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The Hidden Curriculum of an English for Academic Purposes Reform in Chinese Universities

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Abstract

The fundamental challenge in China's higher education is its bureaucratic governance system; however, it remains untouched after several reforms. The recent Shanghai EAP policy does nothing to challenge the system, but rather, it blames the general English curriculum for failing to prepare students academically. By critically reflect on data from some previous studies, this study discovered that the new EAP curriculum and the policy proposed to replace the general English curriculum harboured a hidden curriculum that tightened the control of knowledge, legitimizing the existing higher education system, and reproducing future academic subalterns. This Shanghai EAP policy is the result of the policymakers' social mobility struggle as members of a new middle class, together with their accomplices: neoliberalism and neoconservatives. However, resistance and conflict exist in every working context, including the context of Shanghai EAP as justified in the study, despite some of the students' and the teacher's resistance being counter-productive.



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Introduction

Despite China's recent proactive ambition to establish world-leading universities and actions towards accelerating its research capacity, bureaucratic steps taken within the university governance system and their side effects have become a major challenge for the country's academic development (Douglass, 2012; Ren, 2012; Shi & Rao, 2010; Wang & Chen, 2007; Yaisawarng & Ng, 2014; Zhang, Dai & Yu, 2016). Although China has upgraded and reformed its public universities many times in its history, the governance system within the universities has witnessed little change (Dai & Yu, 2016; Wang & Chen, 2007; Zhang,). To illustrate, recently, a regional language policy called, *A Framework of Reference for EFL Teaching at Tertiary Level in Shanghai for Non-English Major Undergraduates* (shortened to the Shanghai EAP policy) was released by the Shanghai Education Bureau under advice from the English language expert committee commissioned by the China Ministry of Education. The new policy aims to replace the existing general English curriculum with an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) curriculum for undergraduates in Shanghai (Cai, 2017a). On the surface, this policy claims that the general English course in universities is a fundamental obstacle holding back China's academic improvement (Cai, 2012a; 2014; 2017a), due to the course's humanistic orientation being useless in equipping students with academic skills (Cai, 2017b).

However, this essay critically reinterprets some of the results of the previous studies (Li & Wang, 2018; Li, 2019; Li & Gong, 2019; Li & Feng, forthcoming) related to Shanghai EAP reform. This essay unveils a hidden curriculum promulgated by the Shanghai EAP policy, which operates to divert the public's attention away from problems in China's higher education stemming from the bureaucratic approach to the English curriculum. It also reveals a rightward turn in the Shanghai EAP policy led by a new Chinese middle class and their alliance with a rising Neoliberalism (Lo & Mok, 2007) coupled with Neoconservative political thought (Chen, 1997) which sustains the existing system and preserves the new middle class's social mobility. More importantly, this essay also exemplifies how some teachers and students resisted the reform as their culture as lived (Apple, 1995).

The following sections will start by discussing the bureaucratic system in higher education of China before moving on to how the Shanghai EAP policy blames the university general English courses for the "lagging behind" of China higher education, and then the essay will analyze a hidden curriculum the policy delivers.

The Bureaucratic Governance System Challenging China's Higher Education

In China, universities are owned by the country. A Chinese Communist Party committee is placed within each level of the university, i.e., in schools, institutions, and departments (Wang & Chen, 2007), and even the university presidents are under the supervision of the Party (Li & Zhu, 2019). Furthermore, administrative offices, such as human resources, registry, and finance in each department or faculty are controlled as state resources. So the administrative staff are, in effect, the representatives of the country and the law, and therefore they wield managerial power to govern academic staff by regulating their behavior including teaching and research, and fending off any ideologies that run counter to Chinese Socialism (Wang & Chen, 2007).

However, administrative and academic power are often in conflict, as the academic staff may develop their own opinions of the university system in their teaching, and produce research differing from the administrators' expectations (Wang & Chen, 2007). In order to control the academic staff and reduce resistance from them, the universities usually award administrative and even political positions, such as Party committee secretaries or deans, to higher ranking academic staff, like professors, who subsequently become academic bureaucrats who have the power to appropriate funding and other resources for their personal research (Wang & Chen, 2007). With administrative power, higher ranking academic staff can even persuade domestic publishers to lower their standards in order to publish their research (Wang & Chen, 2007). These academic bureaucrats also have the power to judge and support a particular scholar and a specific type of research they prefer (Shi & Rao, 2010). In the meantime, those academics without administrative power who do not have the support of their bureaucratic superiors may be marginalized (Wang & Chen, 2007). Thus, such an environment causes academics to chase bureaucratic power via their research, which can convert the purpose of research to be a matter of social climbing (Wang & Chen, 2007). Shi and Rao (2010) claim that the Chinese research environment encourages scholars, even those returnees who have graduated from famous Western institutions, to spend considerable amounts of time pulling strings with bureaucrats in order to secure funding opportunities, while undervaluing their own research. Such a system seems to keep academics busy in gaining social capital or in becoming a more enterprising self, which in nature strengthens the system's governance over academic staff. However, such a system only serves to damage the bureaucracy in China's higher education.

Because the system described above has become entrenched, university scholars and administrators now take it for granted. Ren (2012) found that some universities even help to cover up their bureaucratic academics' unethical behaviors. More people choose to keep silent in the face of the prevailing academic bureaucracy to avoid creating trouble for themselves (Shi & Rao, 2010). Although China has developed academic penalties to punish unethical behavior, such as plagiarism, which are applied using technology, the academic corruption caused by the bureaucracy is too deeply embedded into the Chinese *guanxi* (pulling strings) tradition to bring about any significant improvement (Ren, 2012). Such a bureaucratic governance system which encourages academic corruption reduces China's academic credibility on the international stage (Ren, 2012), downgrading the morale of scholars (Zhang, Dai & Yu, 2016), and corrupting their souls (Shi & Rao, 2010). Without any change, in the long run, the efficiency, productivity, and innovation of China's higher education will continue to be damaged (Shi & Rao, 2010; Zhang, Dai & Yu, 2016). Although many scholars have raised their voices about the damage being wrought by the bureaucracy in the universities, the 2020 Reform Strategy, a recent national education reform policy has avoided discussing it completely (Zhang, Dai & Yu, 2016).

The General English Course as a Scapegoat of China's Higher Education Problems

In 2013, the Shanghai EAP policy was released prioritizing a skills-based EAP curriculum, including teaching skills such as academic writing, reading, speaking, listening, paper presentation, and critical thinking skills (Cai, 2017a). The general English course, which it replaced, had been used in public universities since the 1980s (Gao & Bartlett, 2014), as a component of compulsory general education (Cheng, 2002) for year one and two university students. The general English course provided English literacy as well as speaking and listening skills, but a more important aim

of this course defined by earlier documents from the Ministry of Education (2007) was to broaden students' horizons regarding English speaking countries' cultures, as the textbooks included a large number of celebrities' speeches and excerpts from classic literature. Thus, the general English course has/had a humanistic purpose to raise students' intercultural awareness (Cheng, 2002).

However, the Shanghai EAP policymaker, in an effort to promote the switch to the EAP course, published widely in academic journals and mainstream media noting the lack of practical applications of the general English course for students' needs in future careers, particularly when participating in international academic competitions (e.g., Cai, 2012a; 2017). Cai (2012a, p.2) claimed that "general English course[s] cannot well prepare our university graduates for their jobs, and it is against the national strategy of talent" (my translation). The policymaker even criticized the general English course as being inefficient for teaching academic language, and thus it bears the responsibility for "a whole generation of Chinese scientists and engineers who are unable to extract information in their disciplinary literature in English, and not [being able to] effectively communicating their research [results] in international journals and conferences" (Cai, 2017a, p.115). In a recent publication in the mainstream media, the Shanghai EAP policymaker charged that English courses in Chinese universities are "seriously ill" and they are "not conscientious" (Cai, 2018, Nov, 6th).

Furthermore, the policymaker judged China's academic research as lagging behind Japan, which has more Nobel Prize winners and more publications in SSCI and A&HCI journals than that of China (Cai, 2014; Cai, 2016, Oct, 12th). The policymaker thought Japan's success in academia was a demonstration of their university students' higher proficiency in academic English, which was due to Japanese universities' futuristic adoption of EAP in their English courses (Cai, 2014). He made the following suggestions to universities in China: "The 'Double first-class project' (China's recent ambitious project in establishing a batch of world-leading universities) is rooted in nurturing first-class university students... [o]nly with first-class students can we have first-class scientists and Nobel Prize winners. Only through teaching students to use English to understand and to extract disciplinary information and to report academic findings can first-class university students be nurtured" (my translation) (Cai, 2016, Oct, 12th). As a result, 26 universities in Shanghai, accounting for 2/3 of the total number of local higher institutions, implemented this reform (Wang, 2018). After the implementation, the policymaker's opinion was widely supported by local scholars (Jiang & Zhang, 2017; Zhao & Yu, 2017).

Through media and academic publications, the Shanghai EAP policymaker established what Apple (2000) called "a national popular will." However, this popular will can be viewed with some scepticism because it is based on "the perceived needs, fears, and hopes of groups of people who felt threatened by the range of problems associated with the crises in authority relations in culture, in the economy, and in politics" (Apple, 2000, p.22). In the current context, the goals of the Shanghai EAP policymaker not only arouse the Chinese public's complex emotions and nervousness towards Japan (as the policymaker mentioned academia of Japan in his publications many times as his proof), but, more importantly, also arouse the swelling new middle class's sense of social insecurity (Zhao, Li & He, 2019). In China, the new middle class - the professional and technical class - has emerged gradually with the expansion of higher education, and by 2015, it had grown to 50 million people (Li, 2019). These people have higher educational backgrounds and have undertaken professional and intellectual jobs in society (Li, 2019). Their sense of insecurity

(Zhao, Li & He, 2019) perhaps lies in their social mobility, which is built on their expertise and accumulated cultural capital attained through their university degrees (Apple, 2006). The new middle class emphasizes the “high-status” of expertise with the knowledge they have attained, and they fear themselves’ or their children’s social mobility could decrease due to the declining power associated with their degrees or loss of expertise (Apple, 2006).

Therefore, the Shanghai EAP policymaker has successfully attracted the public’s attention by linking the problems of higher education to students’ incapability of using EAP. In this way, the general English course has become a scapegoat for China’s poor performance in academic research and higher education problems, while ignoring or avoiding the root of the problem, which is related to bureaucratic shortcomings. This phenomenon is similar to what Apple and Jungck (2000, p.114) claim to be the exporting of economic and power relation crisis from the dominant class into the schools; thus, they imitate a voice the dominant class can make on the relationship between social problem and schools: “If schools and their teachers and curricula... (were) more closely linked to the needs of business and industry... the problems of achievement, of unemployment, of international economic competitiveness... would supposedly largely disappear.”

Aspects of the Hidden Curriculum of Shanghai EAP policy

School is a place where hegemony, e.g., class dispositions, racial oppression, certain ideologies and social reproduction, is created and imposed on students from a particular social group to sustain unequal social distribution and to reproduce obedient subalterns of the superstructure (Apple, 1995; 2004). The school curriculum plays an important role in legitimizing such impositions, although students are unaware of, or take this power relationship for granted (Margolis, Soldatenko, Acker, & Gair, 2001), and that is why it is termed the “hidden curriculum.”

Social Reproduction of the New Middle Class

The Shanghai EAP policy serves as a prime example of how the new middle class is brought into being. The process began when the policymaker found that the Shanghai final year secondary school students’ English exam was more difficult than the College English Test band 4 (Cai, 2012b). The policymaker stipulated in the new EAP policy for universities that the majority of the newly admitted students should study the new EAP course, and only those students who obtained lower English grades in the National College Entrance Exam (gaokao) would take the general English (Cai, 2012a; 2017). In reference to the policy, each university established different enrollment arrangements. In university A, for example, only the students with a relatively good English performance are selected into the EAP program, and the selection is based on their results on a test with a similar format based on the IELTS, rather than students’ English score in gaokao (Li & Wang, 2018). University A is a government funded business-major university. It is perched at the top of the second-tier universities, but its ties with industries in Shanghai and nearby places allow it to attract mostly middle-class students nationwide (Li & Wang, 2018).

Although Shanghai secondary school graduates’ English proficiency is generally good enough to take the EAP course in university (Cai, 2012a), not all the students in Shanghai universities are from Shanghai. Different provinces may have diverse English language learning resources and have different requirements for students in the English section of gaokao, which

may result in students' varying ability of English. Thus, the test in University A may favor those from highly developed areas in China.

More importantly, students from advantaged family backgrounds, including those who have recently entered the middle class, can make use of their families' capital to get extra training (Luo, Guo & Shi, 2018), in English or IELTS preparation. Therefore, the EAP selection test in university A to some extent latently selects and strengthens students from the advantaged classes, giving them more chance to study academic English, which creates a springboard for them to pursue further education internationally and a possible career in higher education.

Such a scenario aligns with Li and Gong's (2019) fieldwork in university B. Unlike university A, B did not reform their general English on a large scale, but instead they established a few pilot EAP classes. The students in the EAP classes were not selected through any exams but were appointed randomly by the Dean of the foreign language department. Although University B is a science and heavy-industry oriented research university located in Shanghai, and its students have mostly achieved high grades in the *gaokao* (the national university entrance exam), during classroom observations, Li and Gong (2019) noticed that not all the students were interested in studying EAP, which was supported by students in interviews with student Rain. He commented: "There were so many students who were not interested in EAP... there was hardly anyone who genuinely liked EAP", as Rain feels EAP is not relevant to the students' study (Li & Gong, 2019, p.108). Among the few chosen by their teacher as good EAP students to participate their study, many were from new middle class families who either had the cultural and social capital for nurturing their children's interests in research, or saved money and planned to support their children to study overseas (Li & Gong, 2019). For example, Rain's father is a pharmaceutical scientist, who inspired him to be devoted to pharmacy research and to pursue further study in the UK after graduation. So Rain thought highly of the EAP course he was studying: "EAP as a tool for research guaranteed me to have first-hand information in the field" (Li & Gong, 2019, p. 110). Another student, Lee, was born into a family of musicians; she was once trained to play all kinds of musical instruments in order to carry on her mother's career in the future (Li & Gong, 2019). However, during a summer break in high school, her parents sent her on a study trip to Princeton University, where she learnt about 3D printing technology; since then, she became interested in engineering, which became her major in university (Li & Gong, 2019). She also aims to go back to the US to work on her master's degree in engineering, so she felt learning EAP would be able to prepare her for her studies in the US (Li & Gong, 2019).

Lee and Rain are both from the new middle class, as their parents are intellectuals with abundant cultural capital, such as university degrees and expertise they obtained in their respective fields. According to Bourdieu (1994), people with a similar background are inclined to share similar habitus and dispositions, so the students from intellectual families are more likely to recognize and appreciate EAP and the academic culture EAP relates to. The cultural and economic capital intellectual families have also prepared students like Lee and Rain to pursue a career as academics; therefore, learning EAP becomes meaningful only to them.

In university S, some teachers there said that their university had overhauled the general English course and asked all the undergraduates to study EAP, but most students found the course too difficult and useless to them; some even slept in the class (Li & Feng, forthcoming). University S is a lower ranking polytechnic institute, whose students do not need high grades in the *gaokao* to enter, and its students are mostly from below middle class. After graduation, these students are unlikely to reach a high level, decision-making posts during their careers (Luo, Guo & Shi, 2018).

So the students in university S are not meant to become intellectuals, but rather they are expected to fulfil the needs of society by joining the workforce, so the EAP course does not fit them well.

Generally speaking, the Shanghai EAP policy chooses students from new middle class backgrounds, and the students with such a background are also steered towards the course. Like Apple's (2006) opinion, such a process helps to maintain the social capital of the children of the new middle class by nurturing their expertise knowledge for possible professional positions, preventing them from dropping in social status. In such a hidden curriculum, a social reproduction process of the new middle class is both maintained and accelerated; in the meantime, students from lower social classes, particular those from underdeveloped areas in China are marginalized.

Human capital theory in the Shanghai EAP policy

In effect, then, the Shanghai EAP policy is essentially a human capital policy, which stems from human capital theory, an important technology of neoliberalism (Allatt & Tett, 2018). This theory is founded on the belief that higher education brings benefits in terms of productivity in the workplace, and ultimately better pay (Lauder, Brown, Dillabough, & Halsey, 2006). Becker (2006) suggested that an individual's success is commensurate with one's investment in education or human capital. This is actualized in developed countries which invest more in human capital, resulting in innovation and new technologies (Becker, 2006). In order to cut expenses, rich countries with highly skilled labor forces transfer manual and natural resource-reliant industries to low-income countries that have less human capital investment (Reich, 2006). The only way for poorer countries to change the situation is to invest in human capital and create highly-skilled labor (Becker, 2006).

Therefore, many national education policies in the world are based around human capital theory to develop their talent and to increase their countries' competitiveness internationally (Allatt & Tett, 2018; O'Brien, 2018). Likewise, the Shanghai EAP policymaker has also promoted the human capital-oriented function of the EAP policy: "It is designed to accommodate...the considerable need for university students equipped with international communication skills and competitiveness within their areas of speciality to meet the needs of the national and regional socioeconomic development and the internationalization of higher education" (Cai, 2017a, p.131). Another feature of human capital education policy is its over-emphasis on skills for economic purposes (Allatt & Tett, 2018). According to the Shanghai EAP policymaker, the original general English course has a low-efficiency in equipping students with the necessary skills for maintaining jobs (Cai, 2012a); in contrast, they claim that the Shanghai EAP curriculum revolves around teaching academic skills (Cai, 2017a).

As a technology of neoliberalism (Allatt & Tett, 2018), the human capital theory imposes an economic meritocracy (Wong, 2017). Specifically, the government shifts the responsibility of education to individuals, and the extent a student can succeed depends on his or her personal investment in education; however, this overlooks all of the other socio-cultural, economic, and historical underpinnings that prevent one from getting an education (Allais, 2012; Miller & Rose, 2008). Therefore, in the context of the Shanghai EAP policy, the human capital ideology also imposes a discourse that the success of a student's career in academia and the fate of Chinese higher education depends on students' personal learning of EAP knowledge, distracting people from seeing the issue of social class, which prevents students from learning and from seeing the bureaucratic issue involved in Chinese higher education. Furthermore, human capital theory

weighs more on the value of the market than the value of human beings (Nussbaum, 2010). In this way, it may latently help to engender a mercantile mentality among students which leads to studying for employability's sake (Apple, 2006). As a result, such commercialization neutralizes education and blunts teachers' and students' awareness of the inequities among the social classes, maintaining the unequal status quo (Apple, 2004; 2006). As a result, the human capital side of the Shanghai EAP policy helps to legitimize the bureaucratic system.

Technical Control of the New Academic Knowledge

The Shanghai EAP policy imposes technical control over students by projecting academic discourse as objective and fixed knowledge when it promotes a skilled-based curriculum, which falls into Benesch's (2008 p. 33) criticism of EAP: EAP is often presented as "a consensual and inevitable chronology of pedagogical events rather than a well-crafted and organized effort on the part of governments, businesses, and foundation working together to promote English teaching... to promote their economic interests." The Shanghai EAP policy's neutralization of academic discourse is similar to the hidden curricula in many other schools, and they all, as Apple (2004) pointed out, tend to project science into a positivist ideal with an objective standard (Apple, 2004). However, such a projection of science is unrealistic and conservative (Apple, 2004). While in reality, whether in the natural or social sciences, conflict and competition exist, and it even becomes a motivation for a subject's development (Apple, 2004). In academia, scholars compete over who is the first in making a certain new discovery and whose idea is more widely recognized (Apple, 2004); academics can also be selfish in pursuit of fame, wealth, and power, and new academic practices can also be oppressed by conservative senior members (Wong, 2017).

To teach only neutralized knowledge is to deprive students from a holistic understanding of the academic communities, not to mention their understanding of the power relations and resource distribution in academia, which subsequently prevents the students from having the ability to question the communities (Apple, 2004). Likewise, the skill-based EAP that the Shanghai EAP policy encourages students to follow unquestioned academic assumptions. As Benesch (2008, p.22) critiqued: "one central assumption guiding EAP research and teaching... is to prepare students unquestioningly for institutional and faculty expectations." When EAP students are taught to follow the normative skills and objectivity of academia, the power of the bureaucratic system in Chinese higher education is thus hidden from their focus. Instead, the students may become followers of the system, what Apple (2004, p.80) described as "men and women as recipients of values and institutions, not ... men and women as creators and recreators of values and institutions." Furthermore, teaching neutralized knowledge can put students in a vulnerable and subordinate position in their future careers as academics in China. Apple and Jungck's (2000, p.116) claim: "when complicated jobs are broken down into atomistic elements, the person doing the job loses sight of the whole process and loses control over her or his own labor since someone outside the immediate situation now has greater control over both the planning and what is actually to go on."

Generally speaking, via technical control, the hidden curriculum aims at controlling knowledge and developing commonsense that legitimizes the existing power and priority distribution (Apple, 2004). Such manipulation of the curriculum reveals the emergence of the neoconservative ideology (Apple, 2006) in Chinese higher education.

Silhouette of the New Right Alliance

In view of the above analysis, the hidden curriculum of the Shanghai EAP policy may be helping to sustain the existing bureaucratic system in Chinese higher education while implementing technical control over EAP students. The policy also helps many universities avoid the pressure of reforming the bureaucratic managerial system, while transferring the conflicts to the so-called low-efficiency university general English curriculum. It also maintains the inequity among social classes by giving preference to students from the new middle class via its course content and student selection. This hidden curriculum exposes what Apple (1995 p.13) criticizes as the schools' role as an accomplice in preserving and reproducing social inequity: "A fundamental problem facing us is the way in which systems of domination and exploitation persist and reproduce themselves without being consciously recognized by the people involved."

The ubiquitous and elusive power relationships in education determine the nature of the curriculum as a site of power struggle among social groups (Margolis, Soldatenko, Acker, & Gair, 2001). Indeed, the aforementioned three aspects of the hidden curriculum in the current study demonstrate the interactions of the social groups, i.e., the preservation of the new middle class, the emergence of neoliberalism in the form of human capital pursuit, and some of the technical control representing neoconservative forces. These three aspects, in alignment with Apple (2006), are representing a rise of the three major elements in the New Right Alliance; in this way, the Shanghai EAP policy symbolizes a potential rightward turn led by bureaucratic academics, similar to the policymaker in the current context.

In sum, these bureaucratic academics are university professors, so they themselves actually belong to the new middle class. Although university professors' social status is similar to that of senior civil servants, they are a subordinate group holding only cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984). This social class in China is in a state of insecurity (Zhao, Li & He, 2019), perhaps due to their worries about the upward social mobility of themselves and their children (Apple, 2006). This concern has been heightened with the gradual neoliberalization of higher education (Mo & Lo, 2007) and the tightening of sociocultural control due to the rising neoconservative political thought after the 1989 Tiananmen Square incident in China (Chen, 1997). Against this background, the new middle class is unavoidably turning to the right ideologically and becoming an accomplice with the New Right Alliance (Apple, 2006). This shift helps to explain the motivation of the Shanghai EAP policymakers in promoting such a reform. The New Right Alliance will eventually make education an accomplice towards the goal of success in global competition, commercialisation, and discipline [of people] (Apple, 2006, p.55); however, at the same time, it may damage higher education as a public good for egalitarianism and human emancipation (Giroux, 2002). All these ideological and power struggles are hidden and legitimized once they are reproduced in such a hidden curriculum. Exposing the behind-the-scenes mechanism is a task that educational sociologists need to do (Margolis, Soldatenko, Acker, & Gair, 2001).

The Other Side of the Hidden Curriculum: Some Examples of EAP Teachers' and the Students' Resistance

Apple (1995) pointed out that another side of the hidden curriculum is its subalterns' culture as lived, in other words, the resistance of the students, teachers, or any associated labor. These members may not follow what their rulers prescribe; rather, the resistance and conflicts they produce is always a part of the process of social reproduction (Apple, 1995). However, the

resistance of the teachers and the students is often dismissed in the study of the hidden curriculum (Apple, 1995).

Almost all the teachers in the field agree that the EAP policy has come at the right time and plays an important role for their students and even themselves as teachers; however, some teachers and students have resisted the hidden curriculum to varying extents. Li (2019) and Li and Gong (2019) both depict a teacher named Blue, who is an EAP lecturer in university B. Rather than focusing on teaching the required human-capital-oriented skills, Blue has tried to cultivate students' academic integrity by following the principles of being "trustworthy, knowledge-seeking, truth-pursuing, and willing to share." Blue said that she, herself, was a victim of academic corruption, due to her research being appropriated by her ex-supervisor. So the intention of adding such principles is because EAP students may become future academics, and her EAP course can help prevent her students from acting unethically and perhaps it can help to change the bureaucratic research environment. Blue's student Rain thought highly of the EAP course, particularly the critical thinking component, which Blue stressed; Rain said that the critical thinking in the course gives me the vision of seeing things I had not seen before, I saw academic corruption in China, and I hope I can become a famous professor and change the system in the future (Li & Gong, 2019).

What is noteworthy is that not all the resistance from the teachers and the students point to the bureaucratic system in China's higher education, but rather some of them deteriorate the oppression, which will be explained. Sabrina is an EAP lecturer in university S (Li & Feng, forthcoming). As a polytechnic institution, it has a relatively lower enrollment standard, meaning most students are weak in English. Because of the students' weak English foundation, Sabrina did not follow the EAP curriculum, but instead, created a new beginner level EAP to meet the schema and the needs of the students (Li & Feng, forthcoming). She sacrificed much of her spare time to give one-to-one academic writing consultations to almost every student in her class (Li & Feng, forthcoming). Sabrina's devotion to the students finally touched many, and some of them even wrote her messages at the semester end to express their gratitude (Li & Feng, forthcoming). On the surface, Sabrina resisted the EAP curriculum because she felt it did not meet the students' need; however, her devotion to the students facilitated the hidden curriculum's technological oppression. According to Bourdieu and Passeron (1990), teachers' personal authority and even charisma can become a two-step delegation of the arbitrary ideology; in other words, students may study for the sake of their idolized teachers, which further distracts the students from seeing the power and oppression behind the hidden curriculum.

Some students' resistance to the EAP curriculum was counter-productive, however. Many students in University S were not interested in studying EAP due to their different backgrounds and future plans; as a result, some of them dozed off in the class as related by teacher Victor (Li & Feng, forthcoming). Such resistance cannot help them to deeply understand the power and ideology behind the EAP curriculum; however, at the same time their lack of interest in learning EAP also deprives them from acquiring intellectual knowledge for their possible upward social mobility. The students' behavior is similar to the resistance of the rebellious "lads" in the school as described in Willis' (1977) *Learning to Labour*. Upon observing their parents' working class jobs despite having a school education, the lads realized the school's inability to provide them with upward social mobility, so they developed a counter-school culture among themselves by being

disruptive (Apple, 1995). Their seeming resistance to the social reproduction of schooling was limited by their knowledge of society and the function of school, and they quit at a young age without the necessary intellectual knowledge for better jobs or for changing the oppression, leaving them no way other than to follow their parents' footsteps to be blue collar workers (Apple, 1995). The students in university S and teacher Sabrina's resistance unconsciously strengthened the oppression of the EAP curriculum due to their limited knowledge of the invisible power in education. However, the present study does help in uncovering the hidden curriculum to "make visible the powerful who benefit from the oppression of others" (Margolis, Soldatenko, Acker, & Gair, 2001, p.4).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The fundamental challenge in China's higher education is its bureaucratic governance system; however, it remains untouched after several reforms. The recent Shanghai EAP policy does nothing to challenge the system, but rather, it blames the general English curriculum for failing to prepare students academically. By integrating some data from a five-year ethnographic project, this study discovered that the new EAP curriculum and the policy proposed to replace the general English curriculum actually harbored a hidden curriculum that tightened the control of knowledge, legitimizing the existing higher education governance system, and reproducing future academic subalterns. This Shanghai EAP policy is the result of the policymakers' social mobility struggle as members of a new middle class, together with their accomplices, neoliberalism and neoconservatives. However, resistance and conflict exist in almost every working context (Apple, 1995), including the context of Shanghai EAP as justified by the example of Blue and her student Rain, despite the students' and the teacher's resistance being counter-productive.

Nevertheless, the potential resistance gives some hope for changing the hegemony in the future; although school is the engine facilitating social reproduction and creating hegemony, it can also be the place to wage a war against them (Apple, 1995). Therefore, similar to the present research, examining the hidden curriculum provides a useful resource for raising the teachers' and the students' awareness of the power mechanism of the Shanghai EAP policy, so as to visualize the bureaucratic governance system the Shanghai EAP policy attempted to avoid. In fact, there is nothing wrong with teaching EAP, but the skills-based EAP curriculum should be changed to a pedagogy of critical EAP to produce a more reflexive and critical view on academic practices, so as to interrogate academia "in the interests of greater equity and democratic participation in and out of educational institutions" (Benesch, 2008, p.60). Furthermore, both the EAP and the general English course should be available options for students regardless of their backgrounds, as university in nature is a common good open for the public (Giroux, 2002).

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