group work process, where settling for social order requires challenging struggles. Eline from Denmark describes her experiences of working with students with varying national backgrounds as SDC challenges to overcome.

> Eline: Last time we were doing a project, I was together with two Chinese by myself, and when we came to the discussion part, where one could clearly feel that they wanted facts on the table, I was more, like, that we have to discuss what is good and bad, what we have to change, but in that sense, it seemed to me that they learn and adapt quickly. When we first begin to discuss, or rather try to explain that it's necessary to discuss it this way, we pose these questions: What if something happened, what can one do? Then they are also able to get started and try to discuss, but they are not naturally like this: That we have to discuss or come up with a critical opinion. (Eline, first-year student in the Water and Environment program, from Denmark, my translation from Danish)

This quotation illustrates a situation in which the group is forming and making agreements about how the work should be done, which procedure their process should follow. Here, Eline sees herself as having the ability to discuss, an important skill in the group project assignment. In group work with Chinese students, she interpreted the ability to discuss as unnatural to Chinese students but natural to Danish students. The turning point for forming the basis of the cooperation in the team was when Eline explained the need for discussion during group work. She finds herself persuading the group to integrate the discussion culture, which she describes as a successful process of their work with the assignment. In the narrative, a distinct dichotomy is created between them and us, based on national study skills (e.g. the ability to discuss). Eline thinks that this ability along with critical thinking is a feature of Danish education, but she also thinks that Chinese students can adopt them quickly. The students are pictured as flexible and able to pick up abilities that are imagined as tied to a certain nationality that is not "their own." The category of nationality functions dynamically in the student interactions.

However, as the third example featuring the student Niels illustrates, some interactions across the nationalities took place under a very tense atmosphere. Niels' narrative is about a process the students have undergone in their discussions about criticizing national policies. According to Niels, the turning point for creating a common understanding of the importance of using critique in the learning context and for the learning output was the meta-discussion they had half a year after they started at the SDC. Before the meta-debate he had some controversies with Chinese students, as the critique he raised against Chinese policies in Niels' view was perceived by Chinese students as a personal attack on China that the Chinese students felt they had to defend.

JHL: We talked about a critical culture or critical discussion culture before, you said you had a 'meta-talk' about it, how did it work after that?

Niels: I think in the beginning, we didn't have so much of a meta-talk. We kind of had the expectation that the Danes will raise their hands in class and discuss with the teachers, and the Chinese won't say anything. This was raised as a point during class in plenum. However, nothing was done about why we had the approaches that we had. It is important to have

> a discussion like that in the beginning of the process, to enable them to understand why we are doing this in this way. We didn't have that discussion in the beginning, but later on, because they were a bit surprised that we kept criticizing Chinese policies. And along the way, they became better at engaging in the discussions but still not as good as the Danish students. I think that discussing with and explaining to them, and maybe provoking them a bit and telling them that these are ours (methods, ed.), and we think that it is important because it is something which promotes dialogue about some of the things, and that is exactly in my point of view the intersection where different opinions meet, where you become challenged on your own opinions. And against that background, you maybe will get another view of things and society. (Niels, second-year student in the Public Management and Social Development Program, from Denmark, my translation from Danish)

This illustration depicts how consensus was reached during sensitive negotiations which required provocation and conviction. As a result of the struggles, critical thinking practices are staged as the basis of gaining scientific knowledge regardless of nationality. In Niels' narrative, the Danish students were already educated in that way, whereas the Chinese students had to catch up, which they seem to do gradually after the meta-discussion. The sensitivity of the discussions of national policies among the students illustrates that the "critical sense" is articulated not only as a practical skill or an instrumental tool for studying but also as a skill for personal development. Personal development is seen as the way one's personal opinion becomes challenged through the discussion made possible by "critical sense." "Critical sense" here is produced as a national marker, with Danish-ness encoded in it. The acquisition of scientific knowledge involving national policies at the SDC seems to demand a detachment from assumed (Chinese) nationality. However, at the same time, the acquisition of scientific knowledge is constructed as a Danish method for solving social issues in civil society, in which Chinese students will have to catch up. In a sense, the SDC curricular requirements denationalize scientific knowledge and, at the same time, nationalize it. This requires Chinese students (only) to dispense with their assumed national pride and participate in critiques of Chinese and Danish policies in order to obtain a degree from the SDC.

Discussion

The analysis shows some of the same tendencies as the studies based on the essentializing concept of "Chinese learners" (Grimshaw, 2007) in the perceptions of Chinese students. The term "Chinese learners" is applied to problematize the group of Asian international students with roots in a Chinese-speaking country at English-speaking universities as these students exhibit "Chinese behaviors in [a] Western classroom," which is seen as a clash between the pedagogy of Western universities and the Chinese tradition of learning. The group is often constructed as being obedient to authority, passive in class, lacking in critical thinking and inadequate in adopting learning strategies (Saravanamuthu & Yap, 2014; Tan et al., 2008). However, at the SDC, the educational space is dynamic, and the subject positions for the student are not fixed by nationality or language. Instead, they are flexible, and Chinese students are not seen as lacking the ability to adopt new learning strategies. However, although the SDC curriculum attempts to denationalize the requirements, it nationalizes them in other ways, as the curriculum requirements are linked to the imagined Danish scientific practices rather than Chinese ones. Therefore, Danish students are one step ahead in becoming more reasonable students. In that sense, a non-intentional competition occurs among students as they are equipped with a certain knowledgeable body marked by their nationality. Therefore, at the SDC some of the perceptions of education practices divided into the West and East categories are also reproduced. The shift in the governing principle of the students' subjectivity is one of the consequences of the merging of the two nation-states' similar yet different ways of embedding state-building in their universities. The governing principle of students' subjectivity is led by the shifted focus on interpreting diversity in behavior through national scientific culture instead of national culture. This may imply that the main rationalities from higher education policies at the SDC as a global assemblage are concretely translated into a struggle about hierarchization of forms of scientific knowledge bound to different nation-states. Hence, the main rationalities from higher education policies as a central part of nation-states' fight for economic survival become a struggle about becoming the most scientific nation-state. The described hierarchization can be seen as an expression

of how competition between the nation-states is taking place through the transnational educational practices. In that way, the site of the SDC becomes a site for a competition to nationalize scientific knowledge and practices. Thus, the role of the university in state-building continues in institutions such as the SDC. The intention of constructing the SDC as an institution that can produce a workforce and citizens with a global outlook and competencies seems to be translated and practiced at the SDC as ways to invest certain national students with the strongest argumentation of what scientific knowledge is with implicit connotations of national imaginaries. Thus, the expertise offered to the state formed under these circumstances will also carry the identity marker of nationalized scientific knowledge. Through the translocal governmentality at the SDC, the students can be viewed as future citizens not only fighting for their own personal acknowledgment and development but also struggling with representing a national interest in these processes of nationalizing the educational and scientific practices.

Concluding Remarks

In analyzing the process of the critical moments of students' socio-academic developments, I identified various struggles in transnational education, which visibly illuminate how the students' educational practices in this transnational context change as perceptions of the significance of nationalized culture in education are modified. These examples offer a pattern of the ways the students are making reason in their performance of transnational education. By locating the rationalities in transnational education practices, the analysis has, in Ong's (1999) sense, dealt with the cultural specificities of the global process. The examples do not represent one individual's whole educational process; nevertheless, they illuminate political rationalities tied to the governing principles of their individuality linked to the certainty of Danish-ness as among the ways power is exercised and produced in the transnational context of the SDC. Popkewitz (2000) argues that national schooling is about constructing "the national imaginaries that give cohesion to the idea of the national citizenry." In addition, this analysis displays some aspects of what transnational

schooling is constructing. The transnational subjectivities are shaped by the ideal of the student at the SDC as scientific and non-national, while in the social process the negotiations express possible subject positions that are produced differently depending on the nationality that marks the bodies of the students. The possible subject positions produced through the transnational educational practices at the SDC are therefore still nationalized, as being more or less scientific is strongly attached to national categories. Therefore, transnational schooling is also producing a cohesion that will reinforce the idea of national citizenry. Exploring the transnational processes at the SDC illustrates that the establishment of institutions destabilizes the bond in some ways by having an ideology of an achievement of scientific knowledge that is stated as non-national. However, it may not be breaking the strong historical bond between nation-state building and educational regimes, as student negotiations for acknowledgment are still attached—and their professional identities are still renewed in relation—to an imagined nationality.

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