

Educating for Meaningful Citizenship:
A Critical Corpus Analysis of Public Education Policy in Canada

by
Codie Fortin Lalonde

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Codie Fortin Lalonde

ABSTRACT

Public education is tasked not only with educating, but also with instilling values, knowledge and skill building, and preparation for citizenship (Lemke, 2008; Noddings, 2016; Westheimer, 2015). In Canada, education is provincially mandated, but there have been growing pressures and efforts to standardize policy, curricula, and practice across the country under the banner of inclusion, testing and assessment, and accountability within a globalized neoliberal society (Polster & Newson, 2015; Stack, 2016; Westheimer, 2015). Of particular concern is how these pressures are manifested within education policy and how they may in turn affect the way students and citizenship are invoked and talked about.

This study critically investigates the discursive construction of particular actors (students and citizens) within policy-level education discourse (PLED). Informed by Critical Discourse Studies (CDS), I combine the discourse-historical approach (Reisigl & Wodak, 2016) and corpus-assisted discourse studies (Mautner, 2007, 2016) to analyze the discursive construction of and agency afforded (or not) to students and citizens. A total of 22 policy texts collected from the Ministries/Departments of Education across the provinces and territories between 2018-19 formed the basis of the small reference corpus, from which six provinces—British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Québec, Nova Scotia—were selected for deeper critical analysis. The findings reveal that although there are interesting nuances within and across the provinces, they generally construct the ideal student-to-be-citizen as a passive, complacent, and a lifelong receiver of knowledge, skills, and characteristics which are beneficial to the local, national, and global economy. Furthermore, citizenship is hyper-individualized and constructed in alignment with personal responsibility (Westheimer, 2015). Overall, a technologically advanced factory model of education seems to emerge, wherein educational metaphors blend to forward the student/citizen as automaton. These constructions are legitimized through emerging themes including a quiet moral panic paired with inter and con-textual silences regarding systemic issues and barriers. I conclude that in order for education to shed its oppressive attributes for a more socially just future (Giroux, 2016; Patel, 2015; van Leeuwen, 2018), more must be done to resist neoliberal framings of education which focus narrowly on testing, standardization, closing performance gaps, and the economic return on educating students.

Although much research has used CDS frameworks to investigate educational discourses (including policy) (Fairclough, 1993; Lee, 2015; Mulderrig, 2003, 2011, 2012) around the globe, this study contributes to the small body of work in a Canadian context (Fitzgerald, 2017; Stack, 2016) and to an even smaller body of work that uses the DHA to investigate PLED (Horrod, 2020). This research has also illuminated the complexity of the *educational policyscape* (Carney, 2012) in Canada and calls for a future oriented reimagining of education policy that centres decolonial approaches and a richer and more truly active citizenship.

To all first-generation graduate students—keep going.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Alberta
AMET	Alberta Ministry of Education and Training
BC	British Columbia
BCME	British Columbia Ministry of Education
CADS	Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CDS	Critical Discourse Studies
CL	Corpus Linguistics
DHA	Discourse Historical Approach
DoE	Department of Education
FNMI	First Nations, Métis, and Inuit
GERM	Global Education Reform Movement
GoC	Government of Canada
LGBTQ2IAP+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender/sexual, Queer/Questioning, 2-spirit, Intersex, Asexual, Pansexual (plus – Non-Binary, Gender Fluid)
MoE	Ministry of Education
NS	Nova Scotia
NSDEECD	Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OME	Ontario Ministry of Education
ON	Ontario
PCAP	Pan-Canadian Assessment Programme
PE	Progressive Education
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PLED	Policy-Level Education Discourse
PLET	Policy-Level Education Text
PTC	Provincial/Territorial Corpus
QME	Québec Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement Supérieur
SFL	Systemic Functional Linguistics
SK	Saskatchewan
SME	Saskatchewan Ministry of Education
SPSC	Selected Provincial Subcorpora

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Education is fundamental to democracy and no democratic society can survive without a formative culture shaped by pedagogical practices capable of creating the conditions for producing citizens who are critical, self-reflective, knowledgeable, and willing to make moral judgements and act in a socially responsible way. (Giroux, 2016a, p. 8)

As a central tenet of modern society, education, as it has been and is considered and practiced is influenced by thousands of years of history, culture, politics, and economics. Akin to a Burkean (1941) parlour, education has long been philosophized, theorized, methodized, and of course, argued about. As such, there are several questions which have been asked for centuries and will likely continue to be asked in the future: “every society must answer them, not once and for all time but as well and conscientiously as it can for the benefit of its people and the future of the earth” (Noddings, 2016, p. 1). One of the (often implicit) questions underlying much education research and discussion regards the purpose(s) of education. Tied to the purpose of education is the audience of education. In this dissertation these questions and others will be considered in a Canadian context, within which formal education in the form of public schooling is provincially/territorially mandated (Government of Canada, 2017).

Well-known thinkers such as Aristotle, Socrates, Plato, and later, Rousseau, Kant, Locke, and Dewey have been and still are influential to the underlying structures and theories which encompass a three-dimensional foundation of the purpose of education as the facilitation and development of intellect, morality, and competent participation in society (see Chapter 2 for further discussion). In other words, as a social staple, public education is tasked not only with educating, but also with instilling values, skill building, and preparation for citizenship (Kymlicka, 1999; Lemke, 2008; Noddings, 2016; Westheimer, 2015). As Kymlicka (1999) notes, “education for citizenship is not an isolated subset of the curriculum, but rather, one of the

ordering goals or principles that shape the entire curriculum” (p. 77), and thus ideas about citizenship and society are infused within the discourses surrounding education (Westheimer, 2015). Given this, questions about “what kind of citizenship” (Westheimer, 2015) and what knowledge, skills, and characteristics will benefit present and future generations are necessary. These present and future generations are today’s and tomorrow’s students, for whom education in the form of schooling is intended. As Dewey (1907/2010) posited, “the child becomes the sun about which the appliances of education revolve; he [sic] is the center about which they are organized” (p. 16). With the child or student at the centre, a great deal of research and discussion surrounds the philosophies, theories, approaches, and practices of how best to teach for optimal learning (pedagogy), while other research focuses on the development of children and adolescents (psychology and sociology), and yet other research focuses on the scope and content of learning and its packaging (curricula and instructional design). At the level of implementation, education policy often distills parts of these fields and guides relevant systems, institutions, and stakeholders (Fenwick & Edwards, 2010; Rogers, 2011). Furthermore, as a form of discourse, policy is influential to how particular issues and/or particular groups of people are thought about and acted upon (Bacchi, 2009; Lemke, 1995; van Leeuwen, 2018).

Students are typically heavily mentioned in policy and curricula as the receivers of education, and these mentions often regard what they are meant to learn and/or accomplish within a given education system. However, even as central participants in education, students are generally *talked about* and *talked around* in a generalized and arm’s length way, or alternatively invoked and categorized through demographic information and/or dis/ability. Yet little work explicitly focuses on the discursive construction of students in educational discourses (Dunning-Lozano, 2018) and seems to be even scarcer at the policy level (Brooks, 2021). The work that

does exist is often on the boundaries or contains incidental emergences such as educational metaphors that implicate *students as* particular objects or phenomena in implicit *if, then* logics. For instance, Scheffler (1960/1991) deconstructed and compared common educational metaphors including the cultivating growth metaphor and the moulding clay metaphor, which implicate both teachers and students—if teachers are the gardeners, then students are the garden; if teachers are artisans, students are clay. More direct, is Freire’s (1996) reproach of the banking model of education which implicates students as empty vessels or containers into which knowledge is deposited. Similarly scrutinized is the factory model metaphor in which students are the raw products churned out (Cubberley, 1919; Robinson, 2010). Newer metaphors such as education as a market have emerged which implicate students, *inter alia*, as consumers, human capital, and investments/stocks (Brooks, 2021; Lee, 2015; Mulderrig, 2003), and which begin to blur or mix some of the previous metaphors. Finally, more explicit work that forays into questions of discursive constructions and framing of students often focuses on particular categories of students (e.g., international students in higher education; see Ford & Cate, 2020; Devos, 2003) and/or particular framings such as deficit (Dunning-Lozano, 2018).

Over the last few decades, those studying education with a critical eye have raised concerns over the marketization and corporatization of education (Apple, 1985, 2005, 2012; de Lissovoy, 2013, 2015; Fairclough, 1993; Giroux, 2011, 2012, 2014, 2016b; Lemke, 2007, 2008; Mulderrig, 2003, 2008, 2012; Pini, 2011; Olssen & Peters, 2005; Polster & Newson, 2015; Resnik, 2006; Rogers, 2011; Shaker, 2018a; Spooner & McNinch, 2017; Westheimer, 2015; Woodside-Jiron, 2011; Wubbena, 2016; Zhang & O’Halloran, 2013). Therein, the social institutions of education are argued to have become a product to be consumed by students, a factory model exercise in imperialist, capitalist, and neoliberal indoctrination, and lacking in

deep or meaningful engagement with the nuanced histories of peoples, cultures, colonization, and globalization and how they shape our current realities. Further still, is a lack of meaningful engagement with present and ongoing social issues as well as future imaginaries (den Heyer, 2018; Giroux, 2016ab; Westheimer 2015). Such social issues include but are not limited to the climate crisis, socioeconomic inequities, democracy, and citizenship, which increasingly require ‘all minds and hands on deck’. While a fairly critical condemnation of both public and higher education systems around the world, the overall takeaway many of the above listed scholars wish to share is that we have the *collective* capacity to transform these renderings of education to something more meaningful and capable of addressing our current moment to foment a better future—one with active citizens and a healthy democracy. Part of this work may be carried out through critical analysis of *educational policyscapes* (Carney, 2012; Fenwick & Edwards, 2010) and perhaps more critically informed policymaking (Bacchi, 2009; Ball, 2015; Patel, 2016).

Given the concerns raised, and framed within a Canadian context, the driving question at the core of my PhD research is this: In a world facing a seemingly unprecedented number of social issues—or what social scientists might call, wicked problems (West Churchman, 1967)—what does it mean for public education in Canada to facilitate active citizenship, particularly amongst a culturally-rich population? In other words, how might education systems prepare students from diverse and intersecting social groups to engage meaningfully with and attempt to resolve such issues? These questions are fettered by the social reality that I inhabit with relative privilege yet hope to disrupt—the culmination of which is considered to be the colonial and Westernized neoliberal era wherein individualism and consumption are socially practiced as the dominant ideological forms of citizenship (Fourcade, 2016, 2019; Giroux, 2016b; Hindess, 2002; Westheimer, 2015). The rest of this introductory chapter establishes the site of investigation as

policy-level education discourse (PLED), and then outlines my research questions and approach. I close this chapter with an overview of the chapters contained in this dissertation.

Policy-Level Education Discourse (PLED) as the Site of Investigation

The simplest and broadest definition of public policy, cited by many novice-oriented policy texts, can be found in Dye's (1972) assertion that public policy is what governments choose to do *or not do* (see also Colebatch, 2009; Miljan & Brooks, 2018), which can be expanded to other decision-making bodies and influenced by public discourse and a host of additional stakeholders including experts, third-party/private patrons, interest groups, grassroots activists, and so on. In other words, policy (and those involved in making it) "attempts to shape the way public life is organized" (Colebatch, 2009, p. ix). Furthermore, as Colebatch (2009) notes, policy suggests both *order* and *expertise*, and implies *authority* (pp. 8-9).

Since policy is anything that governments or organizations choose to do or not do, it might then be said that education policy is anything an education system or affiliated decision makers choose to do or not do regarding education. Education policy is thus encompassed in legislation, school acts, ministry or department texts, strategic plans and initiatives, annual reports, curricula, memoranda, practice, and more, spanning the local, school board/district, regional, provincial/state, national, private, public, and inter/supra-national levels. It is influenced by numerous stakeholders, including government, organizations, experts, teachers, students, parents, trustees, community, and the general public, and of course, can be borrowed, lent, transferred, etc. from one context or location to another (see Steiner-Khamsi & Waldow, 2012). It can be written, spoken, performed, or even left un-uttered (implicit). Furthermore, it is important to note that policy is not just the finished product (the text), but the "processes that happen prior to writing the text and what happens after it has been written (Taylor et al., 1997),

courses of action and inaction (Codd, 1998) and ‘textual interventions into practice’ (Ball, 1994, p. 18)” (Smith, 2018, p. 174). As one might gather, this means that policy can be conceptualized as nearly anything and everything. However, in leaning into the *implied authority* of policy (Colebatch, 2009), my research focuses on explicit (written) and publicly accessible policy-level education texts (PLETs) from ministries and departments of education (MoEs/DoEs) across the provinces of Canada which make up a policy-level education discourse (PLED) and part of Canada’s *educational polycyscape* (Carney, 2012; Fenwick & Edwards, 2010).

Although there may be disconnects in how policy is written versus how policy is interpreted, enacted, and/or resisted, here, discourse and discursive practices (i.e., education policies) are considered *forms of action* (van Leeuwen, 2018, emphasis in original)—in other words, they influence thoughts and actions which have material consequences (Lemke, 1995). These forms of action are thus worthy of investigation, consideration, and critique with a view toward “moral evaluation” (van Leeuwen, 2018) and/or social justice (Fairclough, 1995; Rogers, 2011)—that is, a contextualized and qualitative weighing of (potential) merits or benefits and harm or oppression in relation to power (see also Bacchi, 2009; Patel, 2016). In other words, findings of discourse analysis may be interpreted and reflected upon critically and a stance against harm and oppression can be taken up by the researcher(s)—which is common in Critical Discourse Studies (CDS), and which I use as the analytic approach in this study.

Research Questions and Approach

There are several *problematics* underscoring this study which are woven together to establish both my site of investigation and guiding research questions: 1) while there is some work dedicated to particular education policies and/or curricula within a single province (Butler, 2020; Rogers, 2018), there is little research that attempts to investigate and trace relationships

within and across multiple provinces (Action Canada, 2012; Burns, 2017; Canadian Education Association [CEA], 2014), especially without a standardizing agenda; 2) little research explicitly investigates how students are generally invoked and talked about (discursively constructed) within education policy (Brooks, 2021; Mulderrig, 2003); 3) while there is quite a bit of research on citizenship education at the curricular and/or classroom level (Butler, 2020; Butler & Milley, 2020; Heggart, 2020; Westheimer, 2015), little research explicitly investigates how citizens and citizenship are generally invoked and talked about (discursively constructed) within education policy (Lee, 2015; Lim, 2014); 4) little research attempts to explicitly connect these discursive constructions (Lee, 2015; Mulderrig, 2003); and 5) even less research (to my knowledge) has done the above in a Canadian context. With this in mind, and having collected 22 PLETs from the MoEs/DoEs across Canada, the guiding research questions and rationales for this study are:

- 1) How are citizens and citizenship discursively constructed within and across provincial policy-level education texts (PLETs) in Canada?

One of the main goals of the institution of public schooling is to prepare children for their roles as adults—that is, to educate them in and orient them to particular ways of being in society, or what is broadly understood as citizenship (Kymlicka, 1999; Marshall, 1950/1992). This includes the relevant knowledge, skills, and characteristics that are deemed important by relevant authorities and stakeholders that ultimately have a hand in shaping the content and process of educating (policy, curricula, and pedagogy). In my view, exploring this question is crucial to understanding the goals, both explicit and implicit, of education in and for Canada as it is connected to the broader world. In other words, echoing Westheimer (2015), *what kind of citizens* do these PLETs envision as acceptable, necessary, or ideal, and how do these PLETs go about defining what it means to be a citizen? Furthermore, do these texts appear to be in

conversation with one another?—that is, might we find solidarity, similarity, dissent, inconsistencies, and the like within and across these PLETs?

2) How are learners and students discursively constructed within and across provincial PLETs in Canada?

Exploring this question is dually crucial to understanding *who* (both demographically and abstractly) policymakers think learners and students *are* and *should be*, as well as in understanding the intricacies and tracing a trajectory of the learner/student to citizen. In other words, how are they described and categorized, and what is expected of them? This question also aims to explore (and potentially confront) the level and kinds of agency that students are imbued with within and across these policies. As above, I also trace the discursive construction(s) of learners and students within and across these PLETs.

In exploring the underlying key question ([above](#)) and guiding research questions with the understanding that education in Canada is provincially/territorially mandated, the express aim of my research is to critically investigate and trace connections between discursive constructions of citizens and citizenship and students and learners in PLETs at the provincial level. Furthermore, I aim not only to identify possible relationships or conversations between these policies, but to find “leverage points” (Fox, 2004), or space for meaningful recommendations and/or intervention.

Situated in the social constructionist premise that knowledge is socially co-constructed and value laden (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Engeström, 1987; Creswell, 1988), and the “hermeneutic spirit” which embraces complexity, interpretation, and emergence (Noddings, 2016, p. 76; see also Wodak & Meyer, 2016), I draw from a variety of educational and discourse-based philosophy, theories/pedagogies, and literature—which may thus be considered

a “theoretical tapestry” (Hollingsworth et al., 1993), as each are woven into the fabric of this study. Furthermore, my investigation takes a social justice approach—that is, it “contributes to (1) the examination and (2) the reduction or elimination of obstacles to economic, emotional, social, and physical well-being” (Cornelius & Harrington, 2014, pp. 7-8). I draw from these approaches primarily because they can work together to examine and triangulate the intersections and flow of power and are action oriented. Given this critical orientation and the intent to investigate multiple texts, Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) is an advantageous approach.

As a heterogeneous “school” or “paradigm”, CDS facilitates a diverse approach to research, which encompasses a constellation of disciplines, theories, frameworks, methodologies, and methods (Wodak & Meyer, 2016, p. 4). The boundaries of such a diversified approach are quite extensive, yet CDS scholars are united in questioning “common-sense assumptions” (Fairclough, 1989) through “a shared perspective on doing linguistic, semiotic or discourse analysis” (van Dijk, 1993, p. 131). This common ground includes notions of discourse, power, and ideology, as well as critique, and involves investigation at both the micro (level of the text) and macro (sociocontextual factors within which the text is produced and consumed) levels (Wodak & Meyer, 2016). Given CDS’ versatile nature, it can be adapted or combined with other frameworks or methodologies as required.

Two methodological frameworks under the umbrella of (critical) discourse studies that I have paired for this study are the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) (Reisigl & Wodak, 2016) and Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS). As its name suggests, the DHA places emphasis on the “historical anchoring” (Reisigl, 2018, p. 49) of texts and discourses—that is, interpreting the data within and through its socio-historical context(s). The DHA is useful for this study because it offers built-in focus on discursive constructions and social actors (see Chapter

6). Due to the number of PLETs I have collected and the specificity of my research focus, CADS is a practical choice (Baker, 2006; Mautner, 2016). CADS, which is aided by computer software, allows for the investigation of linguistic patterns and particular queries across large and/or multiple texts. It further lends a quantitative edge to (predominantly qualitative) discourse analysis through its ability to generate statistics about the data (Marchi & Taylor, 2018; Subtirelu & Baker, 2018). In combining these two frameworks, this study contributes a distinctive approach to investigating policy-level education discourse.

Overview of the Chapters and Note to Readers

The dissertation is organized accordingly: In establishing the epistemological basis for this study, Chapter 2 overviews the underpinnings of modern education, the goals of public education, citizenship and education, and modern education theories and trends including Progressive Education, Critical Education, and Neoliberal Education. Chapter 3 discusses relevant scholarly literature on the discourses of education and further delineates the boundaries of education policy. It also reviews relevant research including critical discourse studies in education policy as well as the discursive construction of students. In following the Discourse-Historical Approach, Chapter 4 provides a brief history and contextualization of education in Canada and maps the goals of education discussed in Chapter 2 onto this historical trajectory.

In Chapter 5, I describe the historical significance of, objectives, and theoretical concepts embedded within CDS, relating the latter to the purposes of this study. Establishing the methodological framework for this study, Chapter 6 explicates the DHA's theoretical considerations and analytic concepts and tools (Reisigl & Wodak, 2016), followed by a parallel section on CADS and its usefulness for this study. Various relevant discourse and corpus analytic tools, terms, and concepts are also defined. Chapter 7 details the methods of data

collection and analysis which includes the defining criteria and procedure of finding the data as well as describing the corpus-assisted software, procedures, and subsequent critical discourse analytic process.

Chapter 8 investigates the discursive constructions of *citizens* and *citizenship*, and *students* and *learners* in provincial policy-level education texts (PLETs) in Canada. This chapter first establishes some of the themes and patterns of the provincial/territorial corpus (PTC) as a whole, followed by findings of six selected provincial subcorpora (SPSC): British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Québec, and Nova Scotia. Each of these subsections are organized by research question and follow an expository style wherein respective excerpts are listed and critically analyzed, unpacked, and interpreted within their immediate and broader context(s). This style accounts for the extensive length of the chapter. Finally, Chapter 9 discusses and synthesizes the findings and emergences that arose out of critical reflection, and then concludes the dissertation with the limitations and contributions of my research as well as suggestions for future research and reflections on future orientations to education policy.

A couple notes to the reader on the rhetorical and generic aspects of this dissertation: Although mostly adhering to traditional structures/organization, there is not a single literature review chapter. Rather, given the interdisciplinary and interdiscursive nature of the topic and content of this study, the literature is woven into many chapters and sections throughout. Similarly, this study was carried out with attention to reflexive praxis (Freire, 1996) and openness to emergence, which is reflected throughout the dissertation, but especially in the final chapter.

CHAPTER 2: THE UNDERPINNINGS OF MODERN EDUCATION—GOALS AND THEORIES

Ignoring theory is an invitation to ignorance. Adopting only one theory simply raises prejudice to another level. (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 83)

For reasons no doubt relating to my own person and to the state of the world, I have come to believe that those who have the good fortune to be able to devote their lives to the study of the social world cannot stand aside, neutral and indifferent, from the struggles in which the future of that world is at stake. (Bourdieu, 2003, p. 11)

In order to establish a conceptual map from which modern, Westernized public education stems and has evolved, this chapter reviews and critically engages with some of the philosophical, theoretical, and purpose-driven underpinnings of both society and education. It must also be noted that this discussion is not exhaustive as these histories could span multiple books on their own. I begin with a brief discussion of the philosophical influences of education in the form of public schooling, move into a conceptualization of the goals of education, which lay the groundwork for a discussion of citizenship. I follow these discussions with a review of prominent educational theories and trends which lend themselves to modern education policy. While there may be a tendency to view these topics as separate entities, they can be traced back abstractly to the concept of Greek *polis*—that is, “a community of citizens inhabiting a city” (Hansen, 2006, p. 59) or city-state, and accordingly, its/their purposes, structures, and goings-on (e.g., polity, policy, and politics—all of which are etymological derivations of *polis*) (Colebatch, 2009). These facets largely make up the governance of the city, province/state, and nation, and are subsequently mirrored in conceptualizations of education as an envisioning of society, both as it exists and as it ought to (Lemke, 2008; Westheimer, 2015). As Levin and Young (2000) suggest, “no one who is to be involved in schooling can afford to ignore the power exercised

through these structures and processes” (p. 48), and this chapter aims to touch on salient aspects of such structures as they have evolved over time.

From Ancient Greece to the Enlightenment

Picking up from the brief discussion of education in the introductory chapter, this section highlights some of the past’s major contributions to modern education with a critical lens, beginning with the philosophical musings of ancient and enlightenment philosophers. Although best known for his advancement of rhetoric, politics, and social constructs, Aristotle is also influential to the underlying drive for education and educational theory (Brumbaugh & Lawrence, 1959). Aristotle “interpret[ed] human ‘happiness’ in terms of virtue, and assign[ed] education a major role in the development of virtue” (Brumbaugh & Lawrence, 1959, p. 3). Accordingly, moral education, or what is now typically referred to as “character education”, can be traced to Aristotle, taken up by Plato, as well as Kant, and adapted by Dewey (Noddings, 2016; see also Jonas, 2016). Aristotle’s pre-enlightenment ethics were concerned with virtues which were required to achieve and nurture “the good life” (Noddings, 2016, p. 146). As a utopian model of society, Plato’s *Republic* (again, etymologically traceable to *polis*) considers the process of education in relation to effective participation in the community. Notably, Plato advocated for education based on capacity, yet sorted these capacities into three *functionalist* categories—rulers (philosophers), soldiers, and labourers. This model—also picked up by Durkheim—connects intellect with competent, moral, and functional participation in society, which is a prominent educational ideal today (see below). For Durkheim, schooling was meant to not only to promote functional participation in society but to attain “society’s [ever evolving] ideal conception of itself” (Holmes, 1985, p. 10). Just as this ideal societal conception is ever-evolving, so too is the meaning of functional or competent participation in society.

The Middle Ages emphasized morality/moral education through “ethical orthodoxy”—the authority of the church (Noddings, 2016, p. 150). In other words, morality was monopolized by the church and rooted in the idea that humans would suffer on earth, obey god and the church, and subsequently be rewarded in the afterlife or heaven. The Enlightenment (1650s-1780s) was in a sense, a rebellion from this authoritative ethical orthodoxy. This period enshrined the freedom of the individual through reason and logic and was highly influenced by Kant. Much of Kant’s moral philosophy was connected to logic, individualism, and autonomy, and forwarded absolute principles and laws (Noddings, 2016, p. 151-152). While Kant’s influence is still visible in today’s discourses, many including Descartes debated such prescriptive ethics. Though Descartes also emphasized the knowledge and autonomy of the individual, he—unlike Kant—recognized that humans are not only or always logical; rather, they have attachments, emotions, and affiliations, which influence their individual or autonomous decisions (Noddings, 2016).

Furthermore, Utilitarianism—which focuses on the greatest good, with the aim to optimize “the ratio of happiness over pain” (Noddings, 2016, p. 153)—also grew out of the Enlightenment period. Here, happiness is aligned with Aristotle’s philosophy of happiness as virtue, while also adapting Kantian ethics to a more context sensitive practice. However, critiques of Utilitarianism hinge on the rejection of hypothetical deliberations about sacrificing a few to save the many (see Noddings, 2016). In education, this can be traced to catering to the majority and allowing certain individuals and groups—largely those who are ‘othered’ by Eurocentric hegemony—to fall through the cracks. On this note—in the time in which I write this¹ and in the spirit of solidarity—it strikes me as incredibly important to point out that the Enlightenment and the values it enshrined, which still permeate our social realities, developed

¹ In the wake of COVID-19, the civil reckoning of the Black Lives Matter movement against police brutality and white supremacy, and the continued colonial violence against Indigenous peoples and the lands we inhabit.

exclusionary and frankly racist, sexist, and ableist human taxonomies which encoded the white/caucasian, affluent male at the top of the hierarchy (Bouie, 2018; Mills, 2017; see also Evans & Wilson, 2016). In fact, Kant wrote that “humanity exists in its greatest perfection in the white race. The yellow Indians have a smaller amount of Talent. The Negroes are lower and the lowest are a part of the American peoples” (as cited in Mills, 2017, p. 95).² And as Bouie (2018) argues, Kant’s “racial theorizing can’t simply be divorced from the moral philosophy for which he’s hailed” (para. 10), nor should it be. Yet time and again, ‘good’ ideas are pedestaled and the less palatable are left unmentioned or unacknowledged, which in effect silences and erases their legacy of oppression and violence—in turn, perpetuating this violence. To be sure, the Liberalism that also underscores modern visions of education, was also founded in these values, and Bouie concludes that to dismiss these paradoxes “is to prefer hagiography to truth” (para. 20). While we cannot simply shelve or ignore the thinking and progress of our predecessors, we must acknowledge the faults and harm perpetuated by them if we are to move forward in a conciliatory way.

Though the above paragraphs barely scratch the surface, they do illustrate some examples of how ideas about education have developed and built from one another over the past several millennia—what may be referred to as generative themes as conceptualized by Freire (1996; see also Straubhaar, 2019). In looking closely at the structures and systems of education (at least, in Western contexts), one can pick out or trace these underpinnings, and possibly see how they intersect, entwine, and sometimes clash with one another. It follows then, that these

² Charles W. Mills (not to be confused with Charles Wright Mills) writes about Kant’s *Untermenschen* (subhuman), borrowing from Eze (1997) and Bernasconi (2002) who note that Kant conceptualized the first ‘scientific’ definition and taxonomy of race in his lesser known/popularized lectures and writings: *Anthropology from a pragmatic point of view* (a collection of lectures; 1974) and “on the different races of man”.

underpinnings also foreground and inform the goals, theories, concepts, and assumptions of education, which are explored in the next section.

Goals of Public Schooling

While arguments about how education in the form of public schooling should be implemented are common in both academic and public arenas, there is typically an agreement (based in a functionalist ontology) that education should instil both practical and abstract knowledge to prepare the next generations for their futures (Lemke, 2007, p. 52; Westheimer, 2015; Young & Muller, 2016). However, as Young and Muller (2016, p. 108) note (but mostly disregard), there is often a tension or dichotomy in the implicit or hidden goals or purposes of schooling: that of *emancipation* versus *domination*. Yet, my reading and research has led me to believe that the histories and philosophies of schooling are not so neatly packaged as one or the other, but rather contain both, even simultaneously.

Noting Connelly and Clandinin's (1984) six perspectives on schooling,³ Holmes (1985) embeds his six functions of secondary school in a hybrid of the *structural-functionalist* and *societal* perspectives—that is, he “examine[s] the functions of the school in terms of the role the school plays within the larger society” (p. 9). These six functions are: allocative, custodial, intellectual-vocational, socializing, aesthetic, and physical. The allocative function emphasizes the “relationship between amount and type of schooling and future job and income” (Holmes, 1985, p. 17), while the custodial function manages the whereabouts of adolescents. The intellectual-vocational function is made up of the acquisition of knowledge, skill development, and vocational training and the socializing function refers to the development of particular values and characteristics. The aesthetic function promotes the appreciation of the arts, and finally, the

³ Holmes lists these as analytic, portrait, narrative, structural, intentional, and societal. These were presented at a conference and unfortunately, I have been unable to find the original source.

physical function promotes an active/healthy lifestyle. Barrow (1981) developed a similar—yet seemingly more in line with critical pedagogy (see below)—list of functions which include “critical thinking, socialization, childcare, vocational preparation, physical instruction, social-role selection, education of the emotions, and development of creativity” (Levin & Young, 2000, p. 51). These functions—contextualized by the above underpinnings of education, themes in education policy (next chapter), the history of education in Canada (Chapter 4), and today’s social reality—can be distilled or conceptualized into three broad strands or pillars—character development, intellectual pursuit, and economic pursuit. Following the strand metaphor, it can be difficult to tease them apart as they typically occur simultaneously and with varying degrees of emphasis. These three purposes of education are detailed below.

Character Development

Character education draws roots from moral education (discussed above)—the purposes of which are largely to instill the values of the current and future society (Noddings, 2016). This of course, can range from the separation of *right and wrong*, to social norms, to the desired or ideal characteristics, values, and/or traits of individuals within said society—and formal education often incorporates all of these (Lemke, 2008; Noddings, 2016; Westheimer, 2015). Characteristics put forward by both public and academic discourses are typically those of a useful (functionalist) nature, or as Baehr (2017) puts it, such characteristics are valued “in terms of their *usefulness* across a range of different contexts or pursuits” (p. 1157, emphasis in original). There are, of course, a multitude of theorizations, frameworks, criticisms of, and alternatives to traditional character education—most of which adapt Aristotelean and/or

Christian virtues⁴ and subscribe to varying degrees of universalism—a selection of which I discuss below.

Peterson and Seligman’s (2004) handbook “aspirationally” (p. 6) classifies a host of interconnected character strengths and 24 constituent virtues from a positive psychology perspective and puts forward the argument that “character strengths are the bedrock of the human condition and that strength-congruent activity represents an important route to the psychological good life” (p. 4). These character strengths are listed as wisdom and knowledge, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence (see Figure 19 in Appendix A). While this handbook is not focused on education in or cultivation of such strengths and virtues in a school setting, it may be a source of reference for the collection(s) of character traits that can be found in education policies and curricula around the globe, which is my purpose for including it. However, Peterson and Seligman are careful to explain that this classification system is not and should not be used as a taxonomy (p. 6), nor are they resistant to the inevitable need to update and adapt their classifications based on relevant contextual and/or research developments.

Furthermore, they provide ten criteria to *measure* such strengths which may be considered both helpful and somewhat problematic insofar as it may be used for less than altruistic or educative purposes—for example, the over-zealous assessment of students and workers and/or (for) the ascription of cultural and/or social capital (discussed [below](#); see Bourdieu, 1986; Fourcade, 2016, 2019). For instance, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2019) released a *Conceptual learning framework* specifically on *Attitudes and values for 2030*, which outlines four classifications of values including personal, social, societal, and human (p. 4), and lists human dignity, respect, equality,

⁴ Although there is a historical tie between moral education and religion, this discussion will not move into such territory.

justice, responsibility, global-mindedness, cultural diversity, freedom, and tolerance and democracy as core values.

Less ambitious than Peterson and Seligman, Baehr (2017) conceptualizes four “characterological domains” which include Aristotle’s moral and civic virtues, as well as intellectual and performance virtues (p. 1154). Here virtue is less associated with ethical righteousness and better understood as aptitudes or excellences. Moral virtues align with being a good neighbour, or a concern with alleviating suffering (qualities such as compassion, generosity, and charity), while civic virtues align with being a good citizen, or a concern with the well-being of society (qualities such as community-mindedness, tolerance, and civility) (p. 1153 and 1156). Intellectual virtues, not to be mistaken for intellectual abilities, are associated with what it means to be a good thinker, learner, and knowledge sharer. Relevant qualities include open-mindedness, curiosity, and attentiveness, as well as intellectual carefulness and thoroughness. Performance virtues are concerned with the ability to “successfully complete complex and challenging tasks across a range of ‘performance’ contexts (e.g., from school to work to athletics)” (p. 1156). Relevant characteristics include, patience, self-discipline, tenacity, resilience, and grit (p. 1154). Baehr also cautions that the latter (intellectual and performance) must be complemented or balanced by the former (civic and moral), borrowing Theodore Roosevelt’s aphorism, “to educate a man in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace [to] society” (p. 1159; see discussion on Intellectual Pursuit below).

In contrast, Ferkany and Creed (2014) list and categorize some of the common or “stock” (p. 574) criticisms of character education—behaviourist, situationist, developmental, decision-making, victim blaming, and cultural imperialist (pp. 572-573; see Appendix A for expanded table of criticisms). However, they mainly dismiss these criticisms in relation to “Intellectualist

Aristotlean Character Education” (IACE), and what they perceive as mis-reading the 1990s character education movement as univocal (p. 574). They debate with each of these criticisms individually, ultimately concluding that the IACE “is not guilty of some of the worst charges against character education” (p. 587), through what seems to be a purist and anti-relativist logic—apparently a trend amongst stalwart moral/character educationists (see Etzioni, 1998; Pamental, 2010). That is, they believe that IACE in its purest form is ostensibly not behaviourist, culturally imperialist, ableist, and the like, though they do acknowledge that it is not always practised as such. Yet they dismiss accusations of imperialism or essentialism for a kind of warm-and-fuzzy universalism-lite in which particular traits are necessary for “human flourishing” as opposed to “flourishing Americans or Brits” (p. 581).

Ferkany and Creed’s heel-digging is redeemed somewhat by a pointed digression on the state of schooling:

A flaw, we submit, in many current iterations of (quasi) Aristotelian character education is that they equate flourishing and virtue in a way that obscures the fact that a flourishing life does not consist so much in being a high-achieving, gainfully employed Goody Two-shoes, but in wholeheartedly valuing and enjoying the best and most important things in life, such as friendship and family, creativity, and justice. In obscuring this fact, the full critical potential of a thoroughgoing IACE is effaced; as we argued earlier, IACE as a model for public schools, if faithfully implemented, should have quite radical implications for school policy. (p. 582)

Such candidness is appreciated, but I had rather hoped to read a more meaningful engagement and possible reconciling with the criticisms presented (

Table 33). In fact, this digression is quite similar to Kohn's (1997) major criticism of character education, which received a wave of backlash (see Etzioni, 1998), and which appears in Ferkany and Creed's list of criticisms. Kohn (1997) writes,

What goes by the name of character education nowadays is, for the most part, a collection of exhortations and extrinsic inducements designed to make children work harder and do what they're told. Even when other values are also promoted — caring or fairness, say — the preferred method of instruction is tantamount to indoctrination. The point is to drill students in specific behaviors rather than to engage them in deep, critical reflection about certain ways of being. (p. 429)

All opined differences aside, these excerpts show an agreement that character education, in whichever form and method, should do more than produce polite and obedient worker bees (see also Janks, 2014; Lemke, 2007; Westheimer, 2010, 2015). Furthermore, there is an overlap in many of the characteristics listed by the above scholars. Fortunately, other education scholars offer further engagement with such criticisms and/or alternatives.

Noddings (2002) offers an alternative to character education (or virtue ethics) in the form of *care ethics* through a virtue of care which is less concerned with explicitly teaching virtues, and uninterested in “allowing a core of powerful authorities to establish a fixed set of approved virtues and values” (p. 23)—for instance, the OECD's (2019) list above. Rather, care ethics is interested in “establishing conditions likely to encourage goodness” (p. 1)—which may abstractly align with Kingston's (2019) discussion of citizenship modeled around human rights ([below](#)). Noddings quickly distinguishes some of the differences between virtue ethics and care ethics, including that care ethicists may be more inclined to facilitate critical thinking. Though from her perspective, the key difference is that care ethics “is relation-centered rather than agent-centered, and it is more concerned with the caring relation than with caring as a virtue” (p. 2). She also emphasizes the reciprocal nature of relationships which centre on a carer-receiver

dynamic such as parent-child, teacher-student, and physician-patient which tend to be considered mainly unidirectional. Here, critical scholars may pause to ask about power, for which the indirect answer seems to again fall into the realm of purism—that is, if a programme of care ethics is fully embraced and practised as intended, power, or perhaps more accurately, dominance, will not interfere. In establishing this query, I do not mean to denigrate the optimism embedded within Nodding's approach, but rather raise this inevitability as something for (potential) adopters to both acknowledge and grapple with.

Guided by critical theory and pedagogy (Freire, 1996; see below), others discuss character in relation to critical consciousness as well as engaged and/or social-justice oriented citizenship (Giroux, 2016ab; Janks, 2014; Lemke, 2008; Westheimer, 2015). A discussion of these approaches will continue below, but with space in mind, I now turn to intellectual pursuit.

Intellectual Pursuit

Intellectual pursuit can be connected to the search for truth (whatever that *truth* may be). Perhaps unsurprisingly, there are centuries, millennia even, worth of debate about what truth is, if we can know it and/or experience it, how we can know it, if it is subjective, objective, omniscient, or even non-existent, and a host of other lofty and important questions (Abel, 2008; Noddings, 2016). The drive to ask and answer the questions of the universe and to continually strive for progress is seemingly universally understood and pursued and is a heavily romanticized trope across the globe. However, like character development, intellectual pursuit is not without its flaws: much harm has been done (to humans, animals, and the earth) in the name of this search for truth or answers. Furthermore, the debates about objectivity versus subjectivity through patriarchal and colonial practice have barred women and non-whites from participating in such intellectual pursuit throughout history (see Solnit, 2014; see also Daston, 1995; Jagger,

2008; Lynch, 2010). As we might guess, intellectual pursuit requires intellectual development—that is, knowledge and know-how are thought to beget answers, solutions, and truth. And in most of the Westernized world, (official) knowledge is bestowed, shared, and developed through education in the form of schooling.

Young and Muller (2016) distinguish between the “knowledge of the powerful” and “powerful knowledge”—the first relates to what counts as knowledge, who defines what counts as knowledge, and who has access to that knowledge, while the second relates to “what knowledge can do”, or in other words how useful it is (pp. 109-110). This “knowledge of the powerful” terminology initially recalled Apple’s (2000) *Official Knowledge* which is concerned with the politics of the legitimization of ‘knowledge’, especially in the neoliberal era; however, Young and Muller do not cite Apple, and instead equate powerful knowledge with specialist knowledge, which is largely of a context-independent or theoretical/abstract nature (pp. 110-111). They argue that teachers must be specialists who impart knowledge that cannot be learned at home or in everyday life.

In formal education, knowledge is typically broken into disciplines and subjects. The structuring of education through subject-based teaching stretches back at least 2000 years to Plato’s era (Noddings, 2016), and Lemke (2007) reports that this structure was prominent even 4000 years ago in Sumerian and Mesopotamian societies. Furthermore, this structure is influenced by the philosophical debates mentioned above and has largely fueled the division of the arts and sciences (Noddings, 2016; Robinson, 2010; Westheimer, 2015; see also Kuhn, 1962). Not surprisingly, arguments about which subjects are more valuable to or useful for the pursuit of answers and solutions to the world’s wicked problems (West Churchman, 1967) influence what gets taught, funded, and encouraged. This also contributes to the standardization

of knowledge or content, as well as standardization of achievement through testing and assessment, especially for literacy and mathematics (Apple, 1985; Giroux, 2011; Lemke, 2007, 2008). More and more, the knowledge considered valuable must align with and/or drive the economy (Apple, 2004), which marks an opportune segue into economic pursuit.

Economic Pursuit

Drawing from functionalist and utilitarian models (Noddings, 2016), the economic argument for education permeates more recent (about 200-300 years) purposes of education. In functionalist terms, a society in which citizens fulfill all the necessary roles and duties (without disdain) is central to ideal visions of society. This is furthered by a utilitarian invocation of ‘the greater good,’ in which each role is necessary for the collective/*polis* (society, nation, state, locality) to survive and thrive. However, the development of capitalism and neoliberalism has entwined a competitive and individualistic thread, in which citizens must compete for their roles, for their own survival, and for the survival of the collective (Apple, 2004; Giroux, 2016b; Mulderrig, 2008; Saunders & Ramirez, 2017). In this model, education is connected to the various roles (jobs) that need to be fulfilled within a given region, nation, and/or society. The shift to the knowledge-based economy (KBE) or society has also shifted the weight of emphasis on characteristics, knowledge, and skills that are conducive to job acquisition and market stimulation (Apple, 2004; Giroux, 2011; Mulderrig, 2008; Stitzlein, 2015). This is further discussed in the section on neoliberal education below, but to summarize these three interconnected goals of education inform and are informed by ideas about citizenship.

Citizenship

Like most of the pieces/threads of this dissertation, citizenship has its own vast and interdisciplinary areas of study, and while I cannot touch on everything, I attempt to summarise

its main and most salient aspects. As mentioned above, the etymology of the word citizenship can be traced back to *Polis*, and its conceptualization described as the symbiotic relationship between a citizen and their community. Generally, when one thinks of citizenship, they think about nationality and residency, and sometimes the rights, protections, and responsibilities that are tied to such residency (à la John Stuart Mill)—which taken together may demarcate membership. It is easily understood that membership imposes insider and outsider status, and those interested may subsequently hop into (potentially polarizing) discussions about legality and constitutions, immigration, and even colonization, or to more abstract discussions of personhood, identity, and human rights. And thorough discussions might highlight the intersections, connections, and barriers between these various aspects as T.H. Marshall's (1950/1992) *Citizenship and social class* and Lindsey Kingston's (2019) *Fully Human* do.

In tracing the history of citizenship, Marshall (1950/1992) conceptualized its three interrelated elements—civil, political, and social. The civil element demarcates the civil rights and protections associated with legal constitutions such as individual autonomy including freedom of thought, speech, and faith, as well as property rights, the right to work,⁵ and the “right to justice” of a legal nature (p. 8), while the political element relates to suffrage and participation in the political sphere via parliament and/or local governmental councils (p. 8). The social element might be considered a catchall for the rest—including community and cultural participation, education, social services, and workers' rights—but is also Marshall's springboard for criticism of the class lines carved by capitalism of the industrial revolution. In fact, he argued that “citizenship has itself become, in certain respects, the architect of legitimate social inequality,” stemming from socio-economic struggles in the Elizabethan period/end of the 18th

⁵ Here, Marshall discusses the right to work in terms of choosing one's occupation and not being excluded from a profession based on class or station (pp. 10-11).

century,⁶ and carrying on through the imposition of social class (p. 7). As Marshall describes it, citizenship is

[...] a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community. All who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed. There is no universal principle that determines what those rights and duties shall be, but societies in which citizenship is a developing institution create an image of an ideal citizenship against which achievement can be measured and towards which aspiration can be directed. (p. 18)

Yet citizenship as we recognize it developed alongside capitalism (discussed further below) and its emphasis on social class, which is ultimately a system of inequality (p. 18). And rather than continually clashing against one another (though there are instances), Marshall explains how the two have largely worked in tandem with one another through the development of social safety nets such as access to healthcare, pensions, and minimum wages which round out some of the edges of poverty, but do not conflict with existing class stratification.

Marshall notes that the development of the elements of citizenship throughout the 19th century did little to ameliorate social inequality, but it did lay the groundwork for the “egalitarian policies of the twentieth century” (p. 24)—the granting of an equality of status and of opportunity—which had an integrating and loyalizing effect, spurring the development of nationalism as an aspect of citizenship (pp. 24-25). From there “social integration spread from the sphere of sentiment and patriotism into that of material enjoyment” (p. 28), which we may recognize as the driver of today’s consumer-oriented or neoliberal citizenship (Giroux, 2011; Hindess, 2002; Lee, 2015; Wilkins, 2002).

⁶ Marshall details the establishment and failure of the *Poor Law*—originally “the aggressive champion of the social rights of citizenship” (p. 15)—which sought to establish what we know as universal basic income, but was degraded into a hollowed out version that disenfranchised those who accessed it (pp. 14-15). He contends that the, “Poor Law was an aid, not a menace, to capitalism, because it relieved industry of all social responsibility outside the contract of employment, while sharpening the edge of competition in the labour market” (p. 21).

Though researchers and the general public alike may discuss and strive for universal human rights wherein no person nor group is discriminated against for their inherent and/or chosen identities, and in which all persons are treated fairly and with dignity, and granted citizenship to whichever locale they wish to call home, social reality and social ideals are not one in the same, and are at this time, far from united. As Kingston (2019) points out, barriers to such idealisms “arise because *hierarchies of personhood*—inequalities that render some people more ‘worthy’ than others for protections and political membership—have been created and perpetuated around the world,”⁷ and explains that they “threaten the *rights to place and purpose* that make a life of human dignity possible” (p. 5, emphasis in original). A life of human dignity (or *the good life*) may have infinite and individual permutations, yet generally include the basic necessities which afford participation including freedom of identity and association, adequate shelter, food, and water, and access to social infrastructures such as education, community, healthcare, and the economy.⁸ However, today, such a life generally requires adequate levels of capital. Bourdieu (1986) conceptualized three types of capital: economic, cultural, and social—all of which require labour (in some form or other) and all of which he equates with interchangeable and exchangeable forms of power. He describes these three types summarily:

Depending on the field in which it functions, and at the cost of the more or less expensive transformations which are the precondition for its efficacy in the field in question, capital can present itself in three fundamental guises: as economic capital, which is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the form of property rights; as cultural capital, which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications; and as

⁷ As illustrated above in my critique of the Enlightenment.

⁸ Here, one might be inclined to recall Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs apart from its elitist and behaviourist aspirations.

social capital, made up of social obligations and may be institutionalized in the form of a title of nobility. (1986, p. 16)

While Bourdieu's conceptualization separates social and cultural capital, it seems in the 21st century as though the boundaries between social and cultural capital have become blurred to a point where they are often inextricably entwined. For example, although most of the Western world has moved away from official titles of nobility, titles associated with one's qualifications, profession and/or membership to certain institutions or organizations tend to equate with prestige, power, and mobility and are associated with particular economic echelons or potential. In modern society, the hyper-emphasis on capital in relation to monetary value or potential subsumes other forms of capital—as Bourdieu states, “the different types of capital can be derived from economic capital” (p. 24)—in other words, social and cultural capital (among others) are typified as vehicles to economic capital. For this reason, and for the general purposes of this dissertation, I adopt the term socio-cultural capital. In bringing these conceptualizations together, it may be understood that in our current time, capital and citizenship are iteratively and generatively bound.

Fourcade's (2016, 2019) work functions to explicate *how* these two inform one another. Fourcade (2019) notes that “the language of citizenship in the 21st century is a strange melding of self-sufficiency and capability, of autonomy and inclusion”; in other words: “the halo of citizenship now encompasses not only one's status as a member of a political community, but also as a worker, as a consumer, as a cultural other, as a biological and sexual being” (8:11-8:23). While this may not sound far from the above discussion, the problems herein lie with the assumptions surrounding inability and/or barriers to access, as well as what such access means in practice. Fourcade (2016, 2019) argues that the many parts that make up citizenship have been ordinalized, that is, classified, imbued with meaning (as Marshall discusses), and ranked in

accordance with Neoliberal values. Furthermore, personhood as citizenship has been uploaded to the digital sphere wherein every aspect of behaviour/habits, preference, level and types of engagement etc. are surveilled, monitored, and algorithmed to determine citizenship status relative to socio-cultural capital and predict potential future behaviour (Fourcade, 2019; see also Brayne, 2020). Fourcade (2019) calls this the “entanglement between digitization, financial inclusion, measured worth, and social citizenship” (39:46-39:55), all of which inform the critical lens of this research.

In the spirit of staying on the topic of education, for the purposes of this research, citizenship (though containing all the potential discussions just mentioned and more) is meant generically as membership to society and the social constructs within said society, be they of a local, national, or global nature. In other words, citizenship supposes personhood and some form of participation in social reality. The purpose of my research is to determine how that citizenship is constructed by the PLETs I have collected—that is, what characteristics, behaviours, and actions (kinds of participation) these policies see and encode as desirable for the education and society they envision.

Education and Citizenship

Akin to Progressive Educationists such as Dewey, Marshall (1950/1992) argues that education is a “prerequisite of civil freedom”, a “genuine social right of citizenship” (p. 16); but more importantly touches on an interesting notion derived from the late 19th and early 20th century prior to education becoming compulsory, which he ultimately rejects:

It is easy to say that the recognition of the right of children to be educated does not affect the status of citizenship any more than does the recognition of the right of children to be protected from overwork and dangerous machinery, simply because *children, by definition, cannot be citizens*. (p. 16, emphasis added)

The notion that children are not considered citizens is important to my findings as its residue can be found in within the policy level education discourse (PLED) I have collected and analyzed. Marshall instead contends that while children are not yet self-sufficient nor capable of exercising their full capacity as citizens, institutionalized education “[...] has the requirements and the nature of citizenship definitely in mind. It is trying to stimulate the growth of citizens in the making,” [...] “to shape the future adult” (p. 16). And moreover, the recognition that a rapidly progressing industrial society required educated workers and that “political democracy needed an educated electorate” (p. 16) is what drove the educational movement from voluntary to compulsory. He goes so far as to say that elementary education (a social element of citizenship) was an aid to capitalism “because it increased the value of the worker without educating him above his station” [sic] (p. 21). In other words, here, education functions as a mechanism of social control. Marshall’s work is seminal in critically conceptualizing the Western understanding of citizenship. With regard to practical and practiced citizenship education, I turn to Westheimer, whose work has been largely influential to mine.

Most of the ‘citizenship education’ learners are exposed to in schools is implicit—that is, most of the ways students learn to be members of their immediate and broader communities is absorbed through the structures and routines of daily schooling. Or as Westheimer (2015) puts it,

Even without specific classes in citizenship, government, character, or life skills, how the classroom is organized, the architecture of the school, the daily schedule, as well as the procedures and rules all have embedded lessons about how one should best behave in order to be a good community member, classmate, student, and so on. (p. 37)

Educators and education scholars may recognize this as part of the hidden curriculum. In addition, Westheimer also examines and discusses explicit lessons and programs in citizenship.

Through this work, Westheimer (2015) categorizes and details three different “visions” of citizenship that are embedded within educational goals and practices: personally responsible citizenship, participatory citizenship, and social-justice oriented citizenship. A personally responsible citizen (PRC) follows the rules and obeys the law, maintains employment and pays their taxes, recycles and picks up litter, donates blood, and might volunteer their time (pp. 38-40). The participatory citizen (PC) “actively participate[s] in the civic affairs and the social life of the community at local, state, and national levels” (p. 40). They have learned *how* the government works and may “engage in collective, community-based efforts” such as community and/or religious organizations and organizing and on-the-ground work (Westheimer, 2015, pp. 39-40). The social justice-oriented citizen (SJOC) may critically consider underlying issues from “multiple perspectives” (p. 40)—what problems exist locally and globally—and look for and implement actionable solutions. Westheimer (2015) notes that educational programs that promote the SJOC “are less likely to emphasize the need for charity and volunteerism as ends in themselves, and more likely to teach ways to effect systemic change” (pp. 40-41). To simply illustrate examples of all three, Westheimer explains that a personally responsible citizen might donate to a food drive, a participatory citizen might organize and run the food drive, and a social justice-oriented citizen explores the systemic or root causes of hunger in that locale and acts to make changes (p. 39). Although aspects of all three of these models of citizenship may be recognized within many education systems and practices, the teaching of PRC is typically the most prevalent (Westheimer, 2015; see also Butler & Milley, 2020). Furthermore, both PC and SJOC are connected to concepts and practices of critical pedagogy/education (Westheimer, 2015). While Westheimer’s (2015) analytic focus is on explicit citizenship curricula and programming, I aim to illuminate these conceptualizations in education policy as they can help

reveal the underlying values of education systems across Canada. The next and final section of this chapter discusses modern education theories, particularly Progressive Education, Critical Education, and Neoliberal Education.

Modern Education Theories and Trends

Although there are virtually infinite theories and approaches to education, the three detailed below are ubiquitous. These theories and trends (in practice) in education are often simultaneously present in education discourses including policy.

Progressive Education

Building from Locke's and Rousseau's Enlightenment thinking, the Progressive Education (PE) movement formed in the early 20th century and was championed by John Dewey (Hartman, 2007). Dewey (1916/2005) viewed education in its broadest sense as "the means of the social continuity of life" (p. 4) and argued that educational means and ends are inextricably linked, which in simple terms means that what and how we teach is bound to be emulated and reproduced. However, Wotherspoon (2009) notes PE was also influenced by Marx, Liberal theory, and the sociological work of Jane Addams, who "promoted social improvement co-operation and democratic social ethics, integrating education, social theory, and community-based practice in order to encourage the collective realization of social benefits for all members of society" (p. 26). The PE movement shifted the emphasis from a traditionalist, authoritarian, and narrow curriculum and corporal disciplining of children's minds and bodies to a broader and less rigid curriculum and teaching approach, or what is generally called a student-centred approach (Hartman, 2007; Wotherspoon, 2009). This broadening of the curriculum, wherein students learned core literacy and subjects (such as maths, English, and sciences) alongside topics such as physical education/health, arts, social studies, and so on was likely influential to

the goals of school outlined by Holmes (1981) and Barrow (1985) discussed above, and also aligned with some of the character virtues mentioned above.

Based in the assumption that interest begets motivation, PE has concerned itself with allowing students to explore their individual interests and develop their knowledge and skills along those interests (Dewey, 1916/2005; Noddings, 2016). Some of the central pedagogical and curricular tenets of PE are constructive alignment and/or backwards design (Biggs & Tang, 2007, 2011; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005), scaffolding, collaborative learning by doing (e.g., experiential learning), lifelong learning and social skills, personalization, variety in learning sources, democratic practice, and more recently, an emphasis on inclusivity/universality.

However, Hartman (2007) points out that from PE's initial formation which viewed education for social efficiency (order) and social democracy (justice) as "mutually constitutive", a rift emerged creating two separate PE camps: education for order and education for justice. The first appears to be taken up by the neoliberal movement, while the second was taken up by critical pedagogues such as Paulo Freire. Paralleling Hartman's understanding, although the PE movement lost steam during the 1950s, it re-emerged in the 1960s and 70s through reforms that emphasized more sensitivity to students' backgrounds and which emphasized student participation and choice. While these were significant improvements to educational ideals, systemic issues (such as racism, sexism, and ableism) were still embedded and reproduced through PE and critiques suggested that "[...] far from being an instrument of social progress, education was actually deadening—much more oriented to producing failure than to developing creative, critical minds that could be the basis for a more humanistic, democratic society" (Carnoy & Levin, 1985, pp. 16-17; see also Robinson, 2010). From these critiques, Critical Education seems to blossom and is discussed in the next section.

Critical Education

Critical Education (CE) or Pedagogy may be considered an offshoot of Progressive Education, as it shares some of its amenable qualities. Such qualities include a social constructivist perspective which emphasizes that learning and knowing occurs in relation to the social world—that is, knowledge is co-created and tinted by each individual’s background, culture, and experiences (Noddings, 2016; Scorza et al., 2013). Inherent within critical education is also an emphasis on individual and collective growth and cultivation of learners as humans within society (Dewey, 1916, p. 9; Giroux, 2016b; Lemke, 2008; Scorza et al., 2013). However, CE starts to depart from PE in its emphasis on and embeddedness in criticality which involves tenets of critical theory such as reflexivity, interdisciplinarity, materialism (i.e., rootedness in the social and material world), and emancipatory aims (Celikates, 2018, p. 206). Here the commonplaces of the curriculum (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Schwab, 1973)—teacher, learner, milieu, subject matter—take on a critical epistemology, ontology, and axiology or what Lemke (2007) terms *critical perspective*. Lemke emphasizes the need for deep and holistic knowledge as a prerequisite for a critical perspective as it enables the knower to “[...] think about a subject in relation to basic values and not just in relation to matters of fact or explanatory adequacy,” to question not just the why and how of a particular subject, but “ask how particular knowledge functions to make the world a better place or a worse place, a more or a less just place” (p. 53). Lemke further suggests that a critical perspective embeds a more collective mindset in that it requires one’s values and consciousness to extend beyond the self—that is, to take into account one’s own as well as others’ privileges as they exist within the intersections of society. In other words, as Giroux (2011) explains, critical education

draws attention to the ways in which knowledge, power, desire, and experience are produced under specific basic conditions of learning and illuminates the role that

pedagogy plays as part of a struggle over assigned meanings, modes of expression, and directions of desire, particularly as these bear on the formation of the multiple and ever-contradictory versions of the ‘self’ and its relationship to the larger society. (p. 4)

To simplify, CE engages with and provides an alternative to some of the criticisms discussed above through its rejection of education modelled as assimilation to the hegemonic social structures which reproduce and promote inequalities and injustices. Given this, CE is used as a backdrop for understanding the pedagogical implications of the PLETs that I have analyzed in relation to the discursive construction of students and citizens.

In terms of its teachings, critical education aims to embed critical thinking and critical literacy within and across the curriculum as they foster the development of critical consciousness (Janks, 2014). It also rejects the notion that knowledge can be packaged into neat containers (units) and poured into the empty minds of students (the banking model) for rote memorization and regurgitation (Freire, 2014). Furthermore, as Freire (2014) remarks in *Pedagogy of Hope* (his sequel to *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*), critical pedagogy requires a delicate understanding of emancipatory action and hope as inextricably linked.⁹ Finally, Apple (2000) reminds us that

the project and tools of critical educational studies are still in formation. It is not a finished project. Just as our social and discursive conditions change—with transformations in the internal and international divisions of paid and unpaid labor; in class relations; in a new politics of gender, race, and sexuality; in the attacks on education by the Right; and so on—so too are our theories and practices changing in

⁹ Freire writes: The idea that hope alone will transform the world, and action undertaken in that kind of naivete, is an excellent route to hopelessness, pessimism, and fatalism. But *the attempt to do without hope, in the struggle to improve the world, as if that struggle could be reduced to calculated acts alone, or a purely scientific approach, is a frivolous illusion*. To attempt to do without hope, which is based on the need for truth as an ethical quality of the struggle, is tantamount to denying that struggle is one of its mainstays. The essential thing, as I maintain later on, is this: hope, as an ontological need, demands an anchoring in practice. As an ontological need, hope needs practices in order to become historical concreteness. That is why there is no hope in sheer hopefulness. The hoped-for is not attained by dint of raw hoping. Just to hope is to hope in vain. (p. 2, emphasis added)

response to all of this. There is a politics, then, to the ways we understand the world. This too involves the connections between power and forms of knowing. (p. 8)

One of the most pressing issues for critical education and affiliates (e.g., decolonial and restorative education) is the infiltration of neoliberal ideologies in education.

Neoliberal Education: Neoliberalism, the Knowledge-Based Economy, and Human Capital

Theorized by Hayek and Freedman in the 1930s, and popularized by Adam Smith, neoliberalism has been the prominent political, economic, and social ideology across many nations since the 1970s. Thus, neoliberalism is not new, and neither are discussions about its insidiousness as a globalized phenomenon (Apple, 1985, 2017; Fairclough, 1993; see also Gilbert, 2013; Harvey, 2005; Springer, 2012, 2016; Wubbena et al., 2016). According to Harvey (2005), neoliberalism is “a theory of political economic practice that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade” (p. 2). While parading as a promoter of equality among race, gender, sexuality, and so on, neoliberalism ultimately “valorises a hierarchical and highly unequal set of social relations while claiming to offer individuals from all backgrounds an equal chance to compete for elite status” (Gilbert, 2013, p. 10-11; see also Curtis, 2013; Littler, 2013). Wubbena (2016) explains, “neoliberalism isn’t merely one ism among others, it is itself the foreground, a political and economic way of thinking, knowing, doing, and living—an entire social order, a generative matrix (McLaren, 2015a) through which everything is articulated”, and thus “exploring the boundaries of neoliberalism and the institutions that intersect with it can help us think through and resist its reproduction” (p. xii). Although neoliberalism can broadly be considered an extension of capitalism, Apple (2017) cautions that it is “not a unitary movement” as it has “contradictory tendencies within it” (p. 148), is influenced by a myriad of contextual, historical,

and cultural elements, and thus manifests differently in different contexts. This is suggestive of its relatively slippery quality (Gilbert, 2013).

Both the knowledge-based economy (KBE) and human capital are entwined as a process and product of the “neoliberal regime” (Sattler, 2012). The KBE refers generally to the shift in economic practice from industrial- and labour-based to knowledge-based, which ultimately places emphasis on institutionalized and standardized education (Olssen & Peters, 2005). Within the KBE, humans are viewed as capital and valued for their economic potential—knowledge, skills, characteristics, and consumer behaviour (Apple, 2005; Giroux, 2011; Mulderrig, 2003, 2008; Stitzlein, 2015). Or as the Government of Canada (2001) put it in their innovation strategy, “a country’s greatest resource in the knowledge society is its people” (p. iv). Herein, citizenship is equated with consumer practices (Giroux, 2011; Lee, 2015; Lim, 2014; Westheimer, 2015), businesses and corporations have become partners in education (Brownlee et al., 2018; Gidney, 2011), and supranational organizations such as the OECD, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank have become influential in the development of educational policy, curricula, and textbooks (Fairclough, 1993, 2003; Giroux, 2014; Lemke, 1995; Olssen & Peters, 2005).

Wubbena (2016) notes that “in public education, neoliberalism is represented through multifaceted privatization efforts” (p. xx) and provides an extensive list of the many ways in which this can take shape, including:

[...] for-profit management of schools, for-profit remediation services, test publishing and the textbook industry, school-based commercialism and advertising, computer-based software for curriculum and database management, social media, private food management contracting, transportation, financial management, outsourced performance consulting services, professional development, and online education and testing (Saltman, 2009; Wait & Waite, 2010). Other, more policy-directed, strategies that characterize the privatization of public education include high-stakes testing, rankings, and comparisons (from

the local to international levels), standardization, accountability, merit pay, data-driven decision making, prescriptive and pre-packaged curriculum, school choice (Au, 2011; Ravitch, 2010, 2013), and the deprofessionalization of teaching [...] (p. xx)

The sheer length of this list is alarming and aligns with what is now referred to as the Global Reform Movement (GERM) (Sahlberg, 2015). As a strategy to defund and ultimately dismantle public education, GERM embraces the idiom ‘death by a thousand cuts’ (de Lissovoy, 2015; Mondale, 2016). Gidney (2019) remarks that “while school commercialism has existed for over a century, it intensified in the 1990s after a decade of fiscal restraint [austerity] and increased application of business models to the education system” (p. 2). In discussing the prevalence of such decentralization and corporatization, Shaker (2018a) mentions the various levels at which corporate partnerships occur with examples such as the Toronto District School Board’s partnership with Future Shop, Chevron’s provincial ‘[Fuel Your School](#)’ initiative in BC, and Indigo’s national ‘[For the Love of Reading](#)’ foundation (p. 48). Through these ‘investments,’ businesses and corporation secure a say in policy and curricula as well as groom customers (Fairclough, 2000; Gidney, 2011; Shaker, 2018).

As shown above, much research has focused on neoliberalism (and its various characterizations) as a pervasive phenomenon in society in general (Gilbert, 2013; see also Curtis, 2013, Littler, 2013; Harvey, 2005), and in educational contexts (Apple, 2017, 1995; Giroux, 2014; Olssen & Peters, 2005; Sattler, 2012; Shaker, 2018a; Spooner & McNinch, 2017; Springer, 2012, 2016). Despite the growing evidence that neoliberalism negatively affects societies and the people within them (Spooner & McNinch, 2017; Springer, 2012, 2016; Springer et al., 2016; see also Monbiot, [2019](#), [2016](#)), neoliberalism persists, and arguably thrives, due in part to the ways in which it is discursively maintained and normalized. While the above work is critical in nature, research that approaches education from a critical discourse analytic

perspective can illuminate *how* neoliberalism is discursively maintained and naturalized through attention to linguistic and discursive features of texts and discourses (Fairclough, 2000; Rogers, 2011) including in education policies, which are the focus of my research.

This chapter has critically reviewed some of the prevalent philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of modern education. The next chapter moves into some of the literature considered relevant to this study including the discourses and analysis of education policy.

CHAPTER 3: DISCOURSES OF EDUCATION

In the previous chapter, I reviewed the historical, philosophical, and theoretical underpinnings of modern Westernized education. This review included discussions on the goals of public schooling, citizenship, and modern pedagogies, which lay the groundwork for this chapter on the discourses of education. Thinking broadly, the discourses of education may be considered any texts that centre, discuss, or promote education or particular education topics. Therefore, education discourses and subsequent analyses may include news articles or op-eds about education (Fitzgerald, 2017; Stack, 2016), materials produced by education system authorities, school boards, and/or schools such as policy and curricula (Horrod, 2020; Lee, 2015; Woodside-Jiron, 2011), websites and promotional texts (Pini, 2011; Tlili, 2007; Zhang & O'Halloran, 2013), or speeches about education given by government officials (Lim, 2014; Mulderrig, 2003, 2008, 2011, 2012). Similarly, if policy is formed by anything governments or authoritative bodies or organizations say or do (or do not do) (Dye, 1972), education policy may be thusly defined, though narrowed by its subject matter. In this case, many of the above listed examples of education discourse including government speeches may also be considered education policy and vice versa. This chapter provides an overview of some of the relevant education discourses and critically oriented analyses of education discourses including education policy and the discursive construction of students. The structure of this chapter mimics an inverted triangle: I begin by defining the parameters of policy and education policy before moving into a review of themes in education policy. Following this is a review of some prominent (critical) discourse studies on education discourse and subsequently the discursive construction of students.

Education Policy as Education Discourse

Many of the approaches to and discourse surrounding policy pay homage to Foucault's work, particularly through concepts such as *governmentality* (1991a; see for example Bacchi, 2009; Colebatch, 2009; Sobe, 2012). One of Foucault's main interests, established through much of his work, was discourse—that is, how discourses are constructed, how they evolve, how they shape and are shaped by the world and the people within it (Foucault, 1991b; 2002ab; see also Ball 2015). While Foucault (2002b) defined discourse as a “group of statements that belong to a single system of formation” (e.g., “economic discourse”) (p. 121), a more robust/abstract understanding of his work might define *discourse* as the utterances that comprise *knowledge* and how it comes to be (Foucault, 1980, 1991b, 2002ab; Ball, 2015). As Ball (2015) put it, Foucault was concerned with “how culture, subjectivity and objects of knowledge are constituted, organised and transformed through the dynamic and contingent interplay between discourse and material practices” (p. 307), and advised that “discourse and concomitantly power relations are manifest in material and anthropological forms, that is, in policy objects, [...] architectures, subjectivities and practices. These are the ‘instruments and effects’ of discourse” (p. 307). In other words, and as mentioned in Chapter 1, we might understand policy as a particular form or type of discourse and discourse as practice (see Chapter 5 for further discussion).

Ball (2015) argues that “we do not do policy, policy does us” (p. 307)—that is, it influences thinking, behaviour, and actions. Although he does note that this is a messy process in which individuals or groups may resist, adapt, or adopt only parts of policies thereby causing “discomforts and misalignments” (p. 307), this seems to fall into a mostly unidirectional understanding of policy. Rather, in understanding discourse as dialogical and dialectical (Fairclough, 1995; Wodak & Meyer, 2016)—an ebb and flow of texts, enactments, practices, and

resistances—and policy as a type of discourse, it becomes possible to say that both are true: we do it, *and* it does us. Along this line and connecting back to Colebatch’s (2009) assertion that policy implies order, expertise, and authority, *governmentality* generally refers to the identification of “different rationalities or mentalities of rule (govern-mentalities), the different kinds of thinking associated with particular approaches to government” (Bacchi, 2009, p. 26). In this sense, governmentality can be thought of as the “conduct of conduct” (Foucault,¹⁰ as cited in Sobe, 2012, p. 83), and focus may fall on how “people are made into ‘governable subjects’” (Colebatch, 2009, p. 77)—that is, how particular groups are constructed and how their actions or resources may be dictated and/or limited by or through policy, and in turn how this may be internalized by said groups.

While much of the literature situates policy as a problem-solving or problem-finding endeavor, as utilitarian, utopian, reflecting the values of society, and/or encapsulating that which is just out of reach (Ball, 2015; Colebatch, 2009; Patel, 2016), there are conflicting views. From Bacchi’s (2009) perspective, problems are constructed by policy, rather than solved or found by policy. Although “problems” may not be explicitly stated within policies, their existence frames the problem, whatever it may be, and Bacchi (2009) explains:

[...] the presumption that the purpose of policy is to solve “social problems” remains a grounding premise in most conventional approaches to policy analysis. By contrast, showing that policies by their nature imply a certain understanding of what needs to change (the “problem”) suggests that “problems” are endogenous - created within - rather than exogenous - existing outside - the policy-making process. *Policies give shape to “problems” they do not address them.* (p. x, emphasis added)

¹⁰ Foucault’s theorizing of governmentality was drawn out over a series of lectures at Collège de France from the late 1970s to early 80s (Henmen, 2011).

In other words, policies discursively construct and frame social problems. In line with this, Ball (2015) states that policies “empower some and displace others” (p. 8), while Scott (2000) expresses concern about the ways in which policies may be “written so as to marginalise debate” (p. 18). More critically, Patel (2016) argues that “the maintained belief that a colonial society’s structures can provide the infrastructure within which noncontingent emancipation can take place is [...] a colonising theory of change (Tuck, 2009)” (p. 118), and Gillborn (2005) views education policy as an act of white supremacy. Here, there is a tension and dichotomy in how policy is thought of—as the answer to or process of solving social issues vs. that which codifies, perpetuates, and/or reproduces social issues and inequity.

Although it may be difficult to reconcile these varying and sometimes conflicting orientations—and in some cases, we may not want to—it is possible to weave (some of) them together for a richer understanding, especially when situated within a social constructionist and/or post-structuralist paradigm. For example, it is possible for policy to have within it both utilitarian and utopian ideas; it likely does reflect the values of society, or at least the values of the policymakers and stakeholders; and those values may construct a social phenomenon or group as a ‘problem’ that needs ‘solving’ and list initiatives to combat the problem. These values may even be inherently prejudiced and discriminatory in some or many ways, yet it is possible that due to their ubiquity in society, their problematic nature may go unnoticed. For example, much education policy is deficit-based (Bacchi, 2009; Hardy & Woodcock, 2014), presenting position statements about closing the performance gap between *regular/normal* students and *insert minority or marginalized group of students here*, and many an education stakeholder champion or support such efforts. But from a critical perspective, policy initiatives aimed at getting test scores or graduation rates up to an affluent white standard do not solve, address, nor

often even acknowledge the underlying issues of poverty, trauma, and/or social and economic alienation a particular group may face. Deficit is one of many themes found in education policy (Gorski, 2011; Hardy & Woodcock, 2011); below I list and discuss a few more.

Themes in Education Policy Analysis

In looking across contemporary literature in education and education(al) policy analysis, several themes arise including, but not limited to: the neoliberalization, marketization, and corporatization of education (Gidney, 2019; Giroux, 2014; Lee, 2015; Lim, 2014; Mulderrig, 2003, 2008; Shaker, 2018a); global(ising) trends and policy transfer (Carney, 2012; Portnoi, 2016; Resnik, 2006; Steiner-Khamsi & Waldow, 2012; Zadjia, 2005); lifelong learning (Jakobi, 2012; Jakobi & Martens, 2010; Mulderrig, 2003, 2008); new managerialism, accountability, and audit culture (Archer, 2002; Bell & Stevenson, 2006; Mulderrig, 2003, 2008; Smith, 2018; Sobe, 2012; Tlili, 2007; Woodside-Jiron, 2011); and governance and governmentality (Jakobi & Martens, 2010; Resnik, 2006; Sobe, 2012). Furthermore, much of this and other literature calls for a more socially- just or conscious approach to policy and education which includes critical examination of everyday assumptions, decolonisation, orientations toward collectivity/ community, social and critical consciousness, and a less singularly economic and individualist trajectory of educational outcomes (Giroux, 2014, 2016b; Janks, 2014; Patel, 2016; Rogers, 2011; Shaker, 2018ab; Spooner & McNinch, 2018; Westheimer, 2015).

As Steiner-Khamsi (2012) points out, much of the phenomena of policy transfer is based in notions of “‘best practice’ or ‘international standards’, in education as *if* there existed a clearly defined set of standards, policies, and practices that are universally shared” (p. 4, emphasis in original). Yet she concedes, “nevertheless, *imagined globalisation* in education has affected agenda-setting as significantly as the *real* pressure to harmonise or align the education systems in

the same region, or in the same ‘educational space’ (Nóvoa and Lawn 2002)” (p. 4, emphasis in original). In line with this, efforts by education systems to adhere to *best practices* span the adoption of standardization, teacher and system surveillance (accountability and audit), human and knowledge capital models (neoliberalism), and international testing such as PISA (Gorur, 2012; Stack, 2016), typically for reasons of legitimization, prestige, and competition (Carney, 2012; Jakobi, 2012; Waldow, 2012). Unfortunately, this drive to fall in line or surpass the competition can lead to the mass adoption (sometimes coerced) of policies/initiatives with little consideration of the local context (Bell & Stevenson, 2006).

While policy transfer and comparison research is a robust field of study (see Steiner-Khamsi & Waldow, 2012), an area that appears to be lacking study, especially in the Canadian context, is policy analysis and comparisons across regions or provinces and territories. Unfortunately, it seems that the provinces are typically only compared for testing and ranking purposes, and/or with the agenda of standardization (Action Canada, 2012; Conference Board of Canada, 2014; see also Westheimer, 2015; Stack, 2016 who are critical of this). Burns (2017) does take up a cross-national policy analysis which investigates publicly available policy commitments to 21st century learning (via ministry of education websites) and categorises these commitments into three frames: futurist, political, and teacher as change agent. For Burns, Manitoba falls within the teacher as change agent frame, Nova Scotia falls within the political frame, and Quebec, Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia fall within the futurist frame. However, exact methods used to examine the policies are unclear (e.g., close reading, discourse analysis, corpus software, coding methods, etc.), and Burns notes that each province’s policy was categorised by its dominant theme/frame, thus possibly leaving out complexities to be explored. Carney (2012) calls for policy analysts to “develop an ‘analytic of noise’ (Ferguson,

1999, p. 210)” (p. 350), while Marchi and Taylor (2018) urge researchers to explore divergences. Thus, it remains clear that more research and collaboration in this area must be taken up, and my research aims to do so. While educational policy analysis remains an enormous field, research employing critical discourse studies frameworks represent a smaller subject, but can offer deeper explications of themes, ideologies, and power relations embedded within education policies.

CDS of Education Policy

Although not explicitly regarding education policy, Fairclough’s (1993) examination of university job postings over a period of time laid important groundwork for future studies on education discourse and policy. Fairclough (1993) observed and (borrowing from Habermas) provided terminology for the gradual change in discursive strategies including constructing the ideal job candidate as well as shifting institutional authority from explicit to implicit (through conversationalization and synthetic personalization; see Chapter 6), which works ideologically to disguise power imbalances. Through this work, Fairclough recorded early signs of the marketization of higher education and the adoption of the human capital model in the knowledge economy in the context of the UK. Many subsequent studies (Mulderigg, 2003, 2008, 2011, 2012; Tlili, 2007; Woodside-Jiron, 2011) employ Fairclough’s approach and terminology.

Looking at a compiled corpus of speeches about education from 1972-2005, Mulderigg (2003) deconstructed how social actors (students, teachers, and government) are represented and found that teachers are often backgrounded and deprofessionalized, while students are represented as passive consumers. Mulderigg (2011, 2012) also shows how the change in self-reference by politicians from “government” to “we” not only disguises authority and power, but delegates responsibility to a wider group (the public) and presupposes public consent to educational policy movements. In connection, both Mulderigg (2011, 2012) and Woodside-Jiron

(2011) comment on measures taken by groups in power to mitigate or avoid public resistance. Mulderrig highlights this through the government's use of "we" and "our", and Woodside-Jiron draws attention to the use of the phrases "expert knowledge" and "current and confirmed research" which aligns with "data-driven decision making" as a form of neoliberal influence in education (Wubbena, 2016, p. xx). While Mulderrig does speak to measures of surveillance within school systems and of teachers (in the UK), Woodside-Jiron (2011) takes a deeper look at how surveillance-based professional development is normalized through these phrases within literacy policies in California. Taken together, this research shows an international trend in educational contexts which position education as a product to be consumed by students, with efforts to coerce teachers into this regime (see also Polster & Newson, 2015; Westheimer, 2015).

In further deconstruction of how neoliberal values saturate education, Lim (2014) and Lee (2015) looked at metaphor use in a Singaporean context with regard to national curricula (Lim, 2014) and political speeches (Lee, 2015). Lim argues that the "teaching of thinking" embedded in the government-approved curricula engages in shaping "common-sense understandings of what thinking and rationality is and should be" that are "connect[ed] to neoliberal prerogatives" (p. 61) which promote individualism, private enterprise, and consumer behaviour as rational, over traits or concerns such as empathy, justice, imagination, etc. (p. 63). There is a strong connection between these curricula and the public speeches given by the Singaporean government which emphasize the "necessity of national [citizenship] education for national survival" (Lee, 2015, p. 99). Here, the adoption of neoliberal values (knowledge as capital) through education is positioned as a moral obligation (Lee, 2015) which shows further evidence of consumer behaviour as a prerequisite for 'good' citizenship.

Hardy and Woodcock (2014) conduct a critical policy analysis of Inclusive Education policy statements from 28 policies across the US, Canada, UK, and Australia in relation to UNESCO's (1994) *Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education* and (2009) *Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education* and several OECD policies, finding that different nations and states/provinces take up inclusion on a diversity-deficit scale. They are critical of deficit-based constructions of inclusion that narrowly or cooptively define inclusion as "mainstreaming" "students with special educational needs" into "regular classrooms" (p. 159), and correlate deficit to "neoliberal logics" (p. 153). They further interpret these policy statements within an understanding of globalizing neoliberal agendas and discuss the statements in terms of whether they tend to embrace or challenge "neoliberal logics" of education (categorizing Canada firmly within this neoliberal logic). However, this interpretation seems to engender a fairly surface level understanding of neoliberalism and its reach within education policy and practice as they categorize particular statements as challenges to "neoliberal logics" that are rather just more covertly entangled in neoliberalism than their counterparts.

Horrod (2020) investigates the discursive construction and recontextualization of policy in learning and teaching (L&T) texts in higher education in the UK, which, to my knowledge, is the only CDS study that uses the DHA to examine education policy. These policy texts range from 2012 to 2016, starting with discussion papers produced by the Higher Education Academy (HEA) and culminating in short sets of institutional L&T frameworks that act as guidelines through enforcing and rewarding a "shared language" (p. 482 and 485). Horrod traces the shift in genre and recontextualization of suggestions, reasoning, and evidence from within the discussion

papers through to the strategic use of *topoi*¹¹ in the L&T frameworks that remove or “obscure the ideological character of a claim through evaluation of actors and phenomena” (p. 484). The HEA papers are “more dialogic”, resembling an academic genre through features such as literature review, mitigation, and discussion, while the L&T frameworks list ideas as “truth or what must be done” (p. 489), and “thus present a seemingly uncontroversial picture of accepted good practices” (p. 490). Horrod suggests that this recontextualization forwards a

‘tick-box’ approach to accreditation (cf. Botham, 2018; Peat, 2015) and encourage[s] academics to adopt the ‘shared language’ of the frameworks; inevitably limiting the type of activity they highlight in their accounts. Thus, their practice becomes framed in terms of HEA conceptualisations of good pedagogy. (p. 491)

She argues that these policies ultimately contribute to a “narrowing of what it is possible to think and to be” as an educator, which aligns with findings/arguments made by Mulderrig (2003), Woodside-Jiron (2011), Fairclough (1993), and Rogers (2011).

The above research pieces together the global neoliberal trend in education (and society in general). Yet to date, there is little explicit CDS research which focuses on education policy in the Canadian context, with some notable exceptions including Rogers (2018) dissertation, which investigates education policies and initiatives in Nova Scotia from 1994-2016 and finds an emerging neoliberal governmentality which narrates economic and educational crises as loci of policy reform and expanded surveillance of students and teachers. Ultimately, CDS has been a fruitful approach for exploring education(al) texts and is thus the overarching approach I adopt for my research. Given that many of these studies report incidentally on how students are invoked/discussed, one of my aims is to investigate this explicitly.

¹¹ *Topoi*, considered *formal categories* in the Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) within CDS, are parts of argumentation belonging to premises which “connect the argument(s) with the conclusion”, either rationally or fallaciously (Reisigl & Wodak, 2016, p. 35).

Discursive Constructions of Students

As noted in Chapter 1, there is little work that explicitly focuses on the discursive construction of students. However, the work that does foray into questions of discursive constructions and framing of students can be sorted into sometimes overlapping categories including (but likely not limited to):

- the way particular groups of students construct their own identities often in particular contexts (e.g., different disciplines or courses, often at the post-secondary level—see for example, Brooks & Abrahams, 2020; Cheng-Wen & Archer, 2008);
- different kinds of deviance (e.g., cheating—see Schneider, 2011);
- particular ‘national identities’ constructed within educational discourses aimed at and meant to be taken-up by students (e.g., Lim; 2014);
- discursive constructions of particular groups of students (international students; streamed students; higher education students) with subsets of particular types of framing such as deficit (e.g., International students; deficit in relation to Black and Latino boys—see Devos, 2003; Dunning-Lozano, 2018).

Since my interest is in how students are discursively constructed within policy-level education discourse, I briefly summarize a few studies from the latter bullet above.

Both Devos (2003) and Ford and Cate (2020) investigate the discursive constructions of international students in higher education (HE) and present two dichotomous discursive constructions of international students—namely, deficiency and prestige. Devos (2003) looked at several Australian newspapers’ discourse in 2001 on the topic of HE standards and international students after a think-tank report sparked debate regarding fees as the cause for declining teaching and assessment standards. Devos found that although most students paid fees, the news

discourse focused on international students, ultimately discursively constructing them as “the bogey, or problem, for Australian higher education, rather than, for example, the decline in public funding” (p. 164), while “the Australian academic was constituted as the victim through [their] role as guardian of academic standards” (p. 165). This study points to a prominent neoliberal trend in discourses wherein blame is displaced from systemic structures and processes to individuals or groups (see Stack, 2016). Ford and Cate (2020) analysed the discursive construction of international students across 160 US university websites. They found that while there were variations in the ‘story-telling’ across these websites, international students were largely framed as “markers of prestige and legitimacy as well as a means of economic stimulus” (p. 1196). They further deconstruct institutions’ propensity to “blur the demographics of international students” (p. 1202) through aggregation that “retains enough specificity to contribute to institutional prestige while obscuring the actual details of the international community” (p. 1204) which ultimately works as “proof of racial diversity” (p. 1204) without actually factoring in or serving the needs of different racial groups, and which serves to tokenize diversity.

Although a niche context, Dunning-Lozano’s (2018) study provides an understanding of the intersectional and insidious nature and impact of deficit ideologies. Dunning-Lozano (2018) conducted an in-depth ethnography of a Texas-based Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP) called Central Heights, which students who violate zero-tolerance policies in public schools are forced to attend. DAEPs are disproportionately constituted of low-income Black and Latino communities, mainly boys. Focusing particularly on the induction and orientation periods, Dunning-Lozano found that the Heights students are discursively constructed as morally, intellectually, and culturally deficient, and further as “criminal, suspect, and requiring surveillance” (p. 341). Through racializing (Browne, 2015, as cited in Dunning-

Lozano, 2018) ‘disciplinary technologies’ (Foucault, 1977; as cited by Dunning-Lozano, 2018) such as persistent surveillance, strict rules and punishment, point systems, and Boys Town Character Education Curriculum, “deficient,” “weak-minded” students are policed and conditioned to become “docile bodies” (p. 341). This work points to the problematic nature of deficit-based approaches, especially as they are often enmeshed in racism.

Although still bound in deficit ideologies, both Anderson (2015) at the high school level and Brooks (2021) at the higher education level illustrate the multiplicity in how students are discursively constructed. Anderson (2015) conducted an ethnographic critical discourse study to investigate the discursive construction of Technical lowest-tracked students in Singapore, finding that these particular students are dually constructed into two sometimes overlapping categories—*sorting and serving*—which benefit both high-stakes testing and a meritocratic agenda. On the one hand, *sorting* of students into the lowest-track is justified through deficit characteristics—traits mentioned include “not focused; can’t do serious work; communication a problem; difficult to handle, disturb others; more vocal [...]” (p. 12). On the other, *serving* is justified through an emphasis on serving the needs of these particular students and “as a way to redefine success through differentiated curricula and instruction” (p. 14). Anderson asserts that ultimately, “the official rhetoric about [lowest-tracked] students portrays them as hands-on learners best served by ‘soft’ curricula that keep them in school until they are ready to enter the workforce” (p. 16). The propensity to normalize problematic treatment of students can again be seen in this study.

Perhaps most relevant to consider is Brooks’ (2021) recent work, which explicitly investigated the discursive construction of students in higher education policies at the national and international level in the UK. Brooks (2021) conducted a cross-European comparison of the discursive construction of domestic higher education (HE) students in policy from Denmark,

England, Germany, Ireland, Poland, and Spain. Brooks found that students are variably constructed as objects of criticism (Poland and Denmark), as vulnerable individuals (England, Ireland, Spain), and as investors or investments (all countries). In the first construction, students are criticized for their lack of quality in discussion about the “massification of higher education” (p. 166), the length of time to completion, as well as their choices of study (particularly the arts, social sciences, and humanities). In the second, are similar discussions of quality and time to completion but through a more sympathetic lens. In the third construction, the distinction between investors or investments lay in whether HE enrolment is paid for by the student or the government—for example, in England, students are considered investors, while in Denmark, they are considered investments. Brooks further interprets these constructions along sociocontextual lines including geopolitics, funding models/mechanisms, and domestic politics. Central to this work is the notion that despite the growing “homogenisation of higher education across Europe” (p. 176), students may be discursively constructed in multiple, overlapping ways.

Although the bulk of the literature presented here pertains to higher education, from these studies and others already discussed, a pattern starts to emerge. Students are often constructed as passive receivers/consumers of content and skill, as bodies that must be controlled, as in need of monitoring and/or diagnosing, and in positions of deficit when requiring extra or different support(s). Ultimately, they are constructed through many educational discourses as deficient in some capacity—as problems that need solutions or solving (Bacchi, 2009). This chapter has reviewed some of the relevant literature on education policy, critical analyses of education policy, and the discursive construction of students. Before moving into this study’s design considerations, in line with the sociohistorical emphasis in the DHA, the next chapter provides a brief history and contextualization of education in Canada.

CHAPTER 4: A BRIEF HISTORY AND CONTEXTUALIZATION OF EDUCATION IN CANADA

The history of education is Clio's neglected child. One would almost suspect that the muse of history had disliked her school. Wars, politics, religion and trade have in the past monopolized the attention of historians and education has been largely overlooked. (Johnson, 1964, p. 12)

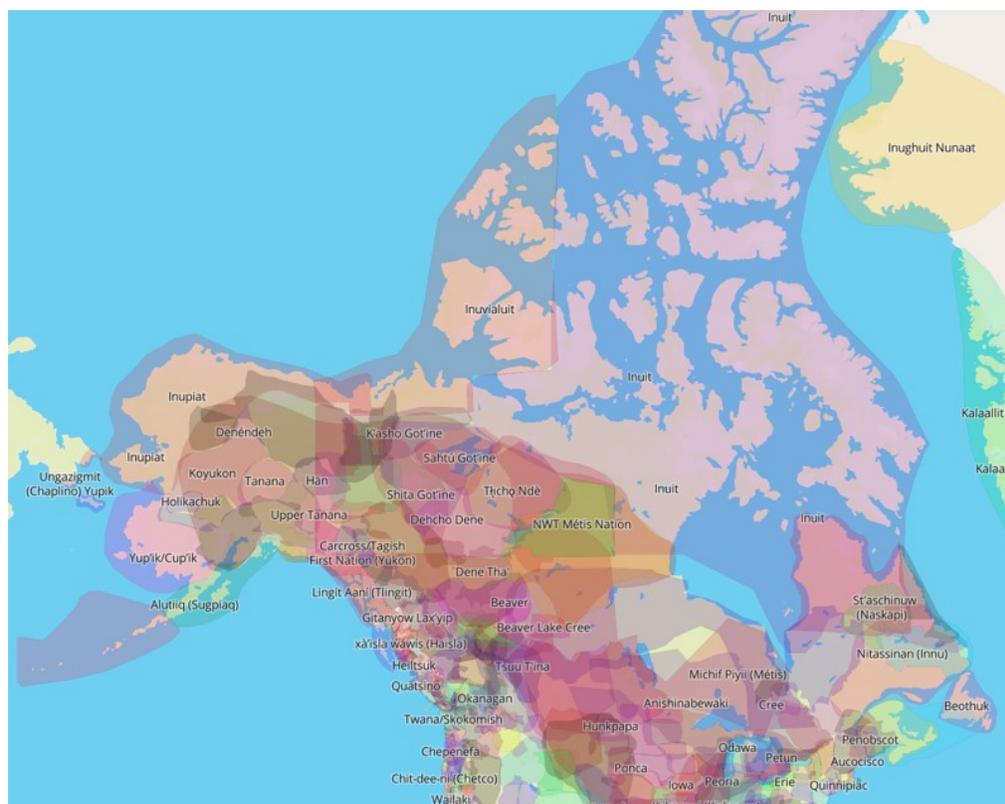
With the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of education (Chapter 2) and the discourse of education (Chapter 3) in mind, this chapter attends to the colonial history and context of public education in Canada from European contact through to the present. For those unfamiliar with the colonial geography of Canada, it is made up of ten provinces (from west to east: British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador) and three territories (from west to east: Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut), which can be seen in Figure 1 (see [Appendix B](#) for more information).

Figure 1
Provincial/Territorial Map of Canada (WorldAtlas, 2021)



In order to both acknowledge the lands on which we have settled and decentralize the colonial mapping of Turtle Island, I also include a map of Indigenous First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI) territories on the Northern part of Turtle Island in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2
Map of Indigenous Territories (Native Land, 2021)



Education in Canada

Public education in Canada is governed provincially, which means that each province/territory's elected government is responsible for funding, overseeing, and carrying out education through formal schooling—including kindergarten, elementary, sometimes middle-school, secondary, and post-secondary (certificate programs, college, university). Schooling is mandatory from about the ages of 4-6 to 16 across Canada, and the national secondary school graduation rate is 85% (OECD, 2018). As discussed earlier, the accumulation and culmination of the philosophy, theory, and practice of education throughout history can be divided into or

conceptualized broadly as three strands: character development, intellectual pursuit, and economic pursuit (Noddings, 2016; Westheimer, 2015). While there have been varying degrees of emphases on these three strands, much is typically placed on how education—including the knowledge and characteristics instilled—should facilitate the economy. From the industrial revolution (1760s-1920s) through to the 21st century knowledge-based economy (KBE), public education in Canada has always been connected to the job market and its capitalist characteristics and trends. To illustrate, the Government of Canada’s (GoC) Innovation Strategy for the 21st century (2001) considers “knowledge as a strategic national asset” and focuses on strengthening Canada’s “science and research capacity[,] and on how to ensure that this knowledge contributes to building an innovative economy that benefits all Canadians” (p. iv). This sentiment has carried forward through the past two decades, with a section of the 2019 Federal Budget dedicated to *Preparing Young Canadians for Good Jobs* through “affordable and accessible [post-secondary] education” ([GoC, 2019, para. 208](#)), mainly through Canada Student Loans and Grants. The following sections detail some of the socio-historical contexts of education in Canada from European contact to the time of writing (2019-2021) and maps the three functions or goals of schooling (discussed in the previous chapter) onto this history.

European Contact (French and English)¹²

While Canada often expresses its pride in its “world class” education systems (Conference Board of Canada, 2014), the roots of public education in Canada are steeped in Eurocentric colonialism (Armstrong, 2005; Baldwin, 2008; Pidgeon, 2013). Education as we recognize it today in Canada grew out of the desire to assimilate Indigenous peoples (First Nations, and Inuit) to French Catholic culture (Baldwin, 2008; Pidgeon, 2013), and reinforce this

¹² While there is evidence that there was European contact (e.g., Spanish and Nordic/Viking) prior to French and English ‘settlement’, I focus on this period because it marked the eventual confederation of Canada.

culture for new settlers while providing them with basic skills and knowledge (Baldwin, 2008). In ceding their power to Britain in 1763, education (for the most part) changed to reflect British rather than French values and culture (Lawr & Gidney, 1973). In 1791, Upper and Lower Canada were formed as what are now respectively the provinces of Ontario and Quebec, and the *District Public School Act* was established in 1807 (Guillet, 1960) (see [Appendix B](#) for Confederation dates). Yet until the mid-19th century, schooling was strictly segregated by sex, and was established, financed, and operated by churches, as well as private and voluntary groups and individuals (Gidney & Millar, 1990). During this period, education was more focused on instilling religious and cultural values than on producing intellectuals and can thus be linked to character education.

Industrial and Technical Revolutions

The industrial era (1760-mid-1800s) marked a shift in thinking with regard to education, as the mass production of goods meant a need for mass factory labourers. Specific skills were needed to perform job tasks safely, and a process of enculturation was required to create the kind of workers that were sufficient for these jobs (Osborne, 1999). This shift can be connected to the promotion of free (universal) schooling by Egerton Ryerson (1840s) through public taxation (Gaffield, 2013; Mah, 2007). Osborne (1999) summarizes that “schools would train children to tell the time, to run their lives by the clock, to work hard even at tasks they saw no point in, to obey orders and generally to accept what life offered them without complaint” (p. 6). Furthermore, Gaffield (2013) notes that promoters of public education such as Ryerson “saw state-controlled schooling as the primary means of assimilating ‘alien’ elements” (para. 3)—a kind of character development (albeit of a colonial and xenophobic nature). In other words,

school would prepare students to work in factories while simultaneously eradicating *undesirable* traits, which encompasses both character development and economic pursuit.

By the technical revolution (1860-1920s; also known as the second wave of the industrial revolution), education had become of central importance in society with schooling becoming compulsory by the 1870s (except in Quebec). Lawr and Gidney (1973) explain that “an enlightened, literate populace would be politically stable, socially cohesive, economically adaptable, and individually moral” (p. 12)—which features the three strands of character, intellect, and economy and is reflective of Marshall’s (1950) conceptualization of citizenship. Alongside Confederation (1867), education became a right of citizenship with schools functioning to inspire nationalism as well as democracy (Osborne, 1999). However, it must also be acknowledged that residential schooling was initiated with the passing of the *Indian Act* also in 1867 (also championed by Ryerson) and that the last residential school did not close until 1997. While this dissertation does not focus on such legislation nor its impact, the public has been increasingly made aware of the atrocities Indigenous peoples and communities were and are subjected to under these and other policies, including their intent to commit cultural, linguistic, and physical genocide (Armstrong, 2005; [Binning, 2021](#); Milloy, 1999). Despite ongoing calls from First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI) for reparations and (re)conciliation and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s ([TRC, 2015a](#)) reported findings and recommendations, systemic discrimination and barriers still exist in Canadian policy, institutions, and systems, including education.

The 20th Century

Formal education developed and expanded rapidly in the 20th century through emphasis on classification, standardization, progressive rhetoric, and efficiency. This progression is detailed in three subsections below.

Early-20th Century. The beginning of the 20th century saw what Milewski (2009) refers to as the “scientisation of education” wherein several manuals were published for pre-and in-service teachers, each aiming “to define schooling and pedagogy as a science” (p. 341). Although Milewski’s work centres on Ontario, this grew to be a trend across Canada and gave rise to “expert” knowledge in the field of education, wherein university professors developed conventions (re)appropriated from developmental and behavioural psychologists for the identification and classification of students by teachers who were required to learn these specialized practices (Milewski, 2009). This ‘scientisation’ can be understood as the one of the roots of the standardization of education. Christou (2013) expresses that during this period, discussion abounded on

[...] the goal of relating school and the home, the notion of school planning for increased efficiency in light of budget cuts and increasing numbers of students, the emphasis on testing and examination, and the curricular attention to vocational education and guidance. (p. 568)

As part of the educational reforms in Canada and the United States, the overall goal of this utilitarian perspective was to attain “social efficiency”, which was influenced by “progressivist rhetoric” inspired by Dewey (Christou, 2013). For example, as early as the 1910s, Dewey’s (1907) *The school and society* was a mandatory part of teacher education in Ontario (Christou, 2013). However, it is important to recall the distinctions discussed in Chapter 2—that of education for order v. education for justice.

In a 1929 issue of *The School*,¹³ an elementary teacher “argued that students had to assume a personal responsibility for serving the social and industrial needs of their country”, stressing that even before the age of 10, children could be made to understand their obligation to work toward “their future economic niche” (Christou, 2013, p. 569). In the same year, Dr. W.H. Rutherford (of Western Technical School) argued in *The School* that students ““need to be trained in the fundamentals of good citizenship ... the characteristics of which are speed, accuracy, and uniformity”” (as cited in Christou, 2013, p. 570). Here, one might note the emphasis on job skills as necessary characteristics for good citizenship, as this is a prominent line of thinking today. Furthermore, the Depression-era initiated a focus on efficiency within educational institutions and provoked a growth of “industrial capitalism needs” within the educational context (Christou, 2013, p. 571). For example, in 1931, school attendance in Ontario rose dramatically due to lack of employment, yet facilities and the number of teachers remained the same, with teaching salaries also dropping sharply (Christou, 2013). In order to increase the usability and efficiency of schools, staggered and rotary/rotating classes modelled after factory shift work were implemented (Christou, 2013) and remain in many formal school settings today. The findings of Christou’s (2013) work suggest that the purpose of education was framed as such: “bringing schools and society into closer alignment could promote democracy as a way of life, emphasize the necessity of English language fluency, and fit students, as well as immigrant adults, efficiently into the industrial complex” (p. 571). Again, elements of these three goals are apparent, yet the emphasis seems to be tipped toward character development/citizenship and economic pursuit.

¹³ A monthly journal distributed to all educators in Ontario.

Mid-20th Century. School enrolment in all levels of education in Canada increased over 200% in the 1950s and 60s as a result of the post-war baby-boom as well as public encouragement for youth to continue into secondary and post-secondary levels (Martell, 1974). By 1970, the Economic Council of Canada reported that education had become Canada's "biggest industry", with over 6.5 million full time students and teachers, and over 6 billion dollars (over 20%) of total government spending annually (Martell, 1974; see [Appendix C](#) for Education Expenditure from 1971-2011).

Notably, the 1960s and 70s brought social movements such as women's rights, anti-war, and LGBT rights to the fore in much of the Western world (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009). The early 70s also saw major cuts to education across several provinces which resulted in retaliation from teachers in the forms of strikes and organized protests, most notably in Ontario and Quebec (see Martell, 1974). While the Deweyan perspective of education views publicly funded schooling as a key for advancement of democracy and progress, another interpretation rose out of the 1960s. This interpretation viewed schooling "as a form of social control" (Osborne, 1999, p. 8; see also Baldwin, 2008). Baldwin (2008) notes that,

the new 'revisionist' historians of education believed that the educational system was simply a reflection of the inequalities in the larger society, and that schools served to buttress the social order. Some historians asserted that the goal of 'heroic' school promoters of the past [such as Egerton Ryerson] was to socialize rather than educate. These 'social control' historians portrayed a hierarchical educational system run by white, Anglo-Saxon, capitalist, middle-class men that deliberately sought to perpetuate the existing racist and class-based social order—a system that had remained fundamentally unchanged ever since. (p. viii)

In reflecting on the arguments made by Rutherford and others in *The School*, and in light of the previous chapters, it would be difficult to argue that this perspective, though quite negative, was

not warranted. As noted in Chapter 2, this view was accompanied by the critical pedagogy movement mainly initiated by Freire's (1996) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

Hargreaves and Shirley (2009) call this period the "First Way of Innovation and Inconsistency" and note that the "rebellious and creative spirit of the times entered public schools, albeit unevenly, in the form of experimentation, innovation, free schooling, deschooling, and teaching in primary and elementary schools that was more child centred" (p. 4)—that is, progressive. In the First Way, educators and schools had more freedom and opportunity for innovation. However, while some educators used this freedom for innovation, change, and even "radical" (as used by Hargreaves and Shirley) curricula, others used it to continue with traditional methods—long lecture-based teaching, and more elitist ideals (such as are listed in the quote from Baldwin above). Although funding cuts were made to education, this period is marked by a lull in the emphasis on economic pursuit. Instead, it appears that ideas (intellectual pursuit) coupled with action (civic participation) were prominent in many domains of everyday life, including education.

Late-20th Century. Hargreaves and Shirley (2009) note that in the late 1980s into the 1990s "markets were overlaid with growing government centralization and standardization of educational goals. Performance standards and achievement targets enforced political control of the public sector" (p. 8). They term this period the "Second Way of Markets and Standardization", listing competition and published rankings between schools and districts, narrow and prescriptive curricula, surveillance and inspection, the transfer and removal of teachers and principals, and the promotion of on-the-job training as some of the rigid and disciplinary reforms introduced in this period (pp. 8-9). For example, in the mid-1980s, an emphasis on accountability and standardized assessment grew out of the public's declining

confidence in the Ontario education system (Earl, 1995). This was shown in a public opinion poll in which approximately two thirds of the respondents wished for province-wide testing to be instated, due to an underlying fear that students were not properly prepared to enter the workforce or post-secondary education (Earl, 1995). This fear permeated across the provinces and territories, and much stock was put into provincial, national, and international testing and ranking of countries. The first Canada-wide achievement testing took place under the Student Achievement Indicators Program (SAIP) in 1993 and continues under the pan-Canadian Assessment Program (PCAP) ([CMEC, n.d.](#)). This may be seen as a shift in emphasis toward economic pursuit, in which both character development and intellectual development become sub-goals of or a means to economic pursuit.

The 21st Century

The new millennium provoked a full embrace of the KBE in Canada and other parts of the world (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009; see also OECD, 1996). In 2001-2002, the Government of Canada (GoC) released its updated Innovation Strategy for the 21st century through two texts, *Achieving excellence: Investing in people, knowledge, and opportunity* (2001), and *Knowledge matters: Skills and learning for Canadians* (2002):

Achieving Excellence: Investing in People, Knowledge and Opportunity recognizes the need to consider knowledge as a strategic national asset. It focuses on how to strengthen our science and research capacity and on how to ensure that this knowledge contributes to building an innovative economy that benefits all Canadians.

Knowledge Matters: Skills and Learning for Canadians recognizes that a country's greatest resource in the knowledge society is its people. It looks at what we can do to strengthen learning in Canada, to develop people's talent and to provide opportunity for all to contribute to and benefit from the new economy. (GoC, 2001, p. iv)

In *Knowledge Matters*, the GoC (2002) states that “the knowledge-based economy means an ever-increasing demand for a well-educated and skilled workforce in all parts of the economy and in all parts of the country” (p. 7). The same report, argues that each sector—education, business, non-profit, etc.—has a role to play, and that “ultimately, individuals are responsible for their own learning and development” (p. 9). This statement mirrors the functionalist and utilitarian sentiment from a statement [quoted earlier](#) from an issue of *The School* (1929), which emphasized the need for young children to understand their obligation to the economic well-being of their society. Furthermore, this downloading of responsibility is a discursive strategy used by power-wielding organizations/bodies to avoid blame if/when there are problems (Fairclough, 2016; Mulderrig, 2003; Stack, 2016; see also Fortin Lalonde, 2016).

Although emphasis on adapting to the needs of the 21st century began near the end of the millennium, there continues to be an outpouring of literature and discourse (both academic and non) about meeting 21st century demands with *21st Century Learning*. The media often contributes largely to the discourse of “education in crisis” (Stack, 2016; see also Berliner & Biddle, 1995). For instance, Tsaparis’ ([2014](#)) argues that Canada has not put enough effort into expanding its knowledge economy and that more must be done “not just for the sake of our current work force and generations to come, but also to remain a player on the global scene” (para. 12). Such discourse is often laden with near-frantic undertones, which put emphasis on stepping up to the challenges of globalization and a *rapidly changing world* (see Fairclough, 2016), and of fostering competencies such as innovation, “entrepreneurial spirit” (OME, 2014; AMET, 2016), and digital/media literacy (Action Canada, 2012; CEA, 2007, 2014; OECD, 2014; OME, 2014). Action Canada’s (2012) report states:

The objective of 21st century learning is to build capacity in areas that promote a *resilient* society capable of effectively adapting to *rapid change*. It represents a shift in

emphasis from the instruction of facts to a model which focuses on competencies such as critical thinking, character, creativity, innovation, as well as digital and computer literacy. (p. 3, emphasis added)

Furthermore, Canadians for 21st Century Learning and Innovation (C21) “see[s] public education as the primary means of meeting the challenge of equipping all young people with the essential knowledge, skills, and personal qualities to thrive in a constantly changing world” (Milton, 2015, p. 6), and list seven competencies (7 Cs) of 21st century learning: 1) creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship; 2) critical thinking; 3) collaboration; 4) communication; 5) character; 6) culture and ethical citizenship; 7) computer and digital technology (p. 8). As necessary as these competencies may be, this type of progressivist rhetoric is often coupled with reports on math and literacy test scores, province and country rankings, and statistics on job acquisition and sector needs. This falls under the umbrella of Hargreaves and Shirley’s (2009), “Third Way of Performance and Partnership” which as a political strategy, was championed by The New Democrats under Bill Clinton in the 90s, theorized by Anthony Giddens in conjunction with Gerhard Schoder and Tony Blair of the New Labour party in the UK, and adopted educationally in Canada in the early 2000s through Dalton McGuinty’s partnership with Ben Levin and Michael Fullan (p. 12, 16-17). One might also wonder what is meant by character (specifically, what characteristics make up character) and how character has become a competency. Ruitenbergh (2019) discusses this phenomenon in education discourse from a philosophical standpoint, naming this conflation a category mistake.

Stack’s (2016) investigation of national press coverage and governmental press releases of the 2000 PISA results from *The Globe and Mail* and the *National Post* exemplifies the push for standardization and the struggles that ‘have-not’ provinces face when it comes to standardization. Using a CDS framework to examine how each Canadian region is framed

(thought/talked about—in other words, discursively constructed), Stack found that these news articles place Ontario and Alberta as leaders of Canadian educational excellence, while Atlantic Canada is often framed as a burden. Most importantly, and in relation to the context of each region, she finds that poverty is downplayed through statements which tout that the gap between the poor and wealthy is smaller in Canada than in other countries. This again matches the discursive neoliberal tendency to place blame on the individual or group, rather than systemic issues (Mulderigg, 2003, 2008, 2012).

To recall, since education is legislated, organized, and funded provincially/territorially, each province and territory has their own legislation, curricula, and goals which are politically informed by the party in power (see [Appendix B](#)). However, due to the emphasis on standardization across the country, many of the publicly stated goals across Canada are similar in nature, with foci on outcomes, knowledge, and skills, as well producing citizens who contribute to the economy. While it is difficult to concretely determine the goals of education in Canada, it is possible to trace the shift from mainly character development in the 18th century and early 19th century to an incorporation of economic pursuit as a result of the industrial and technical revolutions, and intellectual pursuit at the turn of the 20th century, as well as to notice the varying weight placed on these three goals at given periods in time (especially within the 20th century). From the late 20th century to the present, it appears that character development and intellectual pursuit have become subgoals or a vehicle of economic pursuit, which aligns with Mautner's (2014) argument that “we have moved from a market economy to a market society, in which [...] the market ‘envelops society’” (p. 462). Earlier flags were raised, as McKenzie (1994) picks up on a salient dichotomy regarding education:

Is education to be viewed as an industry, producing graduates and potential employees as needed for professional occupations, business and industry? [...] Alternatively, do the

goals of education include learning of a wider nature, the development of critical thinking, a preparation for good citizenship, an understanding of cultures, history and moral values, and the encouragement of artistic and creative potential? (p. 13)

This dichotomy is apparent within provincial and territorial mandate statements and policies, as well as much of the literature produced within the past several decades (Apple, 1985; Lemke, 2008; Mulderrig, 2003, 2008; Noddings, 2016; Westheimer, 2010, 2015) and it is well documented that the neoliberal economic model (the knowledge economy) has had a profound influence on how education is thought about and practiced across the globe (Giroux, 2014, 2016b; Lim, 2014; Stack, 2016). This dichotomy also appears to be a motivation for Critical Discourse Studies scholars interested in education (Lee, 2015; Mulderrig, 2003, 2008, 2011, 2012; Rogers, 2011) and critical education scholars alike (Apple, 2012, 2017; Giroux, 2011, 2014, 2016b; Spooner & McNinch, 2018; Westheimer, 2015). This chapter has broadly detailed the sociohistorical development and goals of public education in Canada since colonial settlement. The next chapter establishes CDS as the theoretical framework, followed by methodological framework and considerations that inform this study including the Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) and Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS).

CHAPTER 5: CRITICAL DISOURSE STUDIES

Discourse is the fundamental medium for action. (Potter & Hepburn, 2008, p. 275)

In the previous chapters, I outlined and discussed education and policy theory, relevant literature, and the history and context of education in Canada. To summarize some of the core and research-driving ideas established in the preceding chapters, I shall reiterate that education discourse is influenced by the contexts within which it is practiced, and in turn influences those and future contexts (Apple, 1985; Noddings, 2016). These ideas are often distilled and presented within education policy and curricula as education is viewed as preparation for participation (citizenship) in society (Lemke, 2007; Noddings, 2016; Westheimer, 2015). Given the discursive nature of the theories and *isms* that inform education and education policy, Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) is an appropriate approach to employ as it affords a rich set of frameworks and tools for “addressing the complexity of movement across educational sites, practices, and systems in a world where inequalities are global in scope” (Rogers, 2011, p. 1). The following chapter provides an overview of CDS as a theoretical framework with discussions of its key components including discourse, criticality, and analysis, and concepts including power, ideology, intertextuality, and interdiscursivity.

An Overview of Critical Discourse Studies

Although often referred to interchangeably as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Critical Discourse Studies (CDS), CDS has become the preferred term to describe the theories, methods, and practices of critical discourse analysts ([van Dijk, 2013](#); see also Flowerdew & Richardson, 2018; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). With theoretical roots in the Frankfurt School and drawing on several pre-established fields including Systemic Functional Linguistics, Critical Linguistics, and Discourse Studies, CDS has always been a multi- and trans- disciplinary

endeavour (Wodak & Meyer, 2016; see also Fairclough, 2016; van Dijk, 2011). The Frankfurt School emerged in the 1920s—with members including Horkheimer, Adorno, Althusser, and later, Habermas—as a neo-Marxist institution concerned with Critical Theory and deconstructing hegemony and oppression (Wodak & Meyer, 2016; see also Chandler & Munday, 2016). Wodak and Meyer (2016) note two core concepts of Critical Theory: 1) that it “should be directed at the totality of society in its historical specificity” (i.e., context), and 2) that it “should improve the understanding of society by integrating all the major social sciences, including economics, sociology, history, political science, anthropology, and psychology” (p. 6). In sum, Critical Theory is sociocontextually rooted and interdisciplinary.

Developed by Michael Halliday (Halliday, 1978; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; see also Eggins, 2004), Systemic Functional Linguistics views language as a system, the use of which involves choices from a range of possible structures and words that are tied to social context, and thus aims to study how language or acts of communication mean. In other words, looking at the lexical and grammatical level, SFL explores the functionality of language choices within texts to locate patterns and contrasts in order to understand how meaning(s) are made (Eggins, 2004). Informed by the ‘linguistic turn’ and originating from the work of Fowler, Hodge, Kress, and Trew (1979), Critical Linguistics sought to depart from traditional linguistics’ “preoccupation with form and formalism at the expense of social function” and investigates how political processes and ideologies are embedded within texts (Fairclough, 2003, para. 3). Discourse Studies (DS), largely developed by Stubbs (1983) and Gee (1985), draws on several pre-established disciplines including anthropology, sociology, linguistics, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, cognitive psychology, social psychology, and the study of communication (van

Dijk, 2011), and has mainly been affiliated with descriptive analysis of texts. The combination of these adjacent fields has proven to be a fruitful effort and paved the way for CDS.

During a small two-day symposium in 1991 at the University of Amsterdam, scholars Tuen van Dijk, Ruth Wodak, Norman Fairclough, Gunther Kress, and Theo van Leeuwen discussed the theories and methods of discourse studies, with the explicit addition of criticality (Wodak & Meyer, 2016, p. 4). What was then a small network of scholars has grown exponentially in only three decades, and each of these scholars has developed distinguished frameworks or approaches to conducting critical discourse analyses—van Dijk, the Socio-Cognitive Approach (1993, 2018); Wodak, the Discourse-Historical Approach (Reisigl & Wodak, 2016; Reisigl, 2018); Fairclough, the Dialectical-Relational Approach (Fairclough, 1995, 2016, 2018); Kress and van Leeuwen, multimodality and social actors (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001; Kress, 2010; van Leeuwen, 2008)—which have been taken up, further iterated, critiqued, and adapted over time.

While CDS boasts a diversity of theoretical underpinnings, approaches, and analytical frameworks, there are a few principles that unite the variety of approaches and their proponents:

- 1) Language use and discourse are social practices that are inherently ideological and have a reciprocal and iterative relationship with social structures and power relations (Fairclough, 1989; Wodak & Meyer, 2016)—that is, they can work dually to maintain and/or change social structures and power relations.
- 2) CDS emphasizes that “any critical interpretation [of text or discourse] must per force relate to the social context” (Fairclough et al., 2011, p. 362).
- 3) CDS is decidedly political in that it takes a stance against unequal power structures that keep certain groups (non-Whites, women, LGBTQ2IAP-persons, persons with

disabilities, and other ‘others’) at a disadvantage (Sheyholislami, 2011; Wodak & Meyer, 2016), and is thus a problem-oriented approach.

- 4) CDS does not claim objectivity (Lemke, 1995; Machin & Meyer, 2012; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). Rather, it acknowledges that each researcher has their own biases, agendas, and values, which they strive to be transparent about in their work.
- 5) Given the explicit political and subjective orientation to research (which garners much criticism), CDS aims to be self-reflexive both within the research process and of itself as a field of study (Flowerdew & Richardson, 2018; Marchi & Taylor, 2018; Wodak & Meyer, 2016).

To summarize some of these main tenets, I turn to Wodak & Meyer (2016), who assert that

[s]ocieties are changeable, human beings are meaning-makers, and the critical subject is not a detached observer but [they look] at the society with a fresh and sceptical eye.

Thus, the subject is not external to discourses on which [they reflect]. (p. 8)

CDS is thus rooted in a social constructionist paradigm (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). To further address the apprehension to self-proclaimed bias, it has become customary for CDS scholars to define and operationalize each component of the moniker, Critical Discourse Analysis, as related to their particular discipline(s), research project(s), and agenda (Fairclough, 1995; Wodak & Meyer, 2016)—which is where I take the reader next, beginning with discourse.

Discourse

Various disciplines and approaches to CDS subscribe to varying definitions of discourse—for example, discourse as simply or solely language use versus discourse as “a specific set of meanings expressed through particular forms and uses which give expression to particular institutions or social groups” (Flowerdew & Richardson, 2018, p. 2)—yet most agree on the constructionist understanding that discourse is a form of social practice (Berger &

Luckmann, 1967; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). In expanded words, discourse is a dialectical, socially constitutive practice—a “discursive event is shaped by situations, institutions and social structures, but it also shapes them” (Fairclough et al., 2011, p. 357). In this understanding, discourse can work dually to “sustain and reproduce the social status quo” and “[contribute] to transforming it” (Fairclough et al., 2011 p. 358). CDS is thus also interested in exploring the relationships *between* and trajectories *of* discourses and their manifestations in social reality and vice versa, which importantly, are not linear, but more akin to an ebb and flow. Aligning with the second view expressed by Flowerdew and Richardson (2018) above, essentially, discourses are “realised by all semiotic systems” (p. 3) (including language and multi-modal sign systems) and thus, all aspects of life, including education, are mediated through texts and discourses.

Where CDS scholars may depart from one another is in their operationalizing of discourse and potential distinctions between the blurry boundaries of text and discourse (see Wodak & Meyer, 2016, p. 6 for good discussion). Since this research loosely follows the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA), I borrow and adapt the DHA’s understanding of text and discourse: texts are viewed as tangible communicative utterances (talk, writing, images, etc.), while discourse is viewed more broadly as a collection of texts, formed around a particular topic (e.g., education discourse), style, register and/or genre (e.g., news discourse, Twitter discourse), and more abstractly as “a dynamic semiotic entity that is open to reinterpretation and continuation” (Reisigl & Wodak, 2016, p. 27). In other words, a discourse is made up of texts and vice versa. In this case, my research investigates a particular education discourse made up of policy-level education texts (PLETs). Although these texts form a discourse, and a powerful one at that, this discourse and its constituent texts are unlikely to be univocal—that is, they may be “sites of social struggle” in which “traces of a range of [ideologies] [struggle] for dominance and

hegemony” (Reisigl & Wodak, 2016, p. 26). Given the intricacies within and of discourses and the potential range of voices and ideologies, CDS scholars including those following the DHA take up investigations of the intertextual and interdiscursive relationships *within* and *between* texts and discourses, as well as their relationships to and manifestations of ideology and power (and their underlying concepts).

Ideology and Power. Many discourse scholars argue that all language use and therefore discourse is ideological (Eggins, 2004; Fairclough, 1992a; van Dijk, 1998). Ideologies—which Malešević (2011) refers to as forms of “*thought-action*” (p. 339), and which may be understood as sets of values and beliefs that are relatively stable and coherent (Wodak & Meyer, 2016)—are entwined in a dialogic relationship with discourse and power. Malešević (2011) explains that “ideology is a complex process whereby ideas and practices come together in the course of legitimizing or contesting power relations” (p. 339). As is the case with power, dominant ideologies are often latent or implicit, since they appear to be the status quo in a given society or discourse community. Thus, if we wish to identify and demystify ideologies—that is, to see what they “actually look like, how they work and how they are created”—we must “look closely at their *discursive manifestations*” (van Dijk, 1998, p. 6, emphasis in original). The DHA proposes that fully developed ideologies (those that typically bear an *ism* in their name—e.g., liberalism, conservatism, socialism) are often considered “grand narratives” which include “three interrelated imaginaries” (Reisigl & Wodak, 2016, p. 25):

- 1) a representational model of what society looks like, i.e., a model of the status quo (e.g., a communist model of a capitalist exploitative society);
- 2) a visionary model of what a society should look like in the future (e.g., a communist model of a classless society); and

- 3) a programmatic model of how the envisioned society could be achieved ‘on the path’ from the present to the future (e.g., a communist model of a proletarian revolution) (Reisigl & Wodak, 2016, p. 25)

These interconnected imaginaries afford a sense of shared identity amongst their subscribers (conscious or not), and in turn, imbue a given ideology with power.

As an abstract and often invisible concept, power is typically only explicitly noticed when dichotomized between *powerful* and *powerless*. According to Bernstein (1996), power relations construct, legitimize, and reproduce boundaries *between* the categories (and intersections) of social groups (gender, race, class, etc.), discourses, and agents, and thus always produce “dislocations” and “punctuations” in social space (p. 19). Control, on the other hand, operationalizes power, and thus “socializes individuals into these relationships” through establishing “legitimate forms of communication appropriate to the different categories” and intersections—“thus, power constructs relations *between*, and control [constructs] relations *within* given forms of interaction” (p. 19, emphasis in original; see [hegemony](#) below). Just as discourses mediate our lives, so do intersections of power and control. With this understanding in mind, for the purposes of my research, power will be considered the relative ability to do, say, and behave, both symbolically and materially (Lemke, 1995). In this understanding, marginalized and vulnerable groups are not considered entirely powerless, which leaves room for *intersectionality*, privilege, oppression, and resistance. The term *intersectionality* was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, and “has become the key analytic framework through which feminist scholars in various fields talk about the structural identities of race, class, gender, and sexuality” (Cooper, 2015, p. 1). Intersectionality rejects the idea of a “single-axis” (Cooper, 2015, p. 2) understanding of power and is situated “within a long history of black feminist

theorizing about interlocking systems of power and oppression” (p. 1) Intersectionality allows for a more nuanced and sociocontextually-informed understanding of power.

To concretize Bernstein’s conceptualization above, power is generally carried out through action (e.g., physical force and/or violence), exertion of authority (e.g., threats, promises, laws, policies), and control of social and material industry (e.g., means of production, transportation, and distribution through established institutions) (Reisigl & Wodak, 2016, p. 26). As such, Fairclough (1995) notes that, “power is conceptualized both in terms of asymmetries between participants in discourse events, and in terms of unequal capacity to control how texts are produced, distributed and consumed (and hence the shapes of texts) in particular sociocultural contexts” (pp. 1-2). In other words, through privileged access to resources and means of communication and distribution, particular individuals, groups, and organizations are able to influence and potentially control the content and structure of texts and discourses (means of production), while also adding and enforcing barriers to access for those considered outsiders or of lesser status (means of distribution/gatekeeping—see [exclusion](#) below). The DHA takes the perspective, that language itself is not powerful; rather, its use, maintenance, and reproduction by social actors is what fosters, maintains, and disrupts power. For example, a law is not powerful on its own; rather its creation, maintenance, and enforcement by powerful people and institutions and the subsequent adherence to it is what imbues it with power. The same may be said of education policy. Furthermore, power and ideology crave hegemony.

Hegemony. Conceptualized by Antonio Gramsci, hegemony refers to the process by which dominant groups in society discursively/rhetorically persuade or coerce subordinate groups to consent to dominant groups’ political and cultural values (Jackson Lears, 1985;

Machin & Mayr, 2012; van Dijk, 1993). Gramsci (1971) proposed that hegemony functions on both the civil (private) and political (state) levels through:

1) The “spontaneous” consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is “historically” caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production. 2) The apparatus of state coercive power which “legally” enforces discipline on those groups who do not “consent” either actively or passively. This apparatus is, however, constituted for the whole of society in anticipation of moments of crisis of command and direction when spontaneous consent has failed. (p. 12)

The first is attained through persuasion of the masses (which is inherently discursive),¹⁴ while the second is a countermeasure for tangible coercion that becomes entrenched as acceptable (legitimized) by virtue of its status. Echoing Gramsci, Lemke (1995) suggests that even though the values and ideologies of cultural hegemony are meant to serve and maintain the dominant class(es), all classes are socialized through state-sanctioned/official education and public discourse, which is how they become part of the common sense or status quo (p. 65). These overarching ideologies and discourses become entrenched, naturalized, and largely unquestioned, and law, policy, tradition, and violence are invoked when they are questioned and/or resisted.

Exclusion. As detailed in Chapter 2, topics such as citizenship and class as they relate to education and concepts of power, require an understanding of exclusion. That is, following Derrida’s notion of *différance*, “any ordered field or system is constituted by what it excludes” (Ryan, 2011, p. 26). Exclusion may occur in many forms, including of certain groups or individuals (social actors) and/or of information, ideas, and discourses. Exclusion may or may not leave traces (see van Leeuwen, 2008), but those interested in texts and discourses may refer

¹⁴ Gramsci argued that this persuasion is often done by the State’s ‘deputies’: intellectuals (p. 12-13). The irony is not lost on me.

to and explore *ellipsis* (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014), *absence* (Partington & Duguid, 2018; van Leeuwen, 2008) or *textual silence* (Huckin, 2002)—all discussed below. Such explorations are generally carried out with the understanding that what is missing or omitted from the text may be done so strategically.

Huckin (2002) devised a five-category taxonomy of silences that may be noticed and traced within texts: speech-act silence, presuppositional silence, discreet silences, genre-based silences, and manipulative silences. Since speech-act silences are not relevant to my study, I skip defining and discussing them (see Huckin, 2002, pp. 348-49). Presuppositional silences involve the omission of information that the interlocutor assumes the audience knows or is “easily recoverable from the context” (p. 349). While presuppositional silence is often intended for efficiency, it may not be “innocent” (p. 350)—that is, it may background or downplay certain aspects strategically. Discreet silences refer to the exclusion of “sensitive” information or topics, “either to avoid offending the reader or to avoid infringing on the privacy of another person or interest” and are often steeped in societal or cultural conventions (p. 350). Genre-based silences involve “omissions that are conventional to a particular genre” and may also be “sensitive to cultural differences” (p. 351). Finally, manipulative silences “are those that intentionally conceal relevant information” from the audience which generally benefit the interlocutor (Huckin, 2002, p. 351). Manipulative silences are common in our everyday/public discourses including advertising, news, political campaigns, and historical texts. Manipulation is a strategic discursive tactic to maintain and or gain power and control which is understood to “reproduce inequality” (van Dijk, 2006). CDS is concerned with examining discourse, ideology and power, and highlighting and deconstructing their relationship to one another in a critical manner. These relationships are often traced through intertextuality, interdiscursivity, and (re)contextualization.

Intertextuality, Interdiscursivity, and (Re)contextualization. In his discussion of language, ideology, and power, Lemke (1995) describes intertextuality as “one of the most useful principles of social semiotics, and so of textual politics” (p. 8). In synthesizing various ideas and principles (mainly Bakhtin),¹⁵ the term intertextuality was coined by Julia Kristeva in the 1960s as a comprehensive perspective from which to view and understand the world (Kristeva, 2002; Lemke, 1995). Bakhtin (1986) notes that

Utterances are not indifferent to one another, and are not self-sufficient; they are aware of and mutually reflect one another. These mutual reflections determine their character. Each utterance is filled with echoes and reverberations of other utterances to which it is related by the communality of the sphere of speech communication. Every utterance must be regarded primarily as a *response* to preceding utterances of the given sphere (we understand the word “response” here in the broadest sense). Each utterance refutes, affirms, supplements, and relies on the others, presupposes them to be known, and somehow takes them into account. [...] each utterance is filled with various kinds of responsive reactions to other utterances of the given sphere of speech communication. (p. 91)

In other words, texts are iteratively and infinitely embedded in new texts, and in focusing on this *responsiveness* as phenomena, Bakhtin believed that we might trace these prior influences.

Building from this idea, Kristeva (2002) states that,

Intertextuality is a way of placing us, readers, not only in front of a more or less complicated and interwoven structure (the first meaning of “texture”), but also within an on-going process of signifying that goes all the way back to the semiotic plurality, under several layers of the significant. Intertextuality accesses the semiotic, that trans-verbal reality of the psyche from which all meanings emerge. (p. 9)

¹⁵ Although mainly influenced by Bakhtin’s *dialogism* or *translinguistic* approach to textual analysis (see Bakhtin, 1986), Kristeva (2002) notes that she was also influenced by Barthes and Foucault.

In other words, our social realities and the texts within them are profoundly connected to one another in an intricate web. An immediate illustration of intertextuality is Kristeva's development of the concept from Bakhtin's work, and my referencing them to explicate.

For CDS purposes, Fairclough (1992b) states that intertextuality “gives a way into the complexity of discursive events (realized in the heterogeneity of texts, in meaning, form, and style)” (p. 269). Intertextuality acts as a dialogue between the text itself, the texts of others (both previous and forthcoming), as well as the reader's and/or audiences' own texts (experiences, culture, social status, and so forth) (Allen, 2000). So, while intertextuality essentially reveals a text within a text within a text (and so on) (Kristeva, 2002), it also spans across genres, time, and ideologies (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). Instances of intertextuality can be spotted through hyperlinks, quotations, citation and references to other research, contextual or historical information, and so on.

Intertextuality is sibling to *interdiscursivity* (coined by Fairclough, 1992b). As Reisigl and Wodak (2001) note, interdiscursivity refers to “both the mutual relationships of discourses and the connection, intersecting or overlapping, of different discourses ‘within’ a particular heterogenous linguistic product’ (p. 37)—that is, “which genres, discourses and styles it draws upon, and how it works them into particular articulations” (Fairclough, 2016, p. 90), and vice versa. In more formal types of texts and discourses, this is often done through topics and subtopics. To exemplify, the policy-level education discourse (PLED) collected incorporate and reference public, academic, and economic texts and discourses as well as deliberations on various subtopics and/or concepts such as testing and lifelong learning. These texts also often blend genres, from pedagogy to strategic planning to action and service planning.

Intertextuality and interdiscursivity as concepts incorporate notions of recontextualization, which is to say that these continuing dialogues and borrowed discourses are reconstituted and recontextualized *within* and *by* texts and discourses as well as their audiences. When texts make direct or discrete reference to other texts or discourses through homage, evocation, paralleling, re-creation/imagining, appropriation, and the like, these are acts of intertextuality, interdiscursivity, and re/inter -contextualization, and whether or not we recognize a particular reference influences our understanding of that text. Likewise, when we think or say that a particular text or discourse ‘*didn’t age well*’, we have (re)interpreted that text in a new or different context with potentially different understandings and social norms, thus recontextualizing it. In fact, whenever we consume a text, we recontextualize it by virtue of our desire to understand it; we also reconstitute texts when we summarize, paraphrase, quote, or retell them. Considering recontextualization is particularly important in this study as policies often recontextualize ideas and initiatives from one another or from a particular authority, which is generally referred to as policy borrowing or policy diffusion (as discussed in Chapter 3). Those investigating texts and discourses may opt to do so critically.

Criticality

In the CDS perspective, the term *critical* is drawn mainly from the Frankfurt School, Critical Linguistics, and Critical Theory with an overall aim of awareness and emancipation through reflective practice (Wodak & Meyer, 2016), or more fittingly, *praxis*—“reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (Freire, 1996, p. 33). Although those doing CDA largely focus on discourses of power, which often leads to negative critiques of such discourses, it is important to note that *critical* does not necessarily mean negative or pessimistic. Rather,

criticality is meant to be open-minded and mind-opening as it calls for consideration of the multiplicities that inform texts and discourses. Mautner (2016) explains that

Analysing discourse is understood as the systematic attempt to identify patterns in text, link them to patterns in the context, and vice versa. Doing so *critically* means unveiling and challenging taken-for-granted assumptions about language and the social, as well as recognizing discourse as a potentially powerful agent in social change. (p. 157, emphasis in original)

Here, emphasis should be placed on the transformative aspirations of CDS as an approach to or framework for research. As detailed in earlier chapters, critical perspectives of education and education discourse are well established and theoretically and methodologically underpin my research. The critical and emancipatory aims of my research involve seeking opportunities or space for decolonization and critical consciousness, viewing humans (students and citizens) as valuable by virtue of *being* rather than by their potential or actual productivity/production.

Analysis

As previously mentioned, CDS emphasizes the need to consider the sociocontextual factors in which texts and discourses are produced and consumed. To reiterate Mautner's assertion (above), the analysis of discourse involves methodical or systematic investigation of texts in connection to their contexts—that is, at the micro and macro levels, and sometimes the meso level. Micro analysis involves close exploration and investigation at the level of the text by way of a variety of analytic tools and lenses. At this level, one might look at the linguistic, grammatical, and semiotic features and processes of a text including word choice, transitivity (who is doing what to whom in what circumstances), agency, patterns/repetition, metaphor, semantic prosody, structure, etc. Macro analysis involves the explicit investigation of the immediate and broader sociocontextual factors that inform a given text. This involves situating

and interpreting the findings at the micro level to both the stylistic and generic aspects of a given text and possible historical, social, political, economic, and cultural factors that inform and are informed by the text and its various discourses and ideologies. Many CDS frameworks connect micro and macro analysis through meso level analysis. However, this level is often the most difficult to adequately analyze and conceptualize because it generally involves the level of material practices that inform the makeup and content of a particular text—the social space/context and norms of interlocutors, organizations, *inter alia*, that produce the text. This analytic process is both dialogic and abductive in that the research moves back and forth between micro, meso, and macro analysis and the interpretation and explanation of the findings are continually reshaped by this movement (Wodak & Meyer, 2016).

This chapter has described and defined the components that make up the theoretical framework for this study. To recap, CDS encompasses critical and problem-oriented approaches to discourse analysis which are multi and trans disciplinary and contextually sensitive. The next chapter details the kindred methodological frameworks that I combine for this study—the Discourse-Historical Approach and Corpus Assisted Discourse Studies.

CHAPTER 6: METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK AND CONSIDERATIONS

The previous chapter established CDS as the approach to conducting this research through a description of the historical influences and trajectory of the field, its objectives, and embedded theoretical concepts. This chapter delineates the dual methodological framework adopted for this study—the discourse-historical approach (DHA) and corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS)—and defines various relevant discourse and corpus analytic tools and terms.

The Discourse-Historical Approach

The Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) was developed by Ruth Wodak and colleagues (such as Martin Reisigl) in the late 1980s through a large study of anti-Semitic stereotypes within discourses surrounding the Austrian presidential campaign of Kurt Waldheim in 1986 (Reisigl, 2018). Subject-wise, the DHA has often researched topics or discourses of identity, politics, discrimination and migration, refugees, and asylum seekers (Wodak & van Dijk, 2000; Wodak & Weiss, 2005; see also Galasinka & Krzyżanowski, 2008; Krzyżanowski & Wodak, 2008) and more recently, right-wing populism, fascism, and multi/social media (Wodak, 2015; Wodak & Forchtner, 2014; Wodak et al., 2013), as well as climate change and environmental discourses (Krzyżanowski, 2015; Reisigl & Wodak, 2016). Reisigl (2018) states that the DHA “considers discourse analysis not just to be a method of language analysis, but a multidimensional project incorporating theory, methods, methodology and empirically based research practices that yield concrete social applications” (p. 48). Furthermore, as its name suggests, the DHA places emphasis on the “historical anchoring” (Reisigl, 2018, p. 49) of discourses, texts, and actors—that is, interpreting the data within and through its socio-historical context(s) of both the past and present. In summation, the DHA is a problem oriented, interdisciplinary approach which draws from both ‘grand’ (e.g., social constructionism) and

‘middle-range’ (e.g., critical pedagogy, neoliberalism) theories, considers multiple sites of research, multiple methods of data analysis, and often integrates ethnography and fieldwork (sociological inquiry). In other words, this multiplicity affords the DHA a deep affinity with *triangulation* (Reisigl & Wodak, 2016, pp. 26 and 31).

Aside from its usual focus on social actors (a key preoccupation in my work), the DHA is the only CDS approach that pairs discourse analysis with sociological inquiry within its holistic framework. While Reisigl and Wodak (2016) advocate for sociological methods/inquiry in which the researcher studies the issue/phenomena from inside (case study, ethnography), they acknowledge that not every study can accomplish this due to various limitations (time, resources, etc.). Furthermore, since the research questions drive the methods, sociological inquiry may not make sense for certain studies, and researchers are free to adopt and adapt the DHA in ways that fit the social problem and research questions. In the following two subsections, I outline some of the theoretical and methodological considerations and concepts of the DHA.

Theoretical Considerations of the DHA

The DHA conceptualizes three integral and interrelated concepts of CDS: discourse, context, critique (Reisigl, 2018, pp. 50-54). These concepts inform the methodological procedures of the DHA, including its table of Discursive Strategies (related to the concept of discourse; see Figure 3 below) which propose a set of five questions analysts can ask of their text(s). First, as described above, the “semantic fuzziness” (Wodak et al., 2009, p. 7) of the term discourse has motivated the DHA’s thorough development of the concept of discourse, which I discussed in the previous chapter. Two additional features of discourse outlined by Reisigl (2018) that were not discussed in the previous chapter are:

- Discourses are situated within fields of action—e.g., economic, political—that ultimately functionally frame discourses and mediate or form parts of the mechanisms and structures of knowledge, institutions, social and power relationships and identities, etc. (termed *dispositifs* by Reisiql, who does not cite Foucault, p. 52).
- Discourses are made up of multiple and evolving perspectives (both in the historical and discursive sense), which tend to form camps, arguments, or “claims of truth” around social problems. As its name suggests, special attention is paid to these historical trajectories (p. 52).

These notions of discourse have been attended to through the previous chapters, which establish education as a field of action that is inextricably linked to political and economic fields of action and situated within particular orientations to both education (e.g., progressive) and those involved in it (e.g., students).

Second, the concept of context is crucial for CDS and the DHA as discourse is often conceived as “text in context” (Reisiql, 2018, p. 53). The DHA classifies four dimensions of context which fall into micro, meso, and macro levels:

- 1) The immediate, language internal co-text and co-discourse regards thematic and syntactic coherences, lexical solidarities, collocations, connotations, implications, presuppositions and local interactive processes;
- 2) The intertextual and interdiscursive relationship between utterances, texts, genres and discourses (e.g., with respect to discourse representation, allusions, evocations) is a further contextual research dimension;
- 3) Social factors and institutional frames of a specific context of situation include: degree of formality, place, time, occasion, addressees, interactive and political roles, political and ideological orientation, gender, age, profession, level of education, ethnic, regional, national, religious identities, etc.

4) On a meso- and macro-level, the broader sociopolitical and historical context is integrated into the analysis. At this point, fields of action and the history of the discursive event as well as of discourse topics are looked at. (Reisigl, 2018, p. 53)

Although the boundaries between these levels are fuzzy, for the purposes of this research, the first dimension falls into the category of micro-analysis (level of the texts); the second dimension is considered meso-level, as I trace features of the micro-analysis across multiple texts as well as to corresponding intertextual, interdiscursive, and recontextualized references; the third dimension wades between micro- and meso- level analysis through attention to immediate contextual information involving discursive construction and text production; while the fourth dimension moves between meso- and macro- analysis of text and discourse production as it relates to broader historical and sociopolitical trajectories and moments. To better illustrate the third and fourth dimension: in looking at the discursive construction of students and citizens, I consider both the level at which the text is produced (provincial ministries/departments of education), including the immediate context (time, governmental party in power, demographic information) in which the text was produced, as well as the broader socio- historical, economic, and political factors that may have influenced text production and discursive constructions (e.g., PISA scores, local/regional events and politics).

Finally, the concept of critique is largely affiliated with the early Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School, Foucault's notions of critique, and Habermas' deliberative democracy and discourse ethics. The DHA lists three forms: text or discourse immanent critique, socio-diagnostic critique, and prospective critique (see Reisigl, 2018, pp. 50-51). My research mainly falls within the second, which "aims at exposing manipulation in and by discourse, at revealing ethically problematic aspects of discursive practices", focusing "on discrepancies between discursive and other social practices and functions as a form of social control" and relying on

“social, historical and political background knowledge” to inform critiques (Reisigl, 2018, p. 51). However, important to all of these forms of critique is a commitment to rationality, awareness, empathy, justice, solidarity, and frankness. In other words, the DHA and the larger field of CDS is oriented toward social justice and well-being. Now that these concepts have been explored and discussed, I turn to the methodological considerations of the DHA as they relate to my research.

Methodological Considerations of the DHA and the CDA Toolbox

Figure 3 provides a detailed description of five discursive strategies that may be critically explored by discourse analysts.

Figure 3

DHA's Discursive Strategies (Reisigl, 2018, p. 52; see also Reisigl & Wodak, 2016)

Table 3.1 Discursive Strategies in the DHA

<i>Questions to approach discursive features</i>	<i>Discursive strategies</i>	<i>Purpose</i>
How are persons, objects, phenomena, events, processes and actions named and referred to linguistically in the discourse in question?	nomination	discursive construction of social actors discursive construction of objects, phenomena, events discursive construction of processes and actions
What characteristics or qualities are attributed to social actors, objects, phenomena, events, processes and actions mentioned in the discourse?	predication	discursive characterization of social actors, objects, phenomena, events processes and actions (e.g., positively or negatively)
What arguments are employed in discourse?	argumentation	persuading addressees of the validity of specific claims of truth and normative rightness
From what perspective are these nominations, attributions, arguments expressed?	perspectivisation	positioning the speaker's or writer's point of view and expressing involvement or distance
Are the respective utterances articulated overtly, are they intensified or mitigated?	mitigation and intensification	modifying the illocutionary force of utterances in respect to their epistemic or deontic status

The main focus of my research is on the discursive construction and characterization of social actors (students, learners, citizens)—or nomination and predication. Nomination strategies are discursive strategies that construct and represent social actors, actions, processes, events, phenomena, and objects (Reisigl & Wodak, 2016, p. 33). These strategies are made up of

linguistic or discursive devices such as membership categorization (them/us), metaphors, and transitive processes (verbs and nouns) (p. 33). Predication strategies incorporate the “discursive qualification of social actors”, actions, processes, events, phenomena, and objects (p. 33).

Devices include “evaluative attributions of negative or positive traits” which are often stereotypical in nature, as well as collocation, adjectives and pronouns, simile and metaphor, comparison, euphemism, allusions, etc. (p. 33).

In order to unpack, analyze, and interpret the output of the corpus analysis and corresponding excerpts, I incorporate some focus on particular linguistic and discursive strategies and devices including social actor/agency, metaphor, SFL terms and tools, synthetic personalization, marketization, and globalization, and repetition and overlexicalization.

Social Actor. *Social actor* generally refers to a conscious—thinking, feeling—being who is capable of acting in and upon the world as well as being acted upon. For the purposes of my research, *social actors* are “a discourse analytical category” made up of “textual instantiations of models of the self and others, both individual and collective” (Koller, 2009, para. 1). In other words, social actors may be recognized by any reference to a human(s) (and sometimes organizations) within a text through a variety of linguistic and/or strategic means such as individual, proper, and collective nouns and deictics. As a discourse analytic category, social actors may be counted and/or examined in order to understand their relative centrality within text(s) (e.g., frequency, which informs repetition, absence, and exclusion) as well as their representation (e.g., characterization, roles, level of agency which inform discursive construction and/or identity) (see Koller, 2009; van Leeuwen, 2008). It is important to note that “social actors do not necessarily map onto grammatical actors” (Koller, 2009, para. 13; see also van Leeuwen, 2008)—that is, in a clause or sentence, the grammatical actor may be any agentive entity (human

or non) represented in the subject or object position (see Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Thus, social actors are generally also grammatical actors, but grammatical actors may not be social actors. For instance, in the clause “the sun is shining”, the sun is a grammatical actor, but not a social actor, while in the clause “students attend school”, students are both the grammatical actor and social actor.

In order to explore the representation of social actors, I draw loosely on van Leeuwen’s (2008) taxonomy of social actors or “social actor network” (p. 52) reproduced in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4
van Leeuwen’s (2008) Social Actor Network (p. 52)

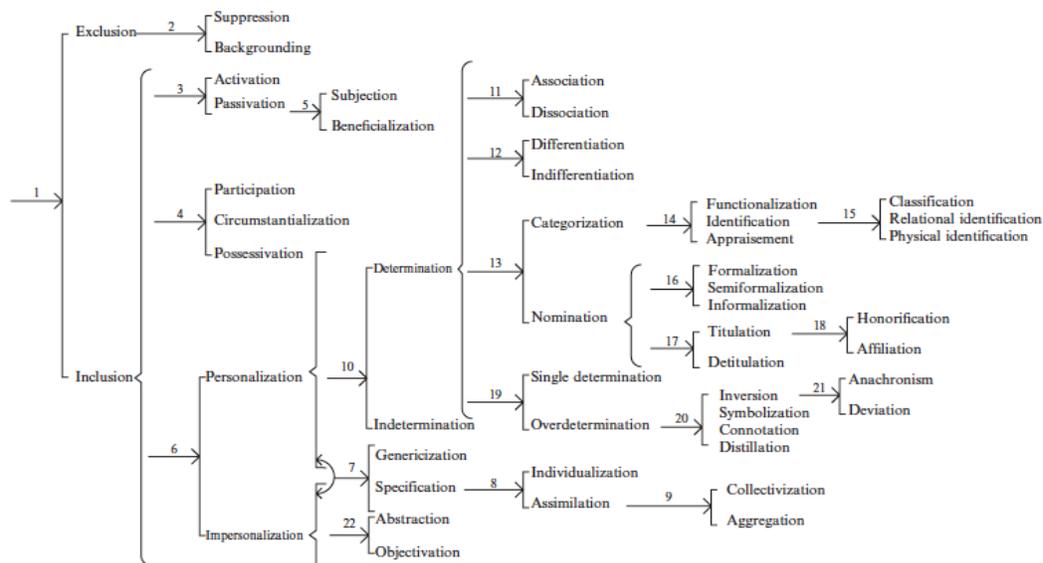


TABLE 2.4. Social Actor Network

Although I do not follow this taxonomy meticulously, I define some of the pertinent delineations as they are referenced in Chapters 8 (Findings) and 9 (Discussion); however, for a more in-depth description, see van Leeuwen (2008). Note that the square brackets represent an “either-or choice” while the rounded brackets represent a “simultaneous choice” (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 51). In this taxonomy one begins with identifying whether a social actor has been included or excluded—“representations include or exclude social actors to suit their interest and purpose in

relation to the readers for whom they are intended” (van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 28). Exclusion may be innocent or strategic and may leave some or no traces in the representation (pp. 28-29). In education policy, we are likely to expect references to social actors including students, teachers, parents, principals, and other education stakeholders, but are unlikely to expect references to weather reporters (innocent, no trace exclusion). However, where actions or processes occur without an agent/actor (usually carried out through passive structures and nominalization), such an exclusion leaves a trace, which may be further distinguished as *suppression* or *backgrounding*, and may garner questions regarding *who* has been excluded and *why* (p. 29). Suppression refers to an absolute absence of a particular (potentially relevant) social actor anywhere in the text, while backgrounding “deemphasize[s]” a social actor referenced elsewhere in the text (p. 29; see also Partington & Duguid, 2018). Where a social actor is referenced, they are understood to be *included*, and the investigator may move further through the delineations of the taxonomy.

The first level of *inclusion* is mainly realized through functional grammar (see Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). As Figure 4 shows, included social actors may be represented through *activation* or *passivation*; *participation*, *circumstantialization*, or *possessivation*; and/or *personalization* or *impersonalization*. A social actor may be *activated* or *passivated* based on their grammatical positioning within a clause—that is, if the social actor is in the subject position, they are activated and if the social actor is in the goal position, they are passivated (pp. 32-33; see below). Passivation has two further categorizations: *subjection*, wherein “social actors are treated as objects”, and *beneficialization*, wherein social actors “benefit” (positively or negatively) from the action (p. 33). *Participation* is most simply realized by the social actor being in the subject position (e.g., ‘students develop critical thinking’); *circumstantialization* is

generally realized through prepositions (e.g., by or from— ‘students receive feedback from teachers’); *possessivation* may be realized through possessive pronouns (e.g., our) as well as “prepositional phrases with *of* postmodifying a nominalization or process noun” (‘the development of students’) (p. 34, emphasis in original). However, possessivation can also lead to activation if a possessive pronoun precedes a nominalized process and passivation if it precedes a named social actor (e.g., ‘our leadership’ versus ‘our students’).

Personalization is “realized by personal or possessive pronouns, proper names, or nouns (and sometimes adjectives [...]) whose meaning includes the feature ‘human,’” while *impersonalization* is realized by the opposite: “abstract nouns” or “concrete nouns whose meanings do not include the semantic feature ‘human’” (p. 46). Furthermore, impersonalization may work to “background the identity and/or role of social actors; [...] lend impersonal authority or force to an action or quality of a social actor; and [/or ...] add positive or negative connotations to an action or utterance of a social actor” (p. 47). As Figure 4 shows, impersonalization carries two distinctions: *abstraction* and *objectivation*. Abstraction is realized through “qualit[ies] assigned” to implicit social actors “by and in the representation” (p. 46) and often carries connotative meanings (p. 47); van Leeuwen uses a news article example “Australia is in danger of saddling itself up with a lot of unwanted problems”, in which the unwanted problems are an abstraction of immigrants. *Objectivation* is realized through “reference[s] to a place or thing closely associated either with their person or with the action in which they are represented as being engaged” (p. 46) which is further categorized into four reference types:

- *Spatialization*: references a place closely associated with the social actor—for instance, Canadian, Ontarian, Sudburian.

- *Utterance autonomization*: references a social actor's implicit utterances, often lending a sense of expertise or officiality—for instance, 'the policy states', 'the research shows', 'test scores', 'literacy rates'.
- *Instrumentalization*: references a social actor by the instrument used to carry out an action—for instance, 'the chalkboard displayed today's lesson'.
- *Somatization*: references a social actor by one or more parts of the body, with or without possessive premodification, which may work to "alienate" or objectify the social actor (p. 47)—for instance, 'hand-holding', 'all legs', respectively.

Spatialization and utterance autonomization are common features in formal and organizational discourse, and thus in this collected corpus.

While the entirety of the taxonomy is important, I define the rest of the relevant categorizations in bullets below:

- *Overdetermination*: when social actors are represented as engaging or participating in more than one social practice at the same time (pp. 48-49). For example, teachers are often assigned various roles including 'delivering instruction', 'giving feedback', 'guiding students', 'providing intellectual and emotional support'.
- *Genericization*: when social actors are represented as classes rather than specific individuals. It is typically realized through plural nouns (children) or single nouns with definite articles (the child/a child), generally in present tense constructions, and may work to 'other' or distance the social actor from the audience's social reality (pp. 35-36).
- *Specification*: when social actors are represented as specific cases (p. 35).
 - *Individualization*: when social actors are referred to as individuals; realized in the singular form (p. 37).

- *Assimilation*: when social actors are represented in groups; realized in plural form ('people') or mass nouns ('the community') (p. 37).
 - *Aggregation*: when social actors are quantified, either definitely or indefinitely—for example, '1000 students', 'most', 'many', 'some'. "quantifies groups of participants, treating them as statistics" (p. 37)—for example, 'Canadian students scored in the top ten in the last round of PISA testing'.
 - *Collectivization*: when social actors are represented together (collectively)—may be realized by first person plural (we), an anthropomorphizing of a nation, place, or organization (Canada, the government), or the suffix 'ist' added to an ism (feminists). May work to signal group cohesion (collective identity), solidarity, agreement, and/or consent (p. 37).
- *Functionalization*: when social actors are identified through something they do and typically are realized through nominalized verbs with corresponding suffixes. For example, *student*, *teacher*, *organizer*, *guardian* (p. 42).
- *Identification*: when social actors are represented by aspects of their identity including age, gender, class, sexual orientation, race, culture, religion, dis/ability, and so on. This may be realized by modifiers that precede the social actor(s) or through relational processes (is/are, has/have) (p. 42).

While these classifications may seem innocuous or based in the grammatical or generic constrictions of a particular text, they are considered textual choices that 1) may work together strategically and 2) affect the discursive construction(s) and agency of particular social actors.

Finally, it is also important to highlight van Leeuwen's (2008) assertion that

[...] in actual discursive practices, the choices need not always be rigidly either-or. Boundaries can be blurred deliberately, for the purpose of achieving specific representational effects, and social actors can be, for instance, both classified and functionalized. In such cases, the categories remain nevertheless distinct and useful for making explicit how the social actors are represented. (p. 53)

Thus, for example, the term *students* within my collected texts may be considered a genericization, functionalization, or specification, and in some cases more than one may be true within the same sentence. Furthermore, in many cases aspects of students' identities are represented (identification) and/or students are aggregated—*students with special needs*, *Indigenous students*, *immigrant students*; *a number of students*, *85% of students*; *many Indigenous students*.

Metaphor. Metaphor is deeply enmeshed in our “ordinary conceptual system” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 3)—that is, how we think about and act in the world. More than a “characteristic of language”, metaphor annotates “our everyday functioning, down to the most mundane details” (p. 3). Underlying assumptions and ideologies are embedded in the common metaphors that frame and/or contribute to our understandings, systems, and institutions, and repeated use of specific metaphors can lead to entrenchment (Hart, 2008). Two common or entrenched metaphors include, *time is money* and *argument is war* (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). As Lakoff and Johnson explain, these metaphors are created through a series of associations (subcategorizations) such as that time is a limited resource and is thus valued as a commodity which can be *spent*, *invested*, *lost*, *gained*, *budgeted*, *wasted* and so on (pp. 7-9). Hart (2008) suggests that “given their socially shared nature” entrenched metaphors can “comprise part of semantic memory” (p. 98). Given that metaphors become common-sense conceptualizations in

our everyday lives which are mediated by semiotic systems including language-use and discourse, it behooves many CDS researchers to pay attention to and deconstruct the metaphors and subcategories found within texts and discourses they analyze (Charteris-Black, 2014; Fairclough, 1989; Hart, 2008; Lee, 2015; Lim, 2014).

Critical metaphor analysis “involves demonstrating how metaphors are used systematically to create political myths and discourses of legitimization and delegitimization that give rise to ideologies and world views” (Charteris-Black, 2014, p. 174). Charteris-Black conceptualizes four stages of critical metaphor analysis, including contextual analysis, metaphor identification, metaphor interpretation, and metaphor explanation. While fairly self-explanatory, these stages help to highlight and deconstruct the common-sense assumptions and ideologies that make-up a given metaphor. For instance, there are many “toxic” (Shariatmadari, [2015](#)) metaphors attributed to migration including immigrants as natural disasters, insects, animals, and marauders (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Shariatmadari, 2015), which are dehumanizing and contribute to xenophobic and racist ideologies embedded in anti-immigration discourse. As listed in the Introduction, there are also several common or entrenched metaphors found in education discourse including the banking model (Freire, 1996).

SFL Terms and Tools: Transitivity, Mood, and Modality. Although I do not conduct in depth/methodical SFL analysis in this study, some of the terminology is helpful for describing particular linguistic and discursive processes and strategies. SFL is broken into three broad categories: ideational/experiential metafunction, interpersonal metafunction, and textual metafunction (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014; see also Eggins, 2004; Young et al., 2018). The main analytical approach within the ideational metafunction is Transitivity, which looks at ‘who is doing what, to whom, in which contexts’. This is carried out by looking at the grammatical

makeup of clauses (e.g., subject, verb, object/goal), and classifying verb processes as either material, relational, behavioural, mental, verbal, or existential (see [Appendix A](#)). Classifying these processes can help in determining the potential roles of and relative agency of the subject (actor), in this case, students and citizens. For instance, relational processes are categorized as states of being and are thus not affiliated with action (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). While material, behavioural, and mental processes fall within the category of “doing” (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014, p. 216), behavioural processes are “on the borderline between ‘material’ and ‘mental’”—“represent[ing] the outer manifestations of inner workings, the acting out of processes of consciousness (e.g. people are laughing) and physiological states (e.g. they were sleeping)” (p. 215). Thus, material processes are most affiliated with agency, followed by behavioural, then mental; however, context also influences the level of agency.

Within the Interpersonal Metafunction, two important analytical tools are Mood and Modality. Mood categorizes a clause/sentence into three possibilities: declarative (giving information), imperative (demanding information or action), and interrogative (asking for information or action). Declarative statements generally have a subject-verb-object construction; imperatives start with a verb; and interrogatives are constructed as questions. However, given the strategic nature of most text and discourse, the true intent may be disguised, especially when power is at play. For example, ‘can you close the door, please?’ is rather just a polite way of demanding that the door be closed. Modality involves ways of expressing probability, frequency, obligation, and/or inclination through words such as *can*, *must*, *will*, and the like. Modality is further categorized by level of certainty. For instance, *will* expresses high certainty while *may* expresses low certainty (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). It is often used as method of hedging and relates to the level of responsibility the interlocutor is willing to take or give.

Modern Discursive Strategies: Synthetic Personalization, Marketization, and Globalization. These three terms, conceptualized by Fairclough, describe particular linguistic strategies used (together) in the “discourse[s] of modern society” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 52). Fairclough (1995) defines synthetic personalization as “the simulation of private, face-to-face, person-to-person discourse in public mass-audience discourse” which represents the “breaking down of divisions between public and private domains” (p. 80). It ultimately aims to disarm/charm the audience by softening or disguising power imbalances, often to gain passive or active consent.

Marketization is a “discoursal process” represented by the “reconstruction on a market basis of domains which were once relatively insulated from markets, economically, in terms of social relations, and in terms of cultural values and identities” (e.g., the commodification of education and other public goods and services), often carried out through strategies embedded in advertising (Fairclough, 1995, p. 19). Marketization may be identified through the use of synthetic personalization, second person pronouns (we, our, us), characterizing institutions and individuals, invoking elements of prestige or rapport, commands/imperative Mood, and Modality (probability and obligation) (Young et al., 2018, p. 224). Finally, globalization as an ideological discursive process, entails the “represent[ation] [of] globalization as not only more complete than it is, but as a simple fact of life which we cannot (if we are sound of mind) dream of questioning or challenging” (Fairclough, 2013, p. 207). It may be identified through absence of agency/passive constructions, nominalization, non-human or inanimate actors, timeless present tense, cascading lists and clauses without indications/explanations of their relationship to one another (parataxis), and presupposition of common knowledge or ground which foregoes explanation (Young et al., 2018, p. 224).

Repetition and Overlexicalization. Repetition and overlexicalization are of concern for discourse analysts as they signal (over)emphasis and may be indicative of persuasion. Repetition can signal patterns and add weight to a particular word or topic in texts, as well as continually remind the audience that something is important. Closely related to repetition, overlexicalization (Fowler et al., 1979) occurs where there a number of “synonymous or nearly-synonymous” terms repeated throughout a text or excerpt which signals “areas of intense preoccupation” (p. 211) or “over-persuasion” (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 37) and may illuminate the values and ideologies of the producer(s) of the text. Furthermore, both repetition and overlexicalization are features of marketized and globalized discourse (Fairclough, 1993; see also Young et al., 2018, pp. 175-228). In order to carry out this critical analysis, I first employ CADS methods.

Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies

CADS is theoretically and methodologically informed by Corpus Linguistics (Sinclair, 1991), Discourse Studies, and SFL. With the onslaught of accessible technology in the late 20th century, Corpus Linguistics (CL) gained a foothold in linguistics communities as a way to find and investigate linguistic patterns across large bodies of texts, which lent a quantitative edge to such research as it could 1) make generalizations about particular language varieties and 2) be replicated by further study (Subtirelu & Baker, 2018)—which proved fruitful for studying language acquisition, lexicography, morphology, and the like (Mautner, 2007). Put simply, CL is the study of authentic language use through computer-assisted examination of a large body (*corpus*) or large bodies (*corpora*) of text (Baker, 2006). Over the years, several large general corpora databases such as the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) and English Web (SpiderLing, 2015) have been built and include billions of words from a variety of written and spoken texts from multiple disciplines and genres (e.g., news, academic journals, political

speeches). Specialized sub/corpora, made up of particular and/or limited types of texts (e.g., legal proceedings) have also been built, and researchers can opt to build their own corpus/corpora. Furthermore, corpora can be mono- or multi- lingual, diachronic, and even multimodal. Thus, corpus studies can involve investigations of particular linguistic phenomena within a (reference) corpus, comparison of a chosen text or set of texts to general or specialized reference corpora, comparison of two or more researcher-compiled corpora, or a combination of these. This study involves the investigation of a small self-compiled corpus, which has been divided into several subcorpora by province. The corpus acts as both a source of analysis and a reference corpus for the subcorpora. There are also occasional comparisons to established reference corpora, mainly English Web, 2015 (EnTenTen15).

While there is continued debate surrounding CL's status as a theory or methodology, I share in Sinclair (1991), Leech (1992) and Vessey's (2016) perspective that CL can operate as both, with the added vestige that it depends on how it is used or taken up by the researcher. As Vessey (2016) suggests, CL has a dialogical relationship with theory and methodology: as a theory, CL attempts to "explain the function of language in society according to attested data," and as a methodology, it hosts "a set of ever-expanding tools for linguistic analysis," which in turn contributes to and enhances its function as a theory (p. 63). In my case, as a branch of CL, Corpus Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS) and its toolbox of methods acts as a methodological approach for carrying out my research.

Developed by Partington (1998, 2006, 2009), CADS combines the quantitative exploration of corpora (large, digitized bodies of text) with qualitative interpretations of sociocontextual factors to examine the "construction of discourses (or ways of constructing reality)" (Baker, 2006, p. 1). In other words, CADS aims to discover and explore the patterns and

meanings within a particular discourse or set of discourses (Partington et al., 2013), using corpus software which can handle abundant textual data. Of the exploratory nature and activity of CADS, Marchi and Taylor (2018) assert Partington's (2009) suggestion that CADS researchers embark on “serendipitous journeys’[,] playing around with the data, organising them in new ways and finding new ways of looking at them. A corpus & [sic] discourse approach is, in other words, about releasing creativity” (p. 6). In line with this, CADS allows for emergence in that surprising or new categories or patterns can rise out of the data (Baker et al., 2008; Marchi & Taylor, 2018).

A particularly important debate within CADS is about its ability to add an air of objectivity to the traditionally qualitative and subjective work of (critical) discourse studies. On this, Subtirelu and Baker (2018) say that incorporating corpus approaches to CDS “reduces the reliance on analysts’ [individual] interpretations and judgements” (p. 109), which aligns with the DHA’s emphasis on both triangulation and intersubjectivity (Reisigl, 2018; Reisigl & Wodak, 2016). While I am inclined to agree, my stance is metred by the social constructionist understanding that all knowledge, and therefore research, is value-laden and tinted by our individual paradigms. As Marchi and Taylor (2018) point out,

what we do when we analyse discourse using corpora “is a qualitative analysis of quantifiable patterns” (Marchi, forthcoming). Because of the fuzziness of boundaries, triangulation is not an anchor that guarantees validity, “nor can it be used to make claims for ‘scientific’ neutrality” (Marchi & Taylor 2009:19); it is rather a means of achieving greater precision, richness as well as awareness. (p. 6)

They further conceptualize the process of triangulation, noting three possible outcomes: convergence, complementarity, and divergence. When results *converge*, “they corroborate the same conclusion; this kind of outcome is a classic form of cross-validation” (p. 7). When results

are *complementary*, they offer “a thicker description of the problem matter than if just one method had been adopted” (p. 7). When results *diverge*, they contradict one another— “dissonance, far from being daunting, holds great creative potential, as it ‘suggests areas for further analysis’ (Rossman & Wilson 1986: 633) and ultimately is a barometer of complexity of the topic/research question(s)” (p. 7). I am thus careful in my research to pay attention to patterns, differences, and complexity.

While CADS is fairly well established, there has been a push in the past 15 years to more consciously pair CDS with corpus linguistic methods (Mautner, 2009, 2016; see also Baker, 2006; Chen, 2014). In favour of this, Mautner (2016) reminds us that a researcher must “look *beyond* the text proper in order to unearth socially meaningful interpretations” which calls for an understanding of the contexts, history, and politics related to the production of the texts under study, and forwards the notion that “corpus linguistics contribute[s] to CDA rather than it ‘doing CDA’” (p. 157, emphasis in original). This means that the output of corpus software must still be interpreted in relation to the chosen social issues and research questions, or as Fowler (1991) argues, “critical interpretation requires historical knowledge and sensitivity, which can be possessed by human beings but not by machines” (p. 68), yet. Mautner (2007) states that “quantitative indicators [of corpus results] highlight particularly promising entry points into the data” (p. 55), and reasserts Sinclair’s (2003), advice to “decide on the ‘strongest’ pattern and start there” (p. 55). In this case, a word frequency list and Ngram/word cluster list might highlight particular words or phrases to explore further in concordance and collocate. For example, in the pilot study for this dissertation (2017, unpublished manuscript), the phrase (word cluster) *student achievement* was an entry point in the corpus data, and I found that it was often

preceded by (in concordance with) *evaluating*, *measures of*, and *evidence of*. Thus, I was able to infer that student achievement is both qualified and quantified by assessment.

In addition to this declaration of synergy between CDS and CL (Baker et al., 2008; Mautner, 2016), such an approach can be useful for identifying and investigating not only difference, but patterns and similarity (Taylor, 2018) as well as absence (Duguid & Partington, 2018). Marchi asserts that when we search for difference, we are likely to find it. Yet, “difference-oriented findings are potentially highly misleading as it may be that in quantitative terms the similarities between corpora [or across texts] or topics considerably outweigh the differences” (p. 21). In this case, we create our own blind spots by only focusing on “a 180-degree visualisation” of the data rather than “aiming for a full 360-degree perspective” (p. 20). Thus, looking for and reporting both similarity and difference can work to check both intentional and unintentional bias in CDS research (p. 21).

While Duguid and Partington (2018) seem to be at odds with some ideas put forward by respected corpus and discourse experts (including Paul Baker and Ruth Wodak), are highly critical of CDS in general, and are a bit prescriptive in what *counts* as *proper* corpus analysis, they classify 9 different types of absence:

- i. ‘known’ – or suspected, or ‘searchable’ – ‘absence’, you already know which linguistic feature you are searching for and simply want to know whether or not it is in the corpus;
- ii. ‘unknown absence’, an absence stumbled upon serendipitously in the course of a piece of research
- iii. relative absence and absolute absence;
- iv. unexpected absence from a sizeable corpus, which may raise questions about the representativeness of the corpus;
- v. absence from a limited set of texts, including from a specific portion of a corpus;
- vi. absence from a position in a single text, including from a location in a phrase;

- vii. absence defined as ‘hidden from open view’, that is, hidden meaning
- viii. the somewhat paradoxical absence of something because it is too obvious to mention and taken for granted
- ix. the absence of something which is hidden from the search due to method of analysis adopted. (pp. 39-40)

Such classifications, though meticulous, are helpful in naming and exploring particular instances of absence within a corpus. However, Duguid and Partington (2018) beg the question “when an absence is discovered, how does one decide whether the absence is intentional or otherwise [...]?”, followed immediately by, “far too often, particularly in the field of critical discourse analysis, it is taken for granted that a silence or absent message or voice must have been deliberately *suppressed* with little evidence of intentionality” (p. 39). Yet as critical discourse analysts might say, intentionality is not the focus of CDS. Absence is absence, whether intentional or not—the consequence is still the same. Where absences exist, I interpret them with Huckin’s (2002) conceptualization of textual and discursive silences in mind (see Chapter 5).

Corpus Analysis Software, Techniques, and Terminology

As I have noted above, corpus analysis requires computer assistance, referred to as corpus software. While hundreds of corpus software exist (see [Berberich & Kleiber, 2020](#) for compiled list), a few have come to be well-known and established in the field including WordSmith (Scott, 1996), SketchEngine (Lexical Computing Limited, 2003), and more recently, AntConc (Anthony, 2014a), and Lancsbox (Brezina & McEnery, 2015; Brezina et al., 2015). Furthermore, most of these software include (in some form) the following five analytic tools or techniques: Frequency, Collocation, Concordance, N-Grams/Word Clusters, and Keywords. I detail the first four tools below, as I use them in my research (see next chapter for description of chosen software).

Frequency. Generating a frequency list is generally the first step in corpus analysis. Frequency simply refers to the number of occurrences of particular words/tokens within a given text or corpus which is typically generated in a ranked word list. It can offer some starting points for entering the data, as it can tell us a little bit about the general and specific *aboutness* of a given text or corpus through the number of tokens, token types, and type/token ratios—that is, the number of words, the types of words, and the ratio of words in a text or corpus. To expand: a token is “a single linguistic unit” (Baker et al., 2006, p. 159), or a word. The number of tokens in a corpus is the total number of words, while token type refers to the number of unique words in a corpus. Most words (especially function words) generally appear more than once in a text or corpus, and thus, the total number of tokens will be higher than the token types. Type/token ratio, then, takes the number of types and divides by the total number of tokens, which can reveal the lexical diversity (the higher the type/token ratio the more lexically diverse it is).

During or after exploring the ranked frequency list, researchers may compare the frequency of a given word within a corpus or across more than one corpus or subcorpora to see potential patterns, similarities, differences, and absences that initiate further investigation—for example, I compare the frequency of student(s) across my corpus and subcorpora to take note of how heavily (or not) they feature within and across the texts. Frequency data can be given as raw data (a number), a normalized frequency (number per set number of words), as well as comparative statistical descriptions (percentages and proportions) and displayed through tables and/or word clouds. Although frequencies “do not explain themselves”, they act as the basis for the rest of these analytic tools as they are used for calculating collocational, concordance, and dispersion data, as well as keywords (Baker et al., 2006, p. 76).

Collocation. Collocation refers to “actual words in habitual company” (Firth, 1957, p. 14, as cited by Baker et al., p. 36). To expand: in certain contexts, particular words are more likely to appear in combination with other words and this entanglement or phenomenon is known as collocation. Collocation can help us understand the subtleties in connotative meaning and behaviour of words (Baker, 2010, p. 25; Baker et al., 2006, pp. 36-38). Brezina et al. (2015) note that “collocates of words do not occur in isolation, but are part of a complex network of semantic relationship which ultimately reveals their meaning and the semantic structure of a text or corpus” (p. 141). Collocation is explored by first entering a search term (node word) and setting the boundaries around or range of that search term (typically 5 words on either side), and choosing the statistical methods (generally mutual information score or log-likelihood) which can “demonstrate frequency *and* exclusivity of particular collocates” (Baker et al., p. 37, emphasis in original). In terms of frequency, function words (the, and, of) will appear most frequently around any search term, while particular phrases or lexical bundles may share a measure of exclusivity with one another. Mautner (2016) notes that exploration of collocation can reveal both semantic preference and discourse/semantic prosody (below) and that taken together they can “show us what kinds of social issues a particular lexical item is bound up in, and what attitudes are commonly associated with it” (p. 161). In other words, collocation helps to investigate explicit and implicit meaning.

In this study, collocation is the most heavily used corpus analytic tool, as I look at collocations for *student(s)*, *learner(s)*, *citizen(s)*, and *citizenship* as a direct way to investigate my research questions. Collocational frequency may help determine the ways in which students or citizens are typically used or constructed within text(s)—for instance, student often co-occurs with achievement or assessment and citizen often co-occurs with active, engaged, and

responsible in this corpus/these subcorpora. While there are many other statistical calculations Mutual Information (MI) score is also used to identify less frequent co-occurrences that would likely be missed if only frequency was looked at as well as to measure the strength of the collocation (Mautner, 2007, p. 55). As Mautner describes, “MI score highlights lexical items that are relatively infrequent by themselves but have a higher-than-random probability of co-occurring with the node word” (p. 55)—the higher the MI score, the stronger the collocation, which lends to significance. In other words, MI score “highlights rare and unique combinations [...] which stand out but are not necessarily representative (through frequent and repeated use) of the discourse” (Brezina, 2018, p. 274). An MI score of three or above tends to be considered significant, but researchers may choose a higher score to thin results (Baker, 2006; Mautner, 2007)—in this study, the cut-off score is five. This purposeful use of multi-methods allows for a more robust or complex understanding of how these social actors are used and discursively constructed within these texts while “leav[ing] room for the unexpected to be discovered [...]” and opening up “the opportunity to be surprised by the data” (Marchi & Taylor, 2018, p. 5). Furthermore, since provinces (subcorpora) are compared to one another, it is important to highlight both their similarities (which can be shown through collocation by frequency) and differences (which can be shown through MI score) (see Marchi & Taylor, 2018; Taylor, 2018).

Concordance. Also known as key word in context (KWIC), concordance refers to a list of all occurrences of a particular word in a corpus, which is “presented within the context in which they occur”—a few words on either side of the search term (Baker et al., 2006, pp. 42-43). A given search term may be one word or a short phrase and concordances may be sorted alphabetically (on the right or left of the search term), and in larger corpora may be thinned or sampled by the researcher for specific purposes. These concordance techniques allow for easier

exploration and pattern-finding/observation by the human eye. Furthermore, concordances are helpful for exploring collocation data as they both offer information about the usual company a word keeps (Baker et al., 2006; Mautner, 2016). As Mautner (2016) points out, sorting collocation results in alphabetical concordance lines, allows “the collocational environment of the search word [to] be assessed rapidly, with frequent patterns standing out clearly” (p. 160). In software such as AntConc, when a word in any other function (e.g., Ngram, collocation) is clicked, the program automatically shows the concordance line(s) or KWIC of that word.

N-grams/Word Clusters. N-grams and word clusters are simply a small number of words (generally 4 or less) that often make up a phrase or lexical bundle and appear frequently in a corpus. For N-grams, N stands for the number of tokens in the cluster. For example, a bigram is two words, and trigram is three words (Baker et al., 2006, p. 21). However, there is a distinction between the two terms: N-grams explore a determined number of words (2, 3, 4) within the whole corpus and can return a list of frequent lexical bundles or phrases that occur in the corpus (e.g., *as well as*, *high school*, *programs of study*) and are typically used for language learning research but can also help to determine important phrases or themes within a corpus. Word clusters generally include a search term (e.g., *student*), an indication of search term position (on the right or left) and a defined maximum cluster size (2, 3, or 4 words). For example, if *student* is in the left position, results include *student learning*, *student assessment*, and *student progress*, whereas when *student* is in the right position results include *the student*, *a student*, *mature student*, etc. Since the parameters of word clusters are defined by the researcher, they can help explore particular research questions or interests, and I use them to further my investigation of the discursive construction of students and citizens. The use and combination of these software

tools can reveal semantic prosody of particular words, concepts, and actors which lend to their discursive constructions.

Semantic Prosody. Coined by John Sinclair (1987) and taken up by Bill Louw (1993),¹⁶ semantic prosody is the “consistent aura of meaning with which a form is imbued by its collocates” (p. 157). More simply, it refers to attitudinal or connotational meanings of words or phrases through their surrounding context or *semantic environment* (Sinclair, 1987). As Sinclair (2004) suggests, semantic prosody “expresses something close to the ‘function’ of the item – it shows how the rest of the item is to be interpreted functionally. Without it, the string of words just ‘means’ – it is not put to use in a viable communication” (p. 34). In other words, paying attention to semantic prosody, may point to additional or truer meanings than might otherwise be understood. Here, we might consider the use of the word *sick*, which denotes illness and has negative associations, but has also developed informal, positive connotations through its use as a synonym for cool or impressive. In this example, two common elements of semantic prosody as outlined by Louw (1993) are presented: 1) the dichotomization between positive and negative associations, and 2) the diachronic nature, in which various meanings (semantic prosodies) develop over time (see also Baker et al., 2006; Cheng, 2012). Although it may be obvious, I might add that semantic prosody is also influenced by the broader context, genre, and/or register within which a text is produced/uttered—that is, we are more likely to find the positive-connotative use of *sick* in informal spoken or digital settings than, for example, newspapers, journal articles, or political speeches. Furthermore, Louw (1993) proposes that “semantic prosodies are a powerful component in suasive writing” (p. 163), which adds credence to the

¹⁶ Although, Sinclair discussed *semantic profiles* and *semantic environments* in his 1987 work, the term semantic prosody was relayed from Sinclair to Louw via personal communication, which they discussed as an offshoot of Firth’s (1966) term, *phonological colouring*.

necessity of attention as policy generally aims to influence (and/or placate) stakeholders and the general public.

Closing Thoughts

Primed with the knowledge and approaches that inform this study, it is important to operationalize the concept of *discursive construction* prior to moving to the next chapter: Within a social constructionist paradigm (Berger & Luckmann, 1967), we understand that knowledge and therefore meanings and identities are not fixed once and for all. Rather meanings and identities are in a perpetual state of (re)negotiation in which history, context, and discourses are mediators. Just as discourses are socially -constituted and -constitutive (Fairclough, 1989; Wodak & Meyer, 2016), meanings and identities/actors are constructed or constituted within and through discourses—that is, discursively constructed. As emphasized by my research questions, I am interested in investigating how students and citizens/citizenship are discursively constructed within and across policy-level education discourse (PLED) in a 21st century Canadian context. These discursive constructions are not static, nor completely transferrable or generalizable to other contexts and discourses. For instance, how students and citizens are discursively constructed within and across my own collected data may have commonalities with public discourse about education or other countries' education policies, but there are likely to be nuances, contradictions, and historical and contextual differences that add layers of meaning to studenthood and citizenship.

To close this chapter, I draw on Reisigl and Wodak's (2016) assertion that, "one of the aims of the DHA is to deconstruct the hegemony of specific discourses by deciphering the ideologies that serve to establish, perpetuate or resist dominance" (p. 25). By virtue of its ability to explore and organize large and/or multiple texts, CADS and its bundle of analytic tools aids in

the potential discovery of patterns and divergences, new meanings, hegemonic ideologies, and resistance. Through this investigation, I hope to contribute to the literature which reimagines education in Canada as less oppressive and more critical and hopeful (Giroux, 2016b; Lemke, 2007, 2008; Robinson, 2010; Westheimer, 2015), as well as more broadly to bodies of research in policy analysis, education, and critical discourse studies. In this chapter, I outlined and discussed the methodological framework and considerations that underpin this study, including the DHA and CADS. The next chapter details the procedural methods of data collection and analysis, which is subsequently followed by the findings chapter.

CHAPTER 7: METHODS

The early chapters of this dissertation explored educational theory, literature, and context as well as education policy and analysis (Chapters 2-4). To reiterate, this study aims to critically investigate the discursive constructions of citizens/citizenship and students within and across policy-level education texts (PLETs) from the ministries and departments of education in Canada through a social justice oriented, multi-method CDS framework. This framework includes methodological considerations and procedures from the Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) and Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS). As mentioned in Chapter 6, the DHA is effective because it allows for the weaving together of multiple theories and concepts, contexts and histories, and methods. CADS methods were chosen because they allow for efficient and effective investigation and comparison of multiple and large texts, directly facilitating the goal of this study. I now turn to the research process including data collection, organization, management, and analytic procedures.

Data Collection

The data for this study were collected between 2018 and 2019 and consist of a small corpus of 22 policy-level education texts (PLETs) from the ministries and departments of education (MoE/DoE) across the provinces and territories that make up Canada. The collected texts may be previewed in Table 1 below.

Defining the Provincial/Territorial Corpus (PTC) and Collection Criteria

Within this particular *policyscape* (Carney, 2012), the boundaries of policy are mainly determined through authority (Colebatch, 2009). In other words, since MoE/DoEs are the highest educational authority for their respective province/territory, the texts they produce are intended to guide the understandings and practices of their education systems and the actors within them

(Fenwick & Edwards, 2010; Rogers, 2011). The texts in this corpus can generally be considered both policy and grey literature, more specifically made up of public-facing and blended genres including strategic plans, action plans, service plans, and reports. Figure 5 illustrates the types of texts that constitute the fuzzy boundaries of policy as well as their relationships to one another. Here, the different levels of planning (strategy, action, and service) feed into policy, and reports often make policy/action item recommendations and both inform and are informed by these types of texts.

Figure 5

The Make-up of Education Policy at the Provincial Level in Canada



Moreover, in looking at the register (a realisation of meanings made up of contextually important aspects; Eggins, 2004) of the collected texts, they can be considered constitutive of a discourse: all texts are produced by MoE/DoEs; they are typically data-rich (listing, discussing, and comparing statistics and rankings—especially with regard to graduation rates, literacy/math scores, etc.), report on a given education system’s success and challenges, and then provide recommendations or action items through persuasive and buzzword-infused language. Finally, as written texts, there is little opportunity for visual, aural, or even written feedback between the producers and the audience—though potential for dialogue is expanded by social media platforms such as Twitter. Of note here, is that there is some variance in *what* particular

MoE/DoEs call their public-facing texts, yet they are meant to achieve similar purposes—hence the terms policy-level education texts (PLETs) and policy-level education discourse (PLED).

Table 1 below lists all of the collected texts by province, producer, year, title, and genre.

Several criteria informed the data collection process. First and foremost, texts had to be publicly accessible via the internet. Given that this research explores public education discourses, examining texts that are ostensibly produced with the public in mind (e.g., those who pay taxes for and/or use public schooling) is a matter of principle. Second, in order to narrow and tune the scope (purposive sampling), the selection criteria factored in time and generality: all collected texts were produced in the 21st century (after the year 2000) and are as recent as possible; the collected texts are general or comprehensive in that their topic is public education (mainly regarding the K-12 system). With this in mind, texts such as annual budget reports and audits, as well as anything too specifically focused on one group of learners or context-specific educational initiatives or issues (e.g., autism policies and anti-bullying policies) were left out. Further research may attend to more specific policies, but for this study, I was most interested in examining policy texts that incorporated current and future strategic planning—that is, mandates and visions, initiatives, action items, and in some cases, service planning (see Figure 5 above and Table 1 below). Although these texts are ostensibly public-facing and publicly accessible, it should be made clear that in some cases, finding an appropriate text required extensive navigation through the corresponding website's veritable labyrinth of pages and archives and that these texts seem to be aimed at educational stakeholders including various educational organizations, teachers, school boards, parents, etc.

Table 1*PTC Collected Corpus: Policy level Education-Texts*

Province	Producer	Year	Title and Length in Words	Genre ^a
West Coast				
British Columbia	Ministry of Education	2018a	<i>2018-19 – 2020-21 Service Plan</i> [3467 words]	Service Plan Policy
		2018b	<i>Policy for student success</i> [1091]	
Prairies				
Alberta	Ministry of Education and Training	2013	<i>Teaching quality standard applicable to the provision of basic education in Alberta</i> [2556]	Policy
		2016	<i>The guiding framework for the design and development of kindergarten to grade 12 provincial curriculum (programs of study)</i> [10247]	
		2018	<i>ECS to grade 12 guide to education 2018-2019</i> [42772]	
Saskatchewan	Ministry of Education	2017	<i>Education sector strategic plan, 2014-2020: Cycle 3 (2017-2019)</i> [485]	Strategic Plan
		2018	<i>Plan for 2018-19</i> [2975]	
Manitoba	Department of Education	2018a	<i>Mandate, mission, vision and priority areas</i> [401]	Policy
		2018b	<i>K-12 framework for continuous improvement</i> [779]	
Central				
Ontario	Ministry of Education	2010	<i>Growing success: Assessment, evaluation and reporting in Ontario schools</i> [22473]	Policy
		2013	<i>Creating pathways to success: An education and career/life planning program for Ontario schools</i> [12022]	
		2014	<i>Achieving excellence: A renewed vision for education in Ontario</i> [7271]	

Province	Producer	Year	Title and Length in Words	Genre ^a
Central				
Québec (QME)	Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement Supérieur ^b	2017	<i>Policy on educational success: A love of learning, a chance to succeed</i> [18383]	Policy
Atlantic				
New Brunswick	Department of Education and Early Childhood Development	2016a	<i>Expecting the best from everyone: Recommendation for a 10-year education plan (Anglophone sector)</i> [35672]	Report
		2016b	<i>10-year education plan: Everyone at their best (Anglophone sector)</i> [7912]	Policy
Nova Scotia	Department of Education and Early Childhood Development	2015	<i>The 3 Rs: Renew Refocus Rebuild</i> [8848]	Action Plan
		2016	<i>From school to success: Clearing the path</i> [9403]	Report
Newfoundland and Labrador	Department of Education and Early Childhood Development	2017	<i>Strategic plan 2017-20</i> [1006]	Strategic Plan
		2018	<i>Education Action Plan: The way forward</i> [4270]	Action Plan
Northern Territories				
Yukon	Department of Education	2008	<i>One vision, multiple pathways: Secondary School Programming Process Summary Report</i> [7318]	Report
Northwest Territories	Department of Education, Culture & Employment	2015	<i>Education renewal and innovation framework: Directions for change</i> [7565]	Action Plan
Nunavut	Department of Education	n.d.	<i>Our goals for education</i> [650]	Leaflet
		2018	<i>Our goals for education</i> [2245]	Action Plan

Note. Bolded provinces are those that were selected to feature in the findings in Chapter 6 (see below for explanation).

^a Here, genre is used in a general sense to indicate what the producers call their texts. ^b Ministry of Education and Higher Education

Prior to moving on to description and procedure, it must be noted that during the data collection period, Prince Edward Island's Department of Education and Lifelong Learning website was undergoing transition and thus their policy texts were inaccessible.

Description and Procedure

The PTC was collected by visiting each province's and territory's Ministry or Department of Education website and using their menu and search functions to find publicly posted policy texts. As noted above, I narrowed what was collected by focusing on general K-12 policy, and for those provinces that had an archive of policies, I collected the most recent years (for example, I collected Alberta's 2018, 2016, and 2013 strategic planning policies, leaving out prior years). Potential texts were opened and scanned for appropriate content and either downloaded or discarded. If a province did not have an accessible or relevant policy document file (pdf) on their website, I looked for signs of policy language stated directly on a webpage throughout the website and screenshotted, copied, and pasted the relevant text into a plain text file and saved it for use in the corpus. For example, Manitoba's Ministry of Education website has a [webpage](#) dedicated to their "Mandate, Mission, Vision, and Priority Areas" which I collected in lieu of a fuller policy document. I must note that 1) there is not an equality in the number of texts or tokens from each province and territory as some provinces and territories had multiple relevant documents while others had fewer, and 2) there is considerable variety in the length of the texts. Using these criteria, I collected a total of 22 texts made up of 209,539 tokens (words) and 7027 token types (see [Appendix D](#) for token breakdown by province/ territory).

Narrowing the Data and Findings. Once the corpus was compiled, cleaned, and analysis was underway, it became apparent that given time and length constraints, not every province could be individually analyzed and featured in the findings. Thus, six provincial

subcorpora were selected with a view to including at least one province from each provincial region in Canada. As indicated in Table 1, the provincial subcorpora included in the next chapter are British Columbia (West Coast), Alberta, Saskatchewan (Prairies), Ontario, Québec (Central), and Nova Scotia (Atlantic). With regard to the elimination process, Manitoba was eliminated due to only having their policy orientations as webtext on various webpages on their Ministry of Education website. Since I had yet to begin analysis on the rest of the Atlantic provinces and the Northern Territories, they were eliminated from individual study. It does not escape me that these regions are most often neglected in research; however, I hope to attend to them in continued and future research projects.

Methods of Data Analysis

Prior to analysis, the data were converted to plain text (UTF-8) files, renamed for consistency to ‘name of organization, (year), title of policy’, and cleaned with TextWrangler¹⁷ to remove and/or reformat content where necessary. Table 2 lists sections or types of content that were removed during data cleaning.

Table 2
Data Cleaning

Front Matter	Body	End Matter	Other/Miscellaneous
Table of contents and figures	Tables and charts	Indices	Non-English sections / translations
Copyright information	Links	Appendices	Course/credit sequencing lists
Ministry personnel bios	References	References	Budgets
	Headers/footers/page numbers	Glossaries	Bullets
	Footnotes		Symbols
	Images		

¹⁷ TextWrangler was a free text and code editing software created by BareBones Software Inc. that has been incorporated as a feature in their newer software, BBEdit.

In some cases, the content of tables and charts were removed entirely if they only contained budgetary information or course sequencing; however, general table content was reformatted for clarity within a plain text format. I also created a stop word list (hereafter stoplist), which removes a pre-set list repetitive function words from the data computation and output (e.g., the, and, of). The stoplist for this study is minimal so as not to remove potentially important information such as pertinent relational verbs (e.g., are, have, has), modal verbs (e.g., can, will, must, should), or collective/anaphoric nouns (e.g., they, their, them) (see [Appendix D](#) for stoplist). Once the data were cleaned, I used corpus analysis software to analyze each corpus. The following section details the software used for this study.

Corpus Analysis and Data Visualization Software

Given the robust nature of this research, I have experimented with many corpus analysis software and chose AntConc and SketchEngine, both for ease of use and what they can do. It should also be noted that these software have built-in data visualization features, which are “automatically generated visual representation[s] of real or simulated non-visual data that [communicate] information about that underlying data in a readable and recognisable way” (Anthony, 2018, p. 199). Visualizations of word frequencies and word comparisons below are used mainly to show the *aboutness* of the texts and break up the textual monotony.

AntConc. Developed by Laurence Anthony (2014a), AntConc is a free, downloadable concordance software (available for all major operating systems) and is one of the most user-friendly. The program runs basic and fundamental corpus tools such as frequency, concordance, concordance plot, collocation, n-gram/word cluster, and keywords (see [Appendix D](#) for AntConc user interface; see Chapter 6 for tool descriptions). AntConc is the main concordance software used for this study. I have found it useful as it processes word forms separately and thus, I was

able to generate data for and examine singular and plural versions of words (e.g., student and students) separately.

Sketch Engine. Founded and developed by Adam Kilgarriff through his company, Lexical Computing Limited, Sketch Engine is a powerful web-based corpus software that offers a free trial and reasonable (even to a poor grad student) pricing thereafter. While Sketch Engine does include some of the same/similar tools as AntConc, I use it mainly for its robust visualization and organization of data including automatic tagging and its subcorpus building tool (see [Appendix D](#) for Sketch Engine user interface). Sketch Engine also provides access to hundreds of reference corpora in several languages (536 at the time of writing), which can be useful for checking collected corpora against general or specialized corpora. In the few instances that I do check my (sub)corpus output against a reference corpus, I use the general English Web 2015 corpus, [EnTenTen15](#) (15.4 billions words), as it falls within the year range of my own subcorpora.

The main functions of Sketch Engine that I use for this study are the subcorpus building tool, normalized frequency, and [Word Sketch Difference](#). Once a corpus has been uploaded to Sketch Engine, the researcher can create multiple sets of subcorpora to explore and/or compare. For instance, I created subcorpora by individual province/territory, by region, and by excluding a single province/territory with the intent of using Word Sketch Difference (described below). Word Sketch Difference (hereafter SketchDiff) allows for analysis of difference *and* similarity (despite its name) within collocational patterns through its inclusion of shared collocates. SketchDiff can be used for three purposes: to compare the use of two different words or lemmas in the same corpus; to compare two different forms of the same word/lemma (e.g., citizen and

citizens, student and students); and to compare the same lemma in different subcorpora within a corpus (see Marchi, 2018). Some SketchDiff visualizations appear early in the findings section.

Wordle. Wordle is a free word cloud generator software developed by Jonathan Feinberg in 2008 (see [Feinberg, 2010](#)). Word clouds visualize the relative frequency of words within a text(s) through size—the larger the word appearing in the cloud, the more frequent it is within the corresponding text(s). Wordle’s software includes several practical and visual functions, such as built-in stop word lists in many languages, the ability to customize the number of words that appear in the cloud (e.g., top 25, 50, 100), as well as display output in different fonts, colours, and layout. Word clouds are considered a supplemental research tool, given that “an understanding of the frequently used words allows viewers to have an overview of the main topics and the main themes in a text, and may illustrate the main standpoints held by the writer of the text” (McNaught & Lam, 2010, p. 630). In line with this, I use Wordle software to generate and visually represent the word frequency of the PTC and SPSC in this study (which can be seen in the following findings chapters), as word clouds are a visually appealing way to display the *aboutness* of the text(s).

Note to the reader: originally, Wordles could be created directly on the [wordle.net](#) website, but with the phasing out of Java and Flash by web browsers (e.g., Firefox, Safari, Chrome) Feinberg created a downloadable app for both Windows and Mac users (2014), which I used to generate my word clouds. While the website link no longer works, it can be viewed through the internet archive, [Way Back Machine](#) (2020).

Corpus Analysis Procedures

Once the data were cleaned and organized, I uploaded the corpus to AntConc and generated [word frequency lists](#) for the whole corpus as well as provincial subcorpora. In order to

visualize frequency, I also input the corpus and subcorpora into Wordle and generated various iterations of frequency-based word clouds, including the whole corpus (PTC) and each province separately (subcorpora). These can be seen in the next chapter. The data were also uploaded to Sketch Engine and normalized frequencies of target words such as *citizen(s)*, *student(s)*, and *learner(s)* were also generated and recalculated from per one million words to per one thousand words to adjust for the small corpus size. These frequencies were subsequently compared to one another. Furthermore, in order to expand on raw and normalized word frequency and allow for emergence, I also generated [bigrams and trigrams](#) for the PTC and the selected provincial subcorpora (SPSC) which highlight themes or patterns arising in the data.

Guided by my research questions, I generated [collocations](#) lists both by mutual information (MI) score (with a cut-off of 5.0) and frequency for the words *citizen(s)*, *citizenship*, *learner(s)*, and *student(s)* with a range of five words on either side of the node. This was done for the PTC as a whole and the SPSC. I then explored the top collocates for these words in their immediate context. For provinces with a smaller subcorpus size and/or with few instances of the node word, the ranked MI score for collocates is generally higher (top scores of 10 and over) and more diversely descendant—that is, one or two words per score in descending order. For provinces with a larger subcorpus size and/or with many instances of the node word, the top MI score tends to be lower (below 10) and there tends to be many collocates with the same score (less diverse). The list of collocates were narrowed first by checking the [concordance](#) lines with the key word in context (KWIC) to make sure that the collocate appeared within the same sentence as the node word. In addition, where there were many collocates with the same top MI score, I chose a random sample of collocates from each policy. This allowed me to limit the number of excerpts for further critical discourse analysis to five or fewer for each query. I then

visited the original texts to scrape (copy and paste) excerpts that included at least a full sentence for further critical analysis and interpretation (more on this below). While the corpus output process was carried out at both the PTC and SPSC levels, I only carried out the latter process of finding and unpacking excerpts at the subcorpus level to avoid redundancy.

In addition to using AntConc, I also used Sketch Engine's Word Sketch and Sketch Difference functions to 1) look at the above mentioned collocates organized into grammatical relations, and 2) to compare texts from one province to other provinces, regions, and the whole PTC. Grammatical relations—such as whether *student* is the subject or object of a sentence—can help determine types and level of agency. This comparison was done to gain a deeper understanding of what might be unique about a particular province's policies when compared to others.

Once excerpts were drawn from the policies, they needed to be critically and discursively unpacked, analyzed, and interpreted within their immediate and broader contexts (see Mautner, 2014, 2016). As mentioned in the previous chapter, in unpacking the excerpts, I focused on nomination and predication strategies including discursive strategies and devices such as metaphor, social actor/agency, and repetition and overlexicalization, as well as discursive trends such as marketization and globalization, all of which were aided by an understanding of SFL tools including transitivity, mood, and modality.

Discourse Analytic Procedures

After locating and collecting excerpts surrounding citizen(s)/citizenship, learner(s), and student(s), I analyzed them using the *toolbox* of discursive and linguistic strategies described in the previous chapter. This emergent process also involved what I refer to as a method of *critical curiosity* which is akin to noticing and pulling at threads to find where they lead or picking away

at chipped paint to reveal what is underneath. Enacting critical curiosity underscores my research aim to trace and map these policy-level education texts (PLETs) to their respective and broader discourses. It also aims to make the familiar strange in deconstructing and questioning the common-sense or status quo (Fairclough, 1989). This method of critical curiosity is loosely inspired by Foucault's work, critical pedagogy, and the historical, socio-contextual, and intertextual and interdiscursive emphases in CDS including the DHA and CADS.

Research Positionality

In exploring PLETs for non-evaluative (rankings, assessment, standardization) purposes, this dissertation contributes to the body of research that critically reflects upon the institution and systems of public education (Apple, 1985; Fitzgerald, 2017; Giroux, 2016; Rogers, 2011; Shaker, 2018a; Westheimer, 2015). More specifically, my research aims to trace a trajectory between how particular provinces discursively construct, characterize, and treat the key actors within their systems (students, learners) as well as the outcome of education (citizens and citizenship). This work acts as part critical needs assessment and part critical commentary on education systems in the selected provinces and in (the colonial project of) Canada as a whole, and discusses potential "leverage points" (Fox, 2004) for intervention in these systems and discourses. This research also makes a methodological contribution, as it brings together multiple frameworks and methods, and is one of only a few (at the time of writing; see Horrod, 2020) pieces of research that uses the DHA to study education discourse.

As I have noted, my research process is quite emergent. This emergence coupled with critical (interpretive) analysis is generally where CDS skeptics raise their flags: *how can you avoid bias? how can you ensure rigour and reliability? how can you make any claims about these texts? Etc.* To briefly address these concerns I offer: no matter the care and caution taken,

the theories considered or abided, the rigour adhered to, or the methods chosen, the spectrum of bias is inherent to our very being, living, and doing and thus our research can never be completely (or even remotely) free of it. What I can do is be transparent about what drives me as a researcher—that is, I strongly believe that the institutions of public education ought to be more than indoctrination to the neoliberal regime in which human value is calculated by a complex matrix of productivity and capital-potential (Fourcade, 2016), based in intersecting racialized, gendered, and ableist hierarchies wherein white, elite, male privilege dominates and success and failure are individualized (Fourcade, 2016; Mulderrig, 2008; Woodside-Jiron, 2011). However, I am not so focused on the forest (negative impacts of neoliberalism) that I shan't see the trees (nuance, resistance, criticality, pedagogical variance). As I have mentioned in previous chapters, the orientation to social justice I work from aims to illuminate and remove barriers and to focus on harm reduction and elimination where possible (Ahmed, 2012; Patel, 2016; Giroux, 2016b). However, I am still learning—both as an academic researcher and as a visibly-white, able-bodied, cis-gendered woman in a relative position of privilege in society. My interpretations may align or differ from the reader's, but they are informed empirically by theory, literature, multitudinal contexts, and experience.

Because education is a microcosm of society—an apprenticeship (Lave & Wenger, 1991) to the *'real world'* (as some regard it)—it encompasses constellations or matrices of intersections between dis/ability, race, sex, gender, culture, class, and more (Crenshaw, 1989). As my research is interested in the workings and purposes (e.g., competent or good citizenship) of the institution of public schooling and those key actors within it (students), focusing too narrowly on one of these intersections is an exercise in organized forgetting. Yet sensitivity to most or all of these intersections is a difficult, if not impossible feat—especially when resources, space, and time are

limited—as depth may be usurped by breadth. However, as Carrol et al. (2019) put it during a conference presentation, “*it is better to be an imperfect accomplice than a perfect stranger*” (see also [Corbett, 2020](#); [Indigenous Action Media, 2014](#); [Jackson, 2019](#); [Kim, 2019](#); [Medville, 2017](#)), and I do my best to catch and give attention to each of these intersections and potential harms (van Leeuwen, 2018) where they present themselves within the data and to point to resources where I cannot provide adequate depth.

Conclusion

This chapter has detailed the research process including research design, data collection and data analysis procedures, noted some study limitations and highlighted some research and methodological contributions, and shared my research positionality. The next chapter presents the findings of this study, starting with Provincial/Territorial Corpus (PTC) findings followed by the selected provincial subcorpora findings, presented from West to East: British Columbia (BCME), Alberta (AMET), Saskatchewan (SME), Ontario (OME), Québec (QME), and Nova Scotia (NSDEECD).

CHAPTER 8: FINDINGS

In this chapter, I present the findings of my corpus-assisted discourse study of provincial PLETs in Canada. I begin by presenting and interpreting some descriptive statistics and general features of the PTC. Some of these numbers are compared to a representative six provincial selected subcorpora (SPSC) within the PTC, followed by individualized sections for six selected provinces: British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Québec, and Nova Scotia. To avoid redundancy, there are no excerpts in the PTC section; rather, they can be seen in the corresponding sections of the selected provinces below.

Provincial/Territorial Corpus (PTC)

This section briefly overviews some findings from the PTC, which provides some context for the selected provincial corpora analyses and findings. Table 3 below shows the number of tokens (corpus size) of the PTC as a whole and by selected province (subcorpus) both before and after stoplisting, the number of token types, as well as each subcorpus' size relative to the PTC.

Table 3

PTC v. Select Provincial Breakdown of Corpus Size (number of tokens) Pre and Post Stoplist

	PTC	BC	AB	SK	ON	QC	NS
Tokens	209539	4587	55148	3400	42031	18367	18150
Token Types	7027	955	3470	691	3001	2167	2258
SL Tokens	143489	3172	37809	2437	28217	12289	13030
% of PTC	100%	2.19%	26.32%	1.62%	20.06%	8.77%	8.66%
% of SL PTC	100%	2.21%	26.35%	1.70%	19.66%	8.56%	9.08%

As noted above, the stoplist is minimal so as not to remove potentially important information (see [Appendix D](#)). It may be extrapolated from Table 3 that the average reduction in the corpus and its constituent provincial subcorpora after stoplisting is approximately 31%. Both Table 4 and Figure 6 below show the word frequency within the PTC as a whole—first, by ranked list and second, by word cloud visualization.

Table 4
Word Frequency List (Top 30, Amalgamated)

Rank	Freq	Token	Rank	Freq	Token
1	3981	student(s)	16	599	skills
2	3227	school(s)	17	580	high
3	1912	learning	18	577	must
4	1883	education	19	558	needs
5	1427	their	20	522	work
6	1191	program(s)	21	520	language(s)
7	977	teacher(s)	22	497	more, not
8	935	course(s)	23	495	curriculum
9	896	will	24	487	educational
10	889	all	25	462	who
11	741	they	26	455	opportunities
12	738	support	27	453	we
13	698	have	28	451	grade
14	606	high	29	443	success
15	603	development	30	436	community

Figure 6
Word Cloud: PTC Top 75 Most Frequent Words



The above table and figure, in addition to Table 5 below provide a relative aboutness of the corpus and subsequent subcorpora through word frequency and cross-provincial comparison.

Table 5
Top 10 Words for PTC and Selected Subcorpora

R	PTC	BC	AB	SK	ON	QC	NS
1	students	students	school	students	students	educational	students
2	school	school	students	education	learning	their	school
3	learning	education student	student	first	student	students	education
4	education	learning	are	Nations Saskatchewan	their	success	Nova
5	are	ministry	learning	school	education	school	their
6	student	all will	education	will	school	education	will
7	their	secondary	Alberta	Métis	are	are	are
8	will	new	courses	graduation ministry	skills	children	Scotia
9	all	system	high	grade year	will	must	youth
10	schools	graduation their	course	Inuit learning plan	achieve- ment	they	we

It is noteworthy that *student(s)*, *schools*, and *education* occur in the top ten across all six selected provincial subcorpora (SPSC), while *learning*, *are*, and *will* occur across four of the six SPSC, which demonstrates a sense of topical and lexical homogeneity across these provinces. As Table 4 above shows, *student(s)* are the most frequent lemma in the PTC. Given that education is the topic under study, it is expected that students are important to these texts, and given the strategic/planning-oriented nature of these texts and the general goals of education, it is expected that citizens and citizenship be invoked and defined in some form. However, they have relatively few mentions across the PTC and SPSC: although not shown in the frequency Tables above, *citizen(s)* are ranked a very distant 551st.

In line with my research questions, Table 6 compares the frequencies of *student(s)* and *learner(s)*, and *citizen(s)*, which offers further understanding about *how* comparatively central they are to the PTC and shows a large disparity in frequency between the two groups.

Table 6

PTC Student(s) and Learner(s) v. Citizen(s) Frequency and Ratio

Token	Freq	Token	Freq
Student	1554	Citizen	8
Students	2427	Citizens	48
Learner	63		
Learners	312		
Total	3956		56
Normalized Frequency per 1000 words	18.88		0.2673
% of corpus	1.88		0.0267
% of SL corpus	2.76		0.0390

This focused frequency list and comparison provide an initial step in understanding how these participants are discursively constructed. That is, an understanding of these discursive constructions within and across the corpus should be influenced by their relative presence within the text. From Table 6, it can be extrapolated that *student(s)* and *learner(s)* occur 70.64 times more than *citizen(s)*. As the most referenced lemma and actor within these PLETs, this corpus may be considered student-centred. It may be also surmised that *citizen(s)* are relatively absent (Duguid & Partington, 2018) in comparison. Although my focus lies on the discursive construction of these two groups, it is notable, for instance, that *teacher(s)* and *educator(s)* occur 1270 times (ranked 7th), while *parent(s)* and their various referents (*guardians* and *caregivers*) occur 537 times (ranked 49th), and *principal(s)* occurs 251 times (ranked 118th) across the PTC—all much more than *citizen(s)*. The next subsection focuses on *citizen(s)*, followed by and *learner(s)* and *student(s)* at the PTC level, before the SPSC.

Citizen(s)

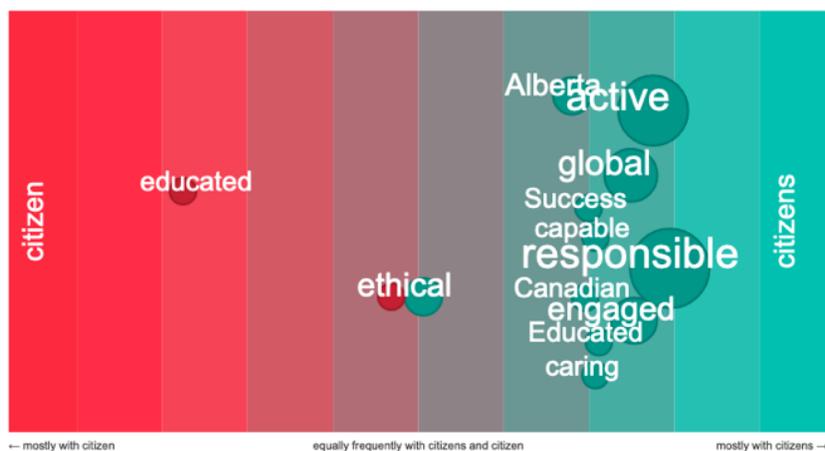
The table and figures below visualize and compare some of the PTC data surrounding citizen v. citizens. Table 7 and Figure 7 show/visualize the modifiers of citizen versus citizen while Figure 8 visualizes verbs with citizen(s) as object. These visualizations were created using Sketch Engine's Word Sketch Difference (hereafter SketchDiff).

Table 7
PTC Modifiers of Citizen v. Citizens

Citizen (8)		Citizens (48)	
Freq	Modifier	Freq	Modifier
3	educated	9	active, engaged
2	ethical	8	responsible
1	active	7	ethical
		4	global
		3	capable, educated, productive
		2	Alberta, contributing, socially responsible
		1	Canadian, caring, competent, confident, creative, open, successful

Whereas Table 7 above shows the raw frequencies by number, the visualization in Figure 7 shows the frequency of modifiers by bubble size and corresponding modifier, and whether they correspond with each word form (citizen v. citizens) by where they are placed on the scale.

Figure 7
PTC Sketch Difference Visualization of Modifiers of Citizen v. Citizens

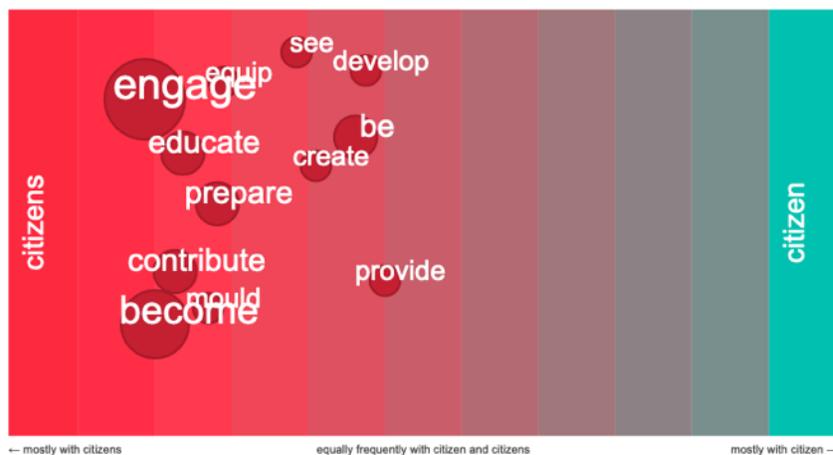


One weakness of SketchDiff is that it distinguishes (without choice) between capitalized and non-capitalized words—as can be seen below, the modifier *educated* is separated in the visualization when it should appear as *ethical* does in the centre. Furthermore, the visualization does not account for lists of modifiers such as “competent, creative and responsible citizens” (QME, 2017, p. 43), “personally successful, economically productive, and actively engaged citizens” (OME, 2014, p. 1), and “ethical and engaged citizens” (AMET, 2016, p. 8), while Table 7 above does. As can be gathered, there is emphasis on the *active, engaged, and responsible citizen*. Furthermore, these lists of adverbs and adjectives often preceding *citizens* leads to a sense of passivized overdetermination—that is, given many roles or latent actions to fulfill (van Leeuwen, 2008).

Figure 8 below shows a host of verbs that indicate that *learner(s)* and *student(s)* are generally not yet thought of as citizens—for example, *equip, prepare, become, develop, create, and mould*—which aligns with Marshall’s (1950) observation (see above) that institutions and their proponents tend to hold this view.

Figure 8

PTC Sketch Difference Visualization of Verbs with Citizen v. Citizens as Object



Finally, since *citizen(s)* are generally considered to be *in formation*, instances often appear later in the clause or sentence and are thus rarely the subject of the clause, carrying out actions. In the few cases that *citizens* are the grammatical actor, from a transitivity standpoint, the subsequent processes (verbs) are generally behavioural (e.g., thrive) or relational (e.g., are). In essence, even when *citizens* are the actor, they are not afforded any real agency.

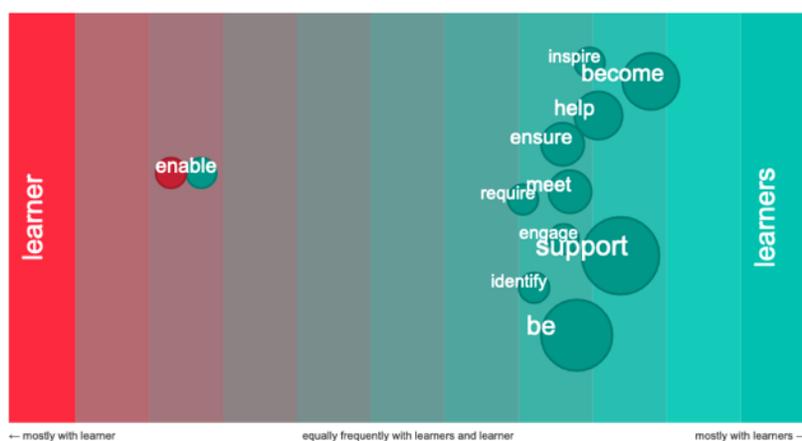
Learner(s) and Student(s)

The tables and figures below visualize and compare some of the data surrounding *learner(s)* followed by *student(s)*.

Table 8
PTC Modifiers of Learner v. Learners

Learner (63)		Learners (312)	
Freq	Modifier	Freq	Modifier
7	each	44	all
4	every	32	English language
2	English language	7	adult
1	independent, lead, lifelong, self-directed	5	lifelong
--		4	diverse, early, independent, Indigenous

Figure 9
PTC Sketch Difference Visualization of Verbs with Learner v. Learners as Object



As can be gleaned from Table 8 above, *learner(s)* are often aggregated and distinguished into identity or contextual groups (see van Leeuwen, 2008) such as *English Language Learner(s)*,

independent, adult, and Indigenous. The buzzterm *lifelong learner(s)* (affiliated with *lifelong learning*) is also invoked here and shows a preoccupation with continual upgrading of knowledge and skills (Mulderigg, 2003). As Figure 9 shows, there is emphasis on *enabling* and *supporting* learners, on achievement through *require, meet, and ensure*, as well as on monitoring through *identify*. This is expanded on in the SPSC findings below.

Similar to *learner(s)* above, *student(s)* are also aggregated (e.g., *each, every, all*) and further distinguished by identity and context (e.g., *high school, First Nation, Indigenous*) (see van Leeuwen, 2008).

Table 9
PTC Modifiers of Student v. Students

Student (1554)		Students (2427)	
Freq	Modifier	Freq	Modifier
21	each	172	all
19	every, individual	34	high school
13	mature	29	First Nation
7	First Nation, Métis, Inuit, resident	25	Indigenous
6	independent, Ontario, other	18	individual

Figure 10
PTC Sketch Difference Visualization of Verbs with Student v. Students as Object

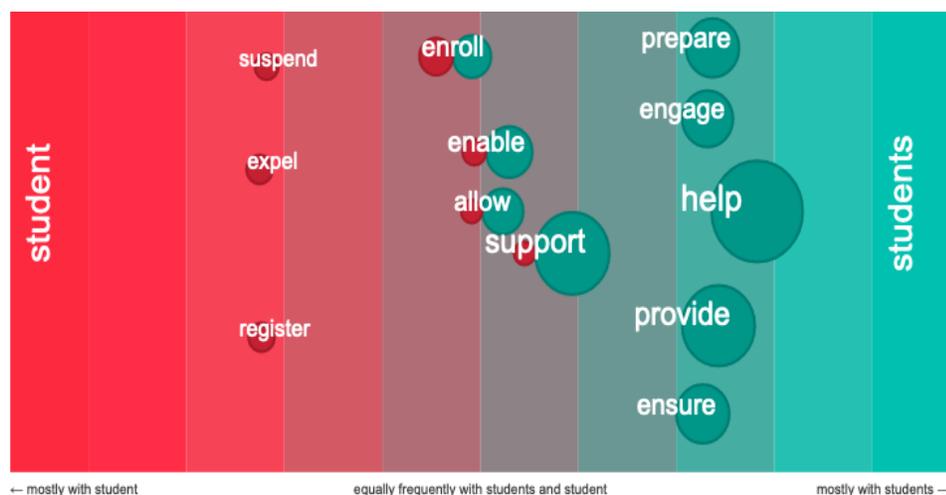


Figure 11

PTC Sketch Difference Visualization of Verbs with Student v. Students as Subject

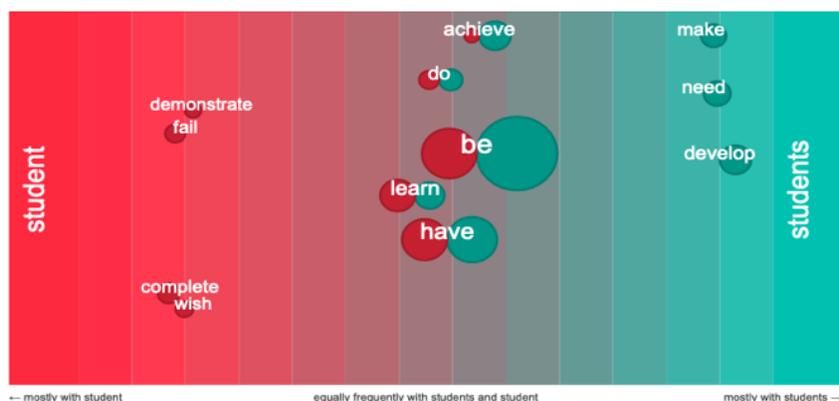


Figure 10 shows a sharp contrast in how *student* singular v. *student* plural are invoked. Verbs belonging to *student* are more affiliated with punishment, while verbs belonging to *students* are related to support and provision. This contrast can also be seen in Figure 11, where *failure* is individualized.

Similar to *citizen(s)* above, in looking at and categorizing the verbs/processes directly following *learner(s)* and *student(s)* via AntConc's word cluster function paired with systemic functional grammar tools (transitivity and modality), it becomes apparent that those for whom education is intended have relatively little agency (see [Appendix D](#)). Modals (e.g., will, must, may) directly follow learner(s) and student(s) 207 times, making up 28.1% of the total. Relational processes make up 30.8%; behavioural processes, 20.8%; material, 11.2%; mental, 8.9%; and verbal, 0.2%. As described in Chapter 6, relational clauses do not signify action and behavioural processes are not as closely affiliated with agency as material processes. Furthermore, given that these processes are dictated by authority, agency is further removed.

Now that some of the general patterns across the PTC have been established, I move into a more in-depth analysis of the selected provincial subcorpora, starting with British Columbia and moving east. Notes on the appearance of excerpts for the reader's benefit: 1) collocational

scores appear in brackets beside each listed word (MI scores have been rounded up to one decimal place), while frequency is listed as a single number; 2) the excerpts pertaining to each collocational query or node word (e.g., citizen, citizens) are numbered; 3) the node word is bolded and underlined; 4) the frequent and top MI scoring collocates are bolded within the excerpt; 5) “|” are used to delineate the boundaries of collocational range either by five words to the right and left of the node word or by sentence boundaries.

British Columbia

British Columbia is the most western and third largest province by both land mass and population (5.1 million) in Canada ([Statistics Canada, 2021a](#)). In 2020-21, the K-12 public school system has 568,271 students enrolled (approximately 11% of total pop.), 11.7% and 12.1% of which are identified as Indigenous students and students with special needs respectively ([Government of British Columbia \[GBC\], 2021a](#)). The province has 60 school districts and 1973 public schools ([GBC, 2021b](#)), and a high school completion rate of roughly 80-90% ([GBC, 2021c](#)). The Ministry of Education administers an annual province-wide Foundational Skills Assessment (FSA) of reading, writing, and numeracy in grades four and seven and participates in national and international testing including the Pan-Canadian Assessment Program (PCAP), Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), and Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). In the past several rounds of PISA testing, BC has had top scores (see [Appendix E](#); see also Stack, 2016).

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives reported in 2017 that “despite being one of Canada’s wealthiest provinces, BC has among the highest poverty rates in the country — 13.2 per cent” (Klein et al., 2017, p. 1), while First Call BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition

(2020) [reported that in 2018](#), 18.5% of children (1 in 5) were living in poverty (para. 2).

Furthermore, First Call (2020) states that

Indigenous children, new immigrant children, children in visible or racialized minority groups and those affected by disabilities all have much higher poverty rates than the BC average. While there are poor children growing up in all areas of BC, many of the regional districts with the highest child poverty rates were located in coastal areas, particularly along the north and central coastal areas. (paras. 11-12).

These statistics provide some contextual background for some of the excerpts and findings below. Furthermore, it has been increasingly recognized that socioeconomic status plays a crucial role in child development and educational performance (Stack, 2016), including graduation rates and standardized testing. In fact, in the 2019-2020 school year, there was a graduation rate disparity of 29% between “BC residents” (90%) and identified Indigenous students (71%) and a graduation rate disparity of 26% between BC residents and students with special needs (74%) (GBC, 2021b).

The British Columbia Ministry of Education (BCME) data (subcorpus) includes two policy level education texts (PLETs)—*2018-19 – 2020-21 Service Plan* (2018a) and *Policy for Student Success* (2018b) published under an NDP government. The *Service Plan* text is 16 pages and includes several sections of note, including “purpose of the ministry”, “strategic direction and alignment with government priorities”, “strategic context”, and “goals, objectives, strategies and performance measures” (p. 4). Latter budgetary sections have been removed. The *Policy for Student Success* is quite short (three pages, one of which is an infographic image) and includes an introductory section, mandate, rationale, and five outlined principles: 1) “quality teaching and leadership,” “student-centred learning,” “future orientation,” “high and measurable standards,” and “healthy and effective learning environments” (p. iii).

Table 10
BCME PLETs Word Frequency List (Top 15)

Rank	Freq	Token/Word
1	76	students
2	67	school
3	54	education, student
4	43	learning
5	42	ministry
6	34	all, will
7	33	secondary
8	29	new
9	26	system
10	25	graduation, their
11	24	Indigenous
12	22	are, height, our, program, success
13	20	curriculum
14	19	have
15	18	improve, outcomes

Table 11
BCME PLETs Most Frequent Bigrams and Trigrams

Rank	N-grams	Freq
Bigram		
1	the ministry	38
2	all students	18
3	education system, high school, post secondary	17
4	student success	14
5	school district	11
Trigram		
1	school district no., under the ministry	7
2	the graduation program, the ministry will	6
3	for all students, linking performance measures, our education system	5
4	a sense of, boards of education, equity in action, for all learners, human and social, post secondary education, sense of belonging	4
5	--	

The bigrams and trigrams in Table 11 reinforce and expand on the word frequency list in Table 10 above, as it lists some of the key phrases which reveal themes within BC's PLETs.

Such phrases also appear within collocational range of *citizen(s)* and *citizenship*, *learner(s)* and *student(s)*, and can be seen in the excerpts that are presented and critically analyzed below.

The following sections present and unpack some findings on citizen(s) and citizenship followed by student(s) and learner(s). There is at least one excerpt in each subsection in which the language seems to skirt grammatical and/or linguistic conventions—I am unsure whether this is due to a possible language barrier, proofreading errors, or purposeful and thus strategic.

Citizen(s) and Citizenship

Table 12 below provides the raw and normalized frequencies of *citizen(s)* and *citizenship*, compares the normalized frequencies to the PTC, lists the range, and percent of subcorpus (PoSC) and stoplisted subcorpus (PoSLSC). This type of table will be repeated for *learner(s)* and *student(s)*, and for each provincial subcorpora’s findings. While there are few instances of citizen(s)(hip), comparing the normalized frequencies between BC and the PTC shows that the BC policy texts mention citizen(s)(hip) more than the PTC average.

Table 12

BCME PLETs Frequency, Range, and Percent of Subcorpus Information for Citizen(s) and Citizenship

	Citizen	Citizens	Citizenship
Freq	3	2	1
BC Nrm Freq	0.65	0.44	0.22
PTC Nrm Freq	0.04	0.23	0.15
Difference	0.61	0.21	0.07
Range	100%	50%	50%
PoSC	0.07%	0.04%	0.02%
PoSLSC	0.09%	0.06%	0.03%

Note. Range indicates the percent of texts that the word appears in.

Citizen. Since the *Policy for Student Success* has a section defining the “educated citizen”, I have excerpted it below. The most frequent collocates of *citizen* are *educated* and *mandate* (2). Given the low frequency, all content collocates are listed in ranked order by mutual

information (MI) score: *defined* (10.0), *educated* (9.6), *mandate* (8.6), *having* (8.4), *develop* (8.0), *success* (6.1).

Our **Mandate** – the **Educated Citizen**

As specified in the *Statement of Education Policy Order*, the purpose of the British Columbia school system is to enable learners to develop their individual potential and to acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to contribute to a healthy society and a prosperous and sustainable economy. To achieve this purpose, we have a collective | **mandate to develop** the “**educated citizen**”, which is **defined** as having: |

- Intellectual Development – to develop the ability of students to analyze critically, reason and think independently, and acquire basic learning skills and bodies of knowledge; to develop in students a lifelong appreciation of learning, a curiosity about the world around them, and a capacity for creative thought and expression.
- Human and Social Development – to develop in students a sense of self-worth and personal initiative; to develop an appreciation of the fine arts and an understanding of cultural heritage; to develop an understanding of the importance of physical health and well-being; to develop a sense of social responsibility, acceptance and respect for the ideas and beliefs of others.
- Career Development – to prepare students to attain their career and occupational objectives; to assist in the development of effective work habits and the flexibility to deal with change in the workplace. (BCME, 2018a, p. i)

As discussed in Chapter 2, I categorized the goals of education as threefold: intellectual pursuit, character development, and economic pursuit. These descriptions of the ‘educated citizen’ align quite neatly with the three categories. A pattern in structure may also be seen in the introductory paragraph wherein intellectual development (knowledge and skills) and human and social development (attitudes needed) are vehicles to a “prosperous and sustainable economy”.

Additionally, note the overlexicalization of the lemma *develop*, as it appears 11 times in this section of the policy and becomes quite circular—to *develop development to develop*. In other words, the BCME aims to develop the educated citizen who has developed intellectually, interpersonally and socially, and career-oriented-ly, each of which have their own sets of skills

and characteristics that need to be developed. Furthermore, these clauses do not position students as agents, and they are in fact, backgrounded as circumstance—e.g., *develop in students* rather than *students will/shall develop* or *develop ability of students* rather than *students' ability to*.

Under *Intellectual Development* there are emphases on critical thinking, lifelong learning, curiosity, and creativity, all of which are generally emphasized as desirable in education discourse. Within *Human and Social Development*, there is emphasis on personally responsible citizenship (Westheimer, 2015) through the phrases, *personal initiative* and *social responsibility* as well as through the emphasis on *physical health and well-being*. Of course, these are important components of everyday life, yet the emphasis on *understanding the importance of physical health* places the burden and the potential blame on the individual if they ‘fail’ to achieve or maintain physical health and well-being echoes the individualism of neoliberal ideology (Sparke, 2017). Understanding the importance of good health does not automatically beget good health—which is ultimately influenced by a combination of social and genetic factors including socioeconomic status, culture, gender, biology, and access to appropriate care.

Furthermore, we might expect to see some mention of collaboration, which is rather subsumed under *social responsibility*. Once an ethics term affiliated with moral philosophy (see Scanlon, 2000),¹⁸ it has been co-opted by business and marketing as another term for accountability and “responsibility to the community in which [an organization] operate[s]” (Doyle, 2016). However, in BC’s case, the term is tied to a “performance standards” framework published in 2001, entitled *Social responsibility: A framework*. The framework shies away from a concrete definition, stating that it “does not provide a comprehensive definition of social responsibility, but [the framework] is useful in organizing a wide and varied range of competencies and dispositions” (p. 4). The framework includes a list of four overlapping

¹⁸ Or watch *The Good Place* (Schur et al., 2016-2020).

categories: “contributing to the classroom and school community”; “solving problems in peaceful ways”; “valuing diversity and defending human rights”; “and exercising democratic rights and responsibilities” (p. 4) that are accompanied by rubrics for different grade ranges.

The section on *Career Development* seems to both hint at and ignore the realities of employment prospects and precarity in an increasingly hard-to-navigate economy. Hinting comes through the emphasis on dealing with change in the workplace yet is ignored through the emphasis on careers as the ultimate goal of education. With an unprecedented level of post-secondary graduates, the job market is saturated with qualified and even overqualified job candidates in an economy that is both quickly changing and rapidly downsizing due to outsourcing, austerity measures, and technological advancement (de Lissovoy, 2015). Furthermore, a large portion of the population is working multiple jobs (*the gig economy, side-hustling*)—often below their knowledge and skill levels—to make ends-meet, especially in large cities where the cost of living has skyrocketed ([Lim, 2019](#)).

Citizens and Citizenship. Since there are few instances, most of the surrounding content collocates have fairly high MI scores and there are no frequent collocates. *Citizens* appears twice, first, as a subheading, and second, within the policy’s introductory paragraph, which can be seen in the first excerpt below. The ranked collocates are *thrive, rapidly* (10.0), *educated* (9.0), *who* (7.8), *policy* (7.5), *success* (6.7), and *student* (4.9). With only one instance of *citizenship*, the surrounding collocates are ranked accordingly by MI score: *adaptability* (11.6), *ultimately, global, competencies* (10.0), *successful* (9.1), *transition* (8.5), *skills* (8.3).

1. British Columbia has a great education system, and we have the opportunity to make it even better. We have a renewed and clear mandate: to enable every learner to maximize their potential, which fuels our passion and | vision that [sic] B.C. has **educated citizens** who **thrive** in a **rapidly** | changing world. (BCME, 2018a, p. i)

2. Future orientation – Because the pace of social, economic, and environmental change is increasing, there is a greater need to enable all students to have essential | **skills, adaptability, global competencies** and **citizenship**, and **ultimately successful transition** to | employment. Our education system will enhance our efforts to prepare all students for lifelong learning, encourage the use of technology, and be prepared for graduation with practical expectations informed by employers and post-secondary institutions. (2018a, p. iii)

The focus on maximizing potential, skills, and competencies in these excerpts align quite closely to education and citizenship as constructed through neoliberal ideology as well as Gough's (1990; see also den Heyer, 2018) categorization of *taken-for-granted* future. Here, there is an emphasis on “a certain set of competencies in order to thrive in the future” (den Heyer, 2018, p. 31) and a particular performance of citizenship as *ultimately* tied to employment and thus the economy. This mirrors the way in which knowledge, skills, and characteristics are subsumed under economic agendas (Apple, 2005; Mautner, 2014). Interestingly, *thrive* only occurs seven times across the PTC, and generally refers to life after or outside of schooling (*world, community, contemporary society, environments beyond the classroom*) with words such as *rapidly changing, adapt* in close proximity. The ever-present and agentively vague insistence of a rapidly changing world and future is a feature of globalized discourse (in close partnership with economic discourse)—that is, such phrasing is presented as an unstoppable given (presupposed), as its own agent (Fairclough, 2013). The emphasis on lifelong learning in the second excerpt also connects to this notion of thriving in a rapidly changing world in the sense that individuals are expected to perpetually update their knowledge and skillset to match the ever- increasing and changing demands for survival (Mulderriq, 2003; see also Fairclough, 1993; Fourcade, 2019).

Learner(s) and Student(s)

As shown in Table 10 above, *students* is the most frequent token in BC's PLETs and together *student(s)* and *learner(s)* make up 3.14% of the subcorpus. Table 13 below provides the

raw and normalized frequency, range, and total percent of learner(s) and student(s) in BC's PLETs. As can be surmised, *learner* occurs slightly less in the BC texts than in the PTC as a whole, while *learners*, *student*, and *students* occur more in the BC texts than in the PTC.

Table 13

BCME PLETs Frequency, Range, and Percent of Subcorpus Information for Student(s) and Learner(s)

	Learner	Learners	Student	Students
Freq	1	13	54	76
BC Nrm Freq	0.22	2.83	11.77	16.57
PTC Nrm Freq	0.30	1.49	7.42	11.58
Difference	-0.08	1.35	4.36	4.99
Range	50%	100%	100%	100%
PSoC	0.02%	0.28%	1.18%	1.66%
PoSLSC	0.03%	0.41%	1.61%	2.40%

Learner. Since there is only one mention of *learner*, all of the content collocates are considered significant based on their MI scores—*maximize* (10.6), *potential*, *every* (9.6), *clear* (9.3), *enable* (9.0), *mandate* (8.5).

1. British Columbia has a great education system, and we have the opportunity to make it even better. We have a renewed and | **clear mandate: to enable every learner to maximize their potential**, which | fuels our passion and vision that BC has educated citizens who thrive in a rapidly changing world. (BCME, 2018a, p. i)

In this excerpt, BC lauds its (top PISA scoring) education system. This praise is followed by two uses of *we*—a collective noun. The first *we* is considered ambiguous, which may work to spread responsibility for action. Note the *opportunity* rather than, for example, responsibility as well as the lack of modal verbs such as *must*, *will*, *can*, etc. They switch back to exclusive *we* (the ministry) to state their mandate: herein, learners are meant to maximize their own potential through some enabling, ostensibly carried out by teachers at the behest of the ministry. As per van Leeuwen's (2008) taxonomy of social actors, *every* functions as an aggregation and an

overlexicalized individualization, since *learner* is already singular/individual—the phrase *every learner* occurs four times across the PTC (AB, 1; MB, 2). Furthermore, this individualized and maximized potential is connected to *educated* and *thriving* citizenship within a taken-for-granted future (as noted above). Taken together, this may be viewed as an example of both the hyper-individualization and hollow mandate and vision statements prominent in neoliberal discourses (Apple, 2017; Giroux, 2007)—or, as den Heyer put it in a conference presentation, “you know you’re dealing with ideology when, in fact, there’s no content” (Couture et al., 2019).

Learners. The most frequent collocates of *learners* are *all* (6), *outcomes* (4) and *Indigenous* (4). There are eleven collocates of *learners* tied at the top MI score of 7.9, of which, I have randomly chosen five in order to narrow the number of excerpts: *care*, *exist*, *groups*, *providing*, *offers*. However, all of the frequent collocates and collocates with a score of 7.9 have been bolded in the excerpts below.

1. Successful completion in our education system is often measured by the acquisition of a Dogwood Diploma,¹⁹ | **providing** opportunities beyond graduation for **learners** to attend further training. | (BCME, 2018a, p. 10)
2. While BC student success has been good, it is inconsistent. Significant differences in student outcomes | **exist among Indigenous and vulnerable learners**, and other significant differences **exist** | between schools across the province. (2018a, p. i)
3. Some **Indigenous learners**, children and **youth in care**, | and students with diverse needs do not always experience the same | levels of success as other **learners**. [...] Key strategies: [...] Focus specific graduation-related strategies regarding particular | **groups** of students, including **Indigenous learners** and students in care. (2018b, p. 7)
4. British Columbia will endeavour to maintain our already high standards on learning outcomes, with a focus on literacy and numeracy, | which evidence **indicates offers all learners**, regardless of background, the best | opportunity to succeed in life and contribute to prosperous economy. (2018a, p. iii)

¹⁹ For clarity, the Dogwood Diploma is what B.C. calls its certificate of graduation for secondary school.

5. Evidence and international best practice conclude that using information on | learning **outcomes**, especially **feedback to learners** from assessments, is critical to | student success. (2018a, p. iii)

Excerpt one positions the Dogwood Diploma as the ticket to “attend further training” which invokes both *lifelong learning* and the workforce, since the term training is most affiliated with employment—the English Web 2015 corpus (enTenTen15) lists modifiers of *training* as vocational, skills, job, formal, professional, and practical. Additionally, “successful completion” is a nominalization which allows for the removal of a human agent or social actor (i.e., students or learners), and is thus, an example of backgrounding (van Leeuwen, 2008) and presuppositional silence (Huckin, 2002).

Many of these excerpts focus on Indigenous and vulnerable learners (identification; van Leeuwen, 2008), outcomes, as well as life after graduation. I discuss BC’s use of Indigenous below but wish to point out that these examples point to ‘differences’ between Indigenous learners’ achievement and an unnamed standard student achievement (see “other learners” in the third excerpt). While the language is not overtly negative, it still places Indigenous learners in a deficit position (Gorski, 2011), in which they need to meet *outcomes* designed for *other learners*—who we might surmise are generally white affluent or middle-class settlers. In this case, those who meet the aforementioned *outcomes* through *literacy* and *numeracy* testing and *graduation* are deemed *successful* and may attend *further training* and *contribute to a prosperous economy*. In reading below the surface, if one is not contributing to a prosperous economy, then they may be considered a ‘burden’ to it (see Springer et al., 2016). This emphasis on contribution recalls the term “wastage”, which was coined in the early 20th century and broadly refers to student deviancy and failure; it was applied mainly to those who did not excel in school, dropped out, and/or did not ‘make something of themselves’ (see Christou, 2013).

While this term may no longer be in common use as a descriptor for students, its spirit can be seen in the emphasis on *success* and *contribution*.

The key strategy listed in excerpt four overlexicalizes specificity—*specific, particular, specifically*—yet presents a vague action. What are *graduation-related strategies*? How might they be implemented? Excerpt five positions *evidence and international best practice* as a social actor (*utterance autonomization*; van Leeuwen, 2008) which acts as a legitimation strategy for what follows—emphasis on outcomes and providing feedback. These two pedagogical aspects are grounded in progressive education ideas surrounding explicit/overt instruction and curricular and course alignment (Biggs & Tang, 2007). While there are evidenced benefits from both alignment and explicit instruction (Artemeva & Fox, 2010; Macleod & Golby, 2003) there are also concerns about cookie cutter curricula and assessment that essentially acts to de-teacher the curricula (Westheimer, 2015; see also Gallagher, 2011). There are also concerns about ‘best practice’ terminology that engender a colonizing and/or one-size-fits-all approach (Crampton, 2015), especially so, when invoked as a globalized phenomenon (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012). Steiner-Khamsi (2012) notes that increasingly, “policy makers unscrupulously refer to [particular] reforms as ‘best practices’, or ‘international standards’, in education, *as if* there existed a clearly defined set of standards, policies, and practices that are universally shared” (p. 4). The takeaway, I believe, is akin to the criticality embedded in CDS—that is, to shine a light on and think critically about ideas or practices that are presented as common sense or status quo.

Student. The most frequent collocates of *student* include *success* (19) and *learning* (12), which feature in the frequent bigram, *student success* (14) as well as larger clusters, *Framework for Enhancing Student Learning* (3), *student’s continuous learning*, and *student satisfaction with*

their learning (2). The collocate with the highest MI score is *wellness* (7.4). There are 41 collocates at the next score down (6.4), thus I randomly chose two collocates: *solid* and *team*.

1. Objective 1.2: | Improve **Student** Satisfaction with Their **Learning** | [...] Key strategies: Fully implement the curriculum in Grades K-12 to provide a greater opportunity | for personalizing **learning**, and enhancing **student** engagement and satisfaction with their | learning. (BCME, 2018b, p. 8)
2. As well, mental health is | an important aspect of overall **student wellness** and is important to **student success**. | (2018b, p. 6)
3. Develop a capacity building | **team** focused on **Indigenous student success** through BC's Framework for | Enhancing Student Learning. (2018b, p. 10)
4. The success of meeting the ministry's mandate of effectively preparing students for life after high school can be measured, in part, by the percentage of students who transition from high school to some type of post-secondary learning. | It is a **solid** indicator of **student** engagement and continued commitment to | their learning. (2018b, p. 12)

All of these instances of *student* are impersonalized as they appear as modifiers of abstract concepts and nominalized processes (van Leeuwen, 2008). The first excerpt makes a number of presuppositions: 1) that the K-12 curriculum is not being *fully implemented*, which implicitly invokes teachers, 2) that the curriculum affords personalized learning, and 3) that the curriculum will increase student satisfaction. Below the key strategies in this policy, are a table of performance measures which connect student satisfaction to feelings of preparedness for both post-secondary education and “a job in the future” (BCME, 2018b, p. 9). What is potentially missing in this feedback loop are questions that ask students to think critically about their engagement and satisfaction with curriculum content and activities as well as pedagogical practice—both with regard to inclusion and openness, civic engagement, social justice, and future orientations that are not solely about post-secondary education and jobs (see den Heyer, 2018; Westheimer, 2015).

The second excerpt is found within a section on strategic context that precedes the goals, objectives, and key actions sections. Here, mental health is framed as important insofar as it influences student wellness and ultimately *success* (assessment, graduation, economic productivity). While true, this statement may be considered an example of how important social concepts are coopted by neoliberalism and individually responsabilized (see Huckin, 2002; Mulderrig, 2003; Sparke, 2017). However, it is followed by a statement on including “mental well-being” in the “new physical and health education curriculum” (p. 6)—a concrete and potentially positive action. Additionally, *wellness* only occurs once in the BC policy texts and 40 times across the PTC beginning in 2015, which suggests its uptake as a potential buzzword in PLED; *well-being* occurs 71 times across the PTC, beginning in 2014.

The third excerpt is the final bullet point in key strategies under the first objective (“close the performance gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students”) of “Goal 2: Improve outcomes for Indigenous students” (2018b, p. 9). The framework mentioned (an instance of explicit intertextuality) outlines its goals as well as roles and actions for both the Ministry and Boards of Education ([GBC, 2020](#)). With regard to capacity building it states that “the Ministry will [...] work with Boards of Education to build capacity along a continuum of supports including: communicate, facilitate, cooperate and direct using provincial and local information” ([GBC, 2020](#), para. 28). These are further delineated later in the policy, but they seem to be more in line with a reporting and facilitation structure within the Ministry-Board hierarchy, with the exception of mention of “peer-based teams to facilitate capacity building” based on “area of focus” (para. 40). Thus, performance gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students appear to be an area of focus which may or may not have a dedicated peer-based team. I discuss the framing of Indigenous students further in the next section.

The fourth excerpt is a performance measure found within “Goal 3: Improve transitions to post-secondary institutions”, under “Objective 3.1: Increase the percentage of students who transition directly from high school to a post-secondary institution”. The term *solid* denotes stability, unanimity, and reliability, which in the context of this excerpt, promotes the acceptance of what follows without questioning. Yet the framing of students transitioning to post-secondary straight from high school as individual *engagement* and *commitment* obfuscates the constellation of social aspects at play including public, peer, and parental pressure and in some cases coercion as well as the lack of both life and job prospects for those without a post-secondary degree. In many cases students are forced to attend post-secondary education when they are not ready, are uncertain about what their interests are, and/or their major/field has been foisted upon them (often STEM)—all of which likely contribute to the anxiety epidemic amongst young adults ([Lewson, 2021](#); [Singal, 2016](#)), disengagement in courses, and drop-out, fail, and withdrawn rates. The excerpt also obfuscates potential reasons why students do not transition to post-secondary directly from high school including lack of personal/familial funds and/or viable funding, lack of support, mental and/or physical health, and taking time to explore and decide upon interests. This excerpt exemplifies the flattening of a complex and social process to individualized decision, behaviour, and action—a common strategy in neoliberal discourse.

Students. Frequent collocates of *students* include *all* (19), *Indigenous* (17), *school* (14), *learning* (14). The collocates with the highest MI scores are *reducing* (6.4), and *care* (6.0). Since there are 86 collocates tied at the next score down (5.4), three were randomly selected: *vulnerability*, *succeeding*, and *self-worth*.

1. Specifically, our investment in the area of Early Childhood Education is | intended to ensure that **all students** arrive in kindergarten ready to | learn and that, where necessary, early monitoring | and interventions occur for **all students**

who need them, **reducing** the **vulnerability** of **students** entering the system. (BCME, 2018b, p. 6)

2. Focus specific graduation-related strategies regarding particular groups of | students, including **Indigenous** learners and **students in care**. | (2018b, p. 7)
3. *Human and Social Development* – to develop in **students** a sense of **self-worth** and personal initiative; (2018a, p. i, italics in original)
4. Focus all talents, efforts, and resources on improving student success. Our success will not just be measured by the amount of investment, legislative changes, the number of programs, or the amount of new construction, but | rather on how well **all students** are **succeeding** in life, regardless | of their background or where they live in B.C. – this is our foundation for a prosperous, shared, and sustainable economy. This commitment depends on using evidence to make decisions, having the courage to adjust and improve programs and policies that are not optimal for students, enabling equity of access to quality education for every student, aligning investments that clearly demonstrate better outcomes, and leading through innovative approaches. (2018a, p. ii)
5. Our education system will enhance our efforts to prepare **all students** for **lifelong learning**, encourage the use of technology, and be prepared for graduation with practical expectations informed by employers and post-secondary institutions. (2018a, p. iii)

The first excerpt makes the claim that through monitoring and intervention, early childhood education (prior to kindergarten) may reduce vulnerability of students who—in reading between the lines—may be neurodivergent and/or have specialized learning needs, as well as reduce the vulnerability of other students whose learning may be disrupted by those children. The excerpt takes on a medicalized tone in its emphasis on early detection, diagnoses, containment, and minimizing symptoms and side effects (see Mulderrig, 2003). This problematic characterization is driven home through the phrase *ready to learn*, which also connects to the standardization of early childhood development, recalling the aphorism once used by a colleague: “out of the womb and into the classroom” (Williams, 2017, personal communication). This standardization ultimately pathologizes difference and also connects to the *life-course matrix* discussed in the Saskatchewan findings [below](#).

The second excerpt falls within the bullet list of key strategies under “Goal 1: Improve Student Achievement and Success”, “Objective 1.1: Improve Student Outcomes” (2018b, p. 7) and names two groups that require *graduation-related strategies* to help improve graduation rates for these students. However, these strategies are left unuttered, and the only performance measure named under this objective is graduation rate percentage targets—greater than 87% by 2019/20 and beyond (p. 7).

The third excerpt is found under the description of the educated citizen which is discussed in depth above. It mentions *self-worth*, which is quite rare, only occurring once in the BC PLETs and three times across the PTC (YT, 1; NB, 1). Its closest synonyms, *self-esteem* and *self-confidence*, only occur once (NL), and twice (NB, NS) respectively across the PTC. However, *self-worth* is followed by *personal initiative*, which may signal personally responsible citizenship (Westheimer, 2015). The fourth and fifth excerpts align with aspects of neoliberalism: although the fourth excerpt discusses equity and accessibility of education for *all students regardless of background*, it frames these progressive initiatives in education as the way *all students* can become successful by contributing to the economy, which ultimately invokes the narrative of meritocracy (Apple, 2004; de Lissovoy, 2013; Littler, 2013). Finally, the fifth excerpt mentions *lifelong learning* as a requirement for maintained success (contribution to the economy) as determined by employers and post-secondary institutions (see Mulderrig, 2003; Piper, 2000; Woodside-Jiron, 2011). But since higher education is facing increasing pressure to cater to economic industries (Giroux, 2014; Spooner & McNinch, 2018), such *practical requirements* are ultimately aligned with employers.

Since *Indigenous* is both in the top 25 most frequent words within the BC PLETs and has appeared in many of the excerpts above, I pulled this thread a little further: It is mainly used as a

modifier of student(s) and learners—*Indigenous students* (17), *Indigenous student* (2), *Indigenous learners* (4). While on the surface we may applaud the BCME for its attention to improving the education system in a way that is beneficial for Indigenous peoples, the bolded sentence in the below excerpt caught my attention:

The success of Indigenous students is a high priority for the entire education system. Through efforts to improve our education system, including forging positive relationships, taking collaborative action, and focusing on results, we have seen continued improvement in Six Year Dogwood Completion and transition | rates to post-secondary education. **More Indigenous students are meeting with success than ever before.** However, much more progress is needed and some areas such as early reading and mathematics results require specific attention. This is especially true for First Nations students if our education system is to provide them with skills and knowledge to thrive in contemporary society. (BCME, 2018b, p. 9)

My focus is on ‘meeting with success,’ as the phrasing is markedly strange and only occurs once in both the BC PLETs and the whole PTC: Here, success seems to be constructed as a corporeal object and possibly anthropomorphized, since the phrase ‘meeting with’ typically refers to humans. Here, Indigenous students are positioned as the subject, carrying out the action of *meeting* (a material process). While this type of construction gives agency, the word *meeting* refers to something temporary, though possibly recurring. It is also unclear what success in this sense is—graduating? learning outcomes? test scores? etc. The sentence may have alternatively been written: *More Indigenous students are successful than ever before*; *More Indigenous students are achieving success than ever before*. In the first example, the process becomes relational, imbuing Indigenous students with success (full stop); in the second, the use of *achieving* aligns more closely with typical phrasing; the English Web 2015 corpus (enTenTen15) lists *achieve* the top verb collocated with ‘success’ as object. While *achieve(ing) success* may be considered a buzz-phrase affiliated with neoliberal discourse, it holds a little more permanence than does *meeting*. It seems appropriate to point out that the colonial system of schooling’s idea

of success may be quite different from Indigenous perspectives. But it is hard to say whether the intent of this marked clause is to destabilize the colonial, neoliberal discourse given the subject of Indigeneity and the understanding that success is not a permanent state, nor a single milestone, or possibly indicative of the colonial (decidedly negative) narratives of Indigeneity.

Summary

Although one of the texts is called a service plan, its three-year period and lack of explicit guidance and broad and vague “key strategies” and “performance measures” lean more toward a policy or strategic planning document. In other words, there is a discernable blending of genres in BC’s PLETs. As one of the most *citizenship-centred* subcorpora in the PTC, the BCME policy texts construct their mandated ‘educated citizen’ in close alignment to personally responsible citizenship (Westheimer, 2015), with no reference to volunteer work, community collaboration, nor social justice. This construction involves the need to adapt and contribute economically to an uncertain *rapidly changing* future. As the PTC section above shows, *learner(s)* is often part of the noun group, *English Language Learner(s)*, which does not occur in the BC policy texts. Overall, the content surrounding *learner(s)* and *student(s)* leans toward an individualistic emphasis on success (performance), well-being, and lifelong learning as tied to *maximizing* economic potential (of citizens to-be). Here, Indigenous and vulnerable students are highlighted as requiring extra attention in this regard with little and vague reference to social determinants that have led to such ‘gaps,’ which is an instance of textual silence that is not only insensitive but is entrenched in coloniality.

Alberta

Alberta is the most western of the prairie provinces and has the fourth largest population at 4.4 million ([Alberta Government \[AG\], 2021a](#)). In 2020-21, the K-12 public school system

had 483,532 students enrolled (10.8% of total pop.), 12.1% of which are identified students with special needs ([AG, 2021b](#)). The province has 42 public school authorities and 1569 public schools, and an average high school completion rate in 2018-19 of roughly 80-85% ([AMET, 2021a](#); [AG, 2021c](#)). The child poverty rate reported in 2018 was 16.7%, but 17% for non-Indigenous visible minorities and 24% for Indigenous children—over 1 in 6 children overall ([Public Interest Alberta, 2018](#)). Alberta Education administers annual Provincial Achievement Tests (PATs) to students in grades 6 and 9 for literacy (both English and French), math, science, and social sciences. Grade 12 students enrolled in core courses (e.g., English, Math, Sciences, and Social Studies) are also required to register for and write diploma examinations worth 30% of the final grade of each course ([AMET, 2021b](#); see also Slomp, 2008). Alberta students also participate in PCAP, and international testing including PISA, PIRLS, and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) ([AG, 2021d](#))—in my understanding, the most tested province of the selected provinces. In the past several rounds of PISA testing, Alberta has had top scores (see [Appendix E](#)).

The data collected from the Alberta Ministry of Education and Training (AMET) includes three policy texts: *Teaching quality standard applicable to the provision of basic education in Alberta* (2013; hereafter *Teaching quality standard*); *The guiding framework for the design and development of kindergarten to grade 12 provincial curriculum (programs of study)* (2016; hereafter *Guiding framework*); and *ESC to grade 12: Guide to education 2019-19* (2018; hereafter *Guide to education*). The *Teaching quality standard* (2013), published under a PC government, is four pages and is based on Ministerial Order (#016/97), and has three sections: 1) teaching quality standard, 2) descriptors of knowledge, skills and attributes related to interim certification; and 3) descriptors of knowledge, skills and attributes related to permanent

certification. The *Guiding framework* (2016) is 52 pages, was published under an NDP government, and contains many sections including a preamble, considerations for design and development, K-12 provincial curriculum, architecture and design of K-12, and two appendices, references, and bibliography (the latter three of which were removed during data cleaning). Also published under the NDP government, the *Guide to education* (2018) at 152 pages, contains an: Introduction, Program foundations, the *School Act*, Other Legislation, Regulations, Policies, Standards, Requirements in Other Alberta Education Documents, Program Planning, Program Administration and Delivery, Resources and Services, and Appendices (pp. iii-ix).

These PLETs total 55148 tokens. After stoplisting, the total number of tokens is 37809. Figure 13 and Table 14 below show the most frequent words in this subcorpus. The bigrams and trigrams in Table 15 below reinforce and expand on the word frequency list in Table 14, as it lists some of the key phrases which reveal themes within Alberta's PLETs. For instance, rather than school districts and school boards, Alberta refers to school authorities to account for the various types of schooling models they have including public, charter, independent, private, and federally funded. Of the 103 instances of "school authorities" across the PTC, Alberta's policy texts account for 96%. Additionally, the 5-gram, *First Nations, Métis, and Inuit* (FNMI) appears 55 times throughout the 2016 and 2018 policies.

Table 15
AMET PLETs Top 5 Bigrams and Trigrams

Rank	N-grams	Freq
Bigram		
1	high school	271
2	school act	153
3	Alberta education	125
4	senior high	120
5	school authorities	99
Trigram		
1	senior high school	108
2	for more information	90
3	programs of study	80
4	kindergarten to grade	44
5	English language arts	40

Citizen(s) and Citizenship

Table 16 below provides the instances, number of collocate tokens and types, and total percent of *citizen(s)* and *citizenship* in Alberta's policy texts. Comparing the normalized frequencies between Alberta and the PTC shows mentions are roughly on par with one another. Furthermore, Alberta's discursive construction of citizen(s) and citizenship is quite robust.

Table 16
AMET PLETs Frequency, Range, and Percent of Subcorpus Information for Citizen(s) and Citizenship

	Citizen	Citizens	Citizenship
Freq.	3	13	10
AB Nrm Freq	0.05	0.24	0.18
PTC Nrm Freq	0.04	0.23	0.15
Difference	0.01	0.01	0.03
Range	33.33%	66.66%	66.66
PoSC	0.005%	0.024%	0.018%
PoSCL	0.008%	0.034%	0.026%

Note. The 2013 policy text has no instances of citizen(s) nor citizenship.

Citizen. The most frequent collocate of *citizen* is *ethical* (2), which can be seen in the excerpts below. Given that there are only three instances, most of the content words surrounding *citizen* have high MI scores. The top ten are: *understands* (13.6), *thinker* (12.6), *agencies* (12.0), *ethical* (11.2), *entrepreneurial* (10.8), *spirit* (10.7), *industry* (10.5), *whereas* (10.2), *business* (10.0), and *engaged* (9.5).

1. | **WHEREAS an Ethical Citizen understands** that it is not | all about them, has learned about and is appreciative of the effort and sacrifice that built this province and country and sees beyond self-interests to the needs of the community; is committed to democratic ideals; contributes fully to the world economically, culturally, socially and politically; as a steward of the earth, minimizes environmental impacts; builds relationships through fairness, humility and open mindedness, with teamwork, collaboration and communication; engages with many cultures, religions and languages, values diversity in all people and adapts to any situation; demonstrates respect, empathy and compassion for all people; cares for themselves physically, emotionally, intellectually, socially and spiritually; is able to ask for help, when needed, from others, and also for others; and assumes the responsibilities of life in a variety of roles. (AMET, 2018, p. 4)
2. LDCs [Locally Developed Courses] must align with the vision of an educated Albertan as | an **engaged thinker** and **ethical citizen** with an **entrepreneurial spirit**. | (2018, p. 68)
3. Using the expertise, talent and resources of community-based service organizations and | **agencies**, and of **business, industry, citizen groups** and parents, schools can | enrich the educational experiences of students. (2018, p. 73)

The AMET (2018) text reproduces the *Ministerial Order on Student Learning* which “sets the goals and standards for student learning outcomes” which are Engaged Thinkers, Ethical Citizens, and Entrepreneurial Spirit (p. 3). Whereas statements are generally part of legislative or political discourse—motions and resolutions that require action—wherein they are listed as preambles (backgrounding and/or context) that inform one or more binding “be it resolved” statements. Yet there are no “be it resolved” statements in the policy nor in the original *Order*, which is highly unusual. This may be strategic, as it precludes any action by and thus onus on the

Ministry. While there are no binding action(able) commitments for the Ministry, these whereas statements are quite forceful in defining the parameters of the education system, the Ministry's goals, and in discursively constructing students and citizens. There are however, two numbered 'action' items that conclude the many whereas statements. The first is to repeal the earlier (1998) version of this *Ministerial Order*, while the second is a restatement of much of the content in the whereas statements as four outcomes, the last of which has many sub-outcomes.

The first excerpt, as one of these whereas statements, defines the ethical citizen and is a prime example of van Leeuwen's (2008) overdeterminism, in which *citizen* has a cascaded list of roles and responsibilities (which is also found in globalized discourse; Fairclough, 2013). Though fairly standard with its emphasis on personal responsibility, openness, resilience, and contribution to the economy and society, the first section which has two parts stands out: First, "it is not all about them" and "sees beyond self-interests", while seemingly opposing extreme individualism (in addressing the singular citizen), calls to mind the public discourse that attacks younger generations (Millennials and Gen-Z who are often mislabelled as Millennials) as narcissistic, self-important, and entitled ([Jarrett, 2017](#); [Ruggeri, 2017](#)). Second, the emphasis on *appreciating* "the effort and sacrifice that built this province and country" is heavily patriotic and fully obfuscates the ongoing atrocities of colonization on First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI) and the land we all inhabit. A truly ethical citizen—that is, one concerned with morality and/or reduction of harm—may in fact, not *appreciate* it.

Furthermore, being aware of Alberta's social and economic context as the oil capital of the country and ongoing conflict with Indigenous peoples and nations, environmental groups and pipeline opposers, and even the government of British Columbia seems to darken their statement

further.²⁰ Within this statement, there is a potential danger of stifling critical thinking and even free speech lingering beneath the surface, which if left unchecked may expand into the territory of authoritarianism and/or fascism—or what has been coined as proto-fascism (Giroux, 2004; and taken up by Webb & Gulson, 2011). This point may be further driven home through the second excerpt, as it invokes the three goals/outcomes of education from the first excerpt, which potentially limit educators’ ability to develop courses/curricula which may be critical of Alberta’s and/or Canada’s history. The third excerpt’s focus on incorporating a range of expertise and resources is laudable; however, those concerned about the corporatization of education may be wary of the inclusion of “business” and “industry” (Gidney, 2019; Shaker, 2018a), especially in regard to the oil industry’s investment in curricula and textbooks which skewed in their favour ([Linnitt, 2014](#); [Mertz, 2013](#)).

Citizens. The most frequent collocates of *citizens* include *ethical* (6), *engaged* (5), *entrepreneurial*, *spirit*, *thinkers* (4). The five top MI scoring collocates include *equipping* (11.5), *thinkers* (11.2), *entrepreneurial* (10.8), *ethical* (10.6), *becoming*, *simultaneously*, *spirit*, and *tomorrow* (10.5).

1. WHEREAS the fundamental goal of education in Alberta is to inspire all students to achieve success and fulfillment, and reach their full potential by developing the competencies | of **Engaged Thinkers** and **Ethical Citizens** with an **Entrepreneurial Spirit**, who | contribute to a strong and prosperous economy and society. (AMET, 2018, p. 3)
2. The ministry ensures that inclusive learning opportunities enable students to achieve success | as **engaged thinkers** and **ethical citizens** with an **entrepreneurial spirit**. (2018, p. 3)
3. | Students, as **ethical** and **engaged citizens**, develop respect for democratic principles | and processes for decision making. (2016, p. 8)

²⁰ The bits about “stewards of the earth” and emphasis on adapting to any situation are particularly ironic, given Alberta’s absolute refusal to take climate science seriously and adapt accordingly.

4. Our education | system must **simultaneously prepare** the **citizens** of tomorrow while **equipping** our | students with the knowledge and skills they need to be successful in a rapidly changing economy and society. (2018, p. 1)
5. Curriculum supports students in | **becoming** active, **ethical** and responsible **citizens** who make well-informed decisions | and meaningful contributions to their families and to local and global communities. (2016, p. 24)

These excerpts again invoke (anaphoric reference) the three goals/outcomes of Alberta’s public education system which align with those that I previously outlined in Chapters 2 and 4, as well as the pattern in which specific ideal characteristics are a vehicle to economic prosperity. The fourth and fifth excerpts illustrate the *student now, citizen in the future* ideology through *prepare* and *becoming*. However, the third excerpt attributes ethical and engaged citizenship to students *now* as a prerequisite for respecting “democratic principles and processes for decision making”. What is interesting, is how the statement is softened by the use of: *develop*, which nominalizes *respect; democratic principles* rather than *democracy*; and *processes for decision making* rather than *decision making processes*. A statement reading ‘students ... respect democracy and decision making processes’ sounds far more authoritarian than what is presented, yet has the same meaning. This softening has the effect of disguising the statement’s imperative nature (a demand) as declarative (sharing information). Although the “democratic principles” are not listed, a quick internet search brought me to the *Learn Alberta* website which hosts curricula, particularly to a unit in a [grade 6 social sciences curriculum](#) which outlines the four key principles of democracy as justice, equity, freedoms, and representation. Furthermore, “decision making processes” is left without a referent and is thus quite vague—one might ask: whose decision-making processes? what kind? Given the context, the classroom and society are likely answers—that is, students are groomed to respect their teachers’ and schools’ decisions (and may or may not be filled in on the process), which may transfer into other contexts such as work,

politics, and so on. This is worrisome as it again may undermine critical thinking and inquiry, and possibly foreshadows the AMET's 2018 definition of the ethical citizen.

Citizenship. The most frequent collocates of *citizenship* are *cultural* (4) and *global* (3). The collocates with the top MI scores include *treating, refugees, immigration* (11.8), *democracy* (10.9), *actively* (10.3), *ethically* (9.9), *global* (9.4), *employment, fairness* (9.3), *excellence*, and *prepared* (9.1). *Refugees* and *immigration* appear together in Alberta's (2018) reference to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) for those wishing to find more information on international education study permits (p. 118). This is the only reference to the IRCC across the PTC and as pointed out, when PLETs refers to citizen(s) and citizenship, it is rarely connected to matters of attaining documented Canadian Citizenship. Thus, its mention in the AMET 2018 text stands out, while also illuminating the potential intended audience as global in scope. Excerpts including the other collocates are:

1. Student values | include the following: **Democracy** and **Citizenship**, by treating others **ethically**, with | fairness and equity; by demonstrating social justice when taking action; by contributing to the common good; by building cross-cultural awareness and celebrating diversity in our pluralistic society; and by contributing to local and global communities; (AMET, 2016, p. 3)
2. **Cultural** and **Global Citizenship** involves **actively** engaging with **cultural**, | environmental, political or economic systems. [...] Indicators: [...] | demonstrating responsible **citizenship** through actions that contribute to | healthy and sustainable communities; (2016, p. 30)
3. WHEREAS education in Alberta is based on | the values of opportunity, **fairness, citizenship**, choice, diversity, and **excellence**. | (2018, p. 3)
4. Knowledge and Employability (K&E) courses are designed for students in grades 8 to 12 who demonstrate reading, writing, mathematical and/or other levels of achievement two to three grade levels below their age-appropriate grade. School authorities may offer Knowledge and Employability courses to provide students with opportunities to experience success and become well | **prepared** for **employment**, further studies, **citizenship** and lifelong learning. | (2018, p. 61)

“Democracy and citizenship” is the first of five “student values” listed in the 2016 policy text; the others are belonging and identity, integrity and respect, perseverance and excellence, and innovation and stewardship—which appear to align with the 2018 definition of the ‘ethical citizen’ (intertextuality). The section introduces a definition of values as “represent[ing] beliefs about the important and desirable characteristics for Alberta’s students” and includes a footnote that states that “student values are derived from the *Ministerial Order on Student Learning* (#001/2013) and the Education Act” (p. 3). There are few interesting discursive leaps happening here including that these values are considered characteristics meant to be instilled in students; one might ask how for example, democracy or belonging can be considered human characteristics—that is, one cannot *be* democracy, nor can they *be* belonging. Rather, in extrapolating from the additional *by* statements, one might show that they *value* democracy *by* “treating others ethically, with fairness and equity [...]”. This exemplifies how meaning and process can be lost or obscured both through space-saving tactics and globalized discursive features (e.g., cascades of lists, timeless present, no agents/non-human agency, nominalization) (Fairclough, 2010, 2013; see also Young et al., 2018, pp. 215-224). Furthermore, though these values are clearly determined and valued by the Ministry, they are named “student values”—rather than say “Ministry values” or “things we/the Ministry/Alberta want(s) students to value”—which has the effect of giving possession of these values-turned-characteristics to students. Finally, the use of the present continuous or timeless present drives the connection between the student *now* and the citizen in the *future*—that is, by learning and performing these characteristics/values as a student, the AMET is confident these values will transfer to the desired embodiment of ‘good’ or *ethical* citizenship.

This notion of ‘good’ citizenship is defined further in the second excerpt. There are three adjectives preceding citizenship—*cultural*, *global*, and *responsible*. Performing cultural and global citizenship means “actively engaging with cultural, environmental, political, or economic systems”, and while this may seem fairly holistic, it is interesting that they use *or* rather than *and*. Also of interest is the notion of cultural citizenship as it only appears explicitly in the AMET policy texts. Further investigation reveals that cultural citizenship is a term coined by Renato Rosaldo in the late 1980s “to make a case for the democratization of institutions of higher education through diversity in the classroom, curricula, decision making, and society at large” (*New dictionary of the history of ideas*, 2020, para. 4; see also Rosaldo, 1999). This concept has been taken up by various citizenship, globalization, and education scholars (Davies et al., 2018; Stevensen, 2001, 2003) wherein two diverging discussions seem to emerge: 1) when applied thoughtfully, cultural citizenship is a hopeful approach to a more inclusive and diverse practice of teaching and engaging citizenship, and 2) marketized and globalized versions of cultural citizenship tend to hollow out the richness embedded in the concept through individualization and a focus on dominant cultural capital. Global citizenship is closely related to notions of culture as it emphasizes notions of citizenship that surpass the local and national levels both in a physical sense (geographically or transnationally) and metaphysical sense (cultural awareness and values) (Delanty, 2005; see also Davies et al., 2018). While there is no actor in this statement, citizenship seems to be enacted from an individual point of view—“engaging with [...] systems”, “responsible citizenship”, “contribute” (see Westheimer, 2015). Thus, it is worth questioning whether these terms bear their intended robust inflections, or whether they are hollow buzzwords, or somewhere in between.

The third excerpt is another whereas statement. Here, several “values” are listed as informing Alberta’s public education system, some of which again are not easily understood as values in the traditional sense (e.g., opportunity). Again, one might say that they *value opportunity, fairness, excellence, diversity, citizenship, and choice*, but when these are presented as values in and of themselves, there is a discursive leap that needs to be made by the reader. Furthermore, these terms are also listed without any explanation or operationalizing.

The fourth excerpt describes the knowledge and employability (K&E) courses offered to students who are several grades behind in particular subjects, where there is again an emphasis on lifelong learning as well as employment. While written with a positive prosody—*offer, provide, opportunities to experience success*—these remedial courses act as a sort of last-ditch effort to make underperforming students useful to society without acknowledging the context or circumstances that lead to such underperformance (textual silence). Rather than detailing a process or discussion surrounding when a recommendation is made (and by whom) that a student be enrolled in K&E courses, the policy relies on power (authority) and a synthetic benevolence (a form of synthetic personalization) likely to avoid questioning and/or dissent.

Learner(s) and Student(s)

Table 17 below provides the raw and normalized frequency, range, and total percent of *learner(s)* and *student(s)* in Alberta’s PLETs. Although most of the normalized frequencies between Alberta and the PTC are not considerably different, *student* does occur roughly 1.5 times more per thousand words than in the PTC.

Table 17

AMET PLETs Frequency, Range, and Percent of Subcorpus Information for Student(s) and Learner(s)

	Learner	Learners	Student	Students
Freq	20	44	603	669
AB Nrm Freq	0.36	0.80	10.93	12.13
PTC Nrm Freq	0.30	1.49	7.42	11.58
Difference	0.06	-0.69	3.51	0.55
Range	66.66%	100%	100%	100%
PSoC	0.04%	0.08%	1.09%	1.21%
PoSLSC	0.05%	0.12%	1.59%	1.77%

Learner. *Learner* occurs only in the 2016 and 2018 policy texts. The most frequent collocates of *learner* are *learning* (6), *nature* (6), *diversity*, *centred* (3). The most statistically significant collocates include *books*, *embraces*, *genuine*, *limit*, *traits*, *virtual* (10.88), *point*, *starting* (10.3), *equality* (9.8), and *nature* (9.5). *Learning* and *nature* co-occur in the phrase “nature of learning and the learner” five times, as it is one of the “considerations for design and development of Alberta’s Kindergarten to Grade 12 Provincial Curriculum” (2016, p. 4)—the first excerpt below is an example.

1. Understanding the | **nature of learning** and the **learner** is the **starting point** for | building a **learner**-focused, knowledge-**centred** and meaningful | provincial curriculum for students in Alberta. (AMET, 2016, p. 4)
2. Alberta’s inclusive K–12 | education system **embraces diversity** and **learner** differences, and promotes equitable opportunities | for all learners in safe and caring environments. (2016, p. 9)
3. The concept of a learning commons is a shift in thinking from a library as a physical space that is a repository of | **books**, to an inclusive, flexible, **learner-centred**, physical and/or **virtual** | space for collaboration, inquiry, imagination and play to expand and deepen learning. (2018, p. 90)
4. Flexible programming involves [...] using a broad range of learning resources, with the selection | of particular resources according to **learner** needs and **learning traits** (2018, p. 6)

5. WHEREAS an Engaged Thinker [...] adapts to the many changes in society and the economy with an attitude of optimism and hope for | the future; as a lifelong **learner**, believes there is no **limit** | to what knowledge may be gleaned, what skills may be accumulated, and what may be achieved in cooperation with others; and always keeps growing and learning. (2016, p. 4)
6. Inclusion is not just about learners with disabilities or exceptionalities. It is an attitude and | approach that **embraces diversity** and **learner** differences, and promotes **genuine** equality | of opportunities for all learners in Alberta. (2018, p. 37)

The first five excerpts are saturated by Progressive Education (PE) ideals through emphasis on a “learner-centred” curriculum which is inclusive of diverse and individual learning needs and mentions communal and virtual learning spaces—and interestingly, includes one of only five mentions of *books* across the PTC. Together, these excerpts construct a sort of utopian vision of the learner and their surrounding school environment. While the last excerpt also engages with progressive ideals (inclusive education), it has a matter-of-factness about it, constructed through the “not just ... it is” phrasing, that departs from the other statements. Furthermore, all of these statements include globalized discursive features such as listing, non-human agency, and nominalization. The cascading list is especially prominent in the fifth excerpt.

The fifth excerpt, another whereas statement, lists several characteristics and behaviours of *engaged thinkers* including adaptability, optimism, and hope, which is essentially another way of phrasing resilience—another neoliberal buzzword (appropriated from psychology) often aimed at young people struggling to make ends meet and/or maintain mental and physical wellness in high-stakes learning environments and the competitive job market with waning resources and social safety nets (see for example, [Andriote, 2018](#); [Gray, 2015](#)). Emphases on resilience and adaptability are generally built upon a deficiency or deficit model (see [Smith, 2020](#)) that assumes students/young people are lacking this capacity. It can also often work to trivialize negative, traumatic, or difficult experiences as something one just needs to get over and

move on from (Lalonde, 2020). And finally, it also works to both ignore and undermine resistance to social issues such as growing class inequalities, stigmatization of mental illness, and the normalization of one's productivity as their inherent and only value (see Fourcade, 2016).

Learners. Interestingly, *learners* also occurs mainly in the 2016 and 2018 policy texts, and only once in the 2013 text with reference to teachers – “teachers are career-long learners” (p. 4). The most frequent collocates of *learners* are *English* (17), *language*, *students* (13), *are* (12), *all*, *who* (6), *needs*, and *their* (5). The phrase “students who are English Language Learners” occurs six times in the Alberta corpus, specifically in AMET 2018. Furthermore, the phrase “all learners”—a collectivized aggregation (van Leeuwen, 2008) which is also prevalent across the PTC—occurs six times. The collocates with the highest MI scores include *participants* (10.8), *central*, *exceptionalities*, *formation*, *impede*, *inspired*, *intrinsic*, *just*, and *profound* (9.8).

1. | Inclusion is not **just** about **learners** with disabilities or **exceptionalities**. | It is an attitude and approach that embraces diversity and learner differences, and promotes genuine equality of opportunities for **all learners** in Alberta. | Every learner has unique needs. | Some **learners** have **profound** and ongoing **needs**; | others have short-term and/or situation-based needs. This calls for flexible and responsive learning environments. (AMET, 2018, p. 37)
2. Learning | **thrives** in contexts that view **learners** as **central participants**, encourage engagement | and activate learners' prior knowledge and evolving understanding of themselves as learners. [...] Emotional and cognitive aspects of learning | are interdependent and critical to **learners'** **intrinsic** motivation. | Knowledge and understanding are built through reflection and interaction with others. (2016, p. 4)
3. A curriculum that promotes the development of competencies across all subjects and grades | supports **students** in becoming lifelong **learners inspired** to pursue **their** aspirations. | (2016, p. 16)
4. Alberta's provincial curriculum strives | to ensure that differences among **learners** do not **impede** participation in | school and community, academic achievement or capacity to access further study and careers which lead them to become contributing members of society. (2016, pp. 8-9)

5. Adolescence is a period of rapid physical, emotional, cognitive and social development. | Identity **formation** is critical to **learners** in the middle years as | they transition from childhood to adolescence. (2016, p. 7)

These excerpts are steeped in progressive education ideals. Within these excerpts, a pattern of over-lexicalization may be noticed, wherein *learners* (including lifelong learners, all learners, and English Language Learners) are developing, evolving, becoming, and forming identities. The surrounding text is framed fairly positively, which in effect, paints *learners* with a positive semantic prosody.

The first excerpt defines inclusive learning as a flexible needs-based approach that has evolved from a more singular attention to those with learning difficulties, exceptionalities, and disabilities, likely in relation to UNESCO's (2009) *Policy Guidelines on Inclusion in Education* mentioned in Chapter 3 (see Hardy & Woodcock, 2015). The second excerpt invokes social constructivism, scaffolding, and even hints at critical pedagogy. While PE values do not necessarily conflict with neoliberal values, it is surprising to see such theoretically dense statements without explicit connections to their economic benefit. However, the meritocracy of opportunity is implied through several of these statements (excerpt one, three, four), wherein supporting *all learners'* diverse needs will grant them *equal opportunity* to compete for post-secondary acceptance and/or jobs. Although a seemingly nice sentiment, this obfuscates the systemic barriers that many groups and individuals face, places the responsibility with the individual, and limits the value of the individual to their economic potential and/or contributions (see excerpt four).

Student. The most frequent collocates of *student* are *school* (133), *student* (102), *learning* (97), *high* (46), *who* (38), *section* (37), *has* (36), *education* (35), *are* (34), *Alberta* (33), *assessment* (32), *achievement*, *parent* (31), and *information* (30). The bigram *student learning* occurs 84 times throughout Alberta's policy texts. Furthermore, many of the instances of *high*

and *school* co-occur (40), while many other instances of *school* (12) are with reference to a particular *section* of the *School Act*. *Alberta* appears as both a self-referent, e.g., *Alberta Education*, *Alberta school system*, *Alberta school*, and as a modifier of student—*Alberta student*. *Information* as a collocate of student generally refers to different types of *student information* (assessment, achievement, and participation) that is added to student files/profiles.

The collocates with the highest MI scores include *excluded*, *handling*, *informs*, *retroactively*, *writes* (7.0), *file*, and *profile* (6.6). All of these collocates occur in the 2018 text, which signals its difference from the other policy texts.

1. | For each **student** who **writes** | **achievement** tests, an | Individual **Student Profile** for the **student**'s **education** | record is provided electronically to the school through the secured Education site. (AMET, 2018, p. 101)
2. | Ongoing **assessment** | of **student** progress **informs** the **student**, parents and | teacher of what has been achieved and what is yet to be achieved. Learning and instruction should be consistent with student abilities and should set appropriate levels of challenge. (2018, p. 6)
3. School Act, Section 50(2): Where a teacher or other person providing religious instruction or exercises or a teacher providing patriotic instruction or exercises receives a written request signed | by a **parent** of a **student** that the **student** be **excluded** | from religious instruction | or exercises or patriotic instruction or exercises, or both, the teacher or other person shall, in accordance with the request | of the **parent**, permit the **student** | to (a) to leave the classroom or place where the instruction or exercises are taking place for the duration of the instruction or exercises, or (b) to remain in the classroom or place without taking part in the instruction or exercises. (2018, p. 20)
4. The privileges afforded | by the granting of mature **student** status are | not applied **retroactively** to a **student**'s completed coursework on **file** with | Alberta Education. The application of mature student status is conditional upon the completion of new coursework subsequent to September 1 of the school year in which the status becomes effective. (2018, p. 104)
5. | In **handling student** requests for such an organization | or activity, principals must be mindful of the following: [...] (2018, p. 97)

As the reader may notice, these collocates and their surrounding excerpts carry a drastic change in tone and prosody from those surrounding *learner(s)*. Prior to deeper analysis, it is important to

point out that these excerpts are quite procedural in tone—they use declarative statements to inform the reader about particular school system operations with little attitudinal or evaluative inflection (e.g., adverbs and adjectives). However, many of these excerpts surround potentially sensitive topics with regard to student files/profiles, voluntary exclusion from particular topics, mature students, and student organizations.

With regard to the first excerpt, *writes* only occurs once in the Alberta policy texts and nowhere else in the PTC, and *profile* is always preceded by *student* in the Alberta policy texts. As noted above, Alberta conducts annual, standardized Provincial Achievement Tests (PATs) for students in grades 6 and 9. The PAT website states that “these standardized tests reflect the essentials that all Alberta students are expected to achieve, regardless of school choice or location” ([AMET, 2019, para. 2](#)). As noted in Chapter 4, every province and territory in Canada has some form of standardized assessment and policies often make reference to them as statements of fact (they occur), as positive accountability measures, as well as successes and/or areas for improvement.

Excerpt two emphasises regular classroom assessment and constructive alignment (Biggs & Tang, 2011) in two highly nominalised and vague sentences. First, “ongoing assessment” is constructed as its own agent that informs various parties (including teachers) of students’ progress, yet we know that teachers are the actual agents of ongoing assessment. This excerpt is thus considered an example of utterance autonomization and backgrounding of teachers (van Leeuwen, 2008). Second, “learning and instruction” are a nominalisation of teaching and an abstraction of pedagogy and curriculum which again removes the teacher as the agent and aligns with the neoliberal trend of the deprofessionalization of teachers (Mulderrig, 2003; Westheimer,

2015; Woodside-Jiron, 2011). There are 327 instances of *instruction* (spanning almost every text) in the PTC, 164 (50%) of which are found in Alberta's PLED.

Excerpt three invokes the Alberta School Act to discuss the procedure surrounding the parent's right to have their child excluded from religious or patriotic content and activities. *Excluded* is only found in Section 50(2) of Alberta's *School Act*. While every province has a School Act, only two provinces (Alberta and British Columbia) make mention of their *School Act* in this corpus and Alberta's 2018 policy includes their *School Act* in full (with 150 mentions), which makes this policy a little characteristically different than the rest of the subcorpus and PTC.

Excerpt four falls into a section titled "Mature Students" which defines and outlines boundaries regarding mature student status. Mature status may be granted to those aged 19 or older or those that have already graduated and are returning to (re)take more courses (p. 104). The excerpt itself, while outlining boundaries of mature student status, remains unclear with respect to *privileges*, which are implicitly detailed later in the section—for example:

A mature student is eligible to enrol in any course at the senior high school level or to write a diploma examination without having completed the required prerequisite courses. (AMET, 2018, p. 104)

A mature student who has achieved a standing of 50% or higher in a senior high school course, by any of the alternatives noted above, will automatically be awarded credits by Alberta Education for the prerequisites in that course sequence. (AMET, 2018, p. 105)

Here, it appears that the term *privileges* is used to describe the procedural rights granted to mature students on the basis of their age and/or previous high school completion that do not apply to 'regular' high school students.

Excerpt five's mention of requests for organizations regards student clubs/organizations such as Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) and Queer-Straight Alliances (QSAs). The preceding paragraph states that

As per section 16.1 of the *School Act*, students are entitled to create or join a voluntary student organization or activity that promotes a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging. Gay-straight alliances (GSAs) and queer-straight alliances (QSAs) are examples of such a student organization. (2018, p. 96)

One of the things principals are meant to be mindful of is that “parental notification around courses of study does not apply to student participation in organizations and activities, including GSAs and QSAs” (p. 97), which protects students from potentially being ‘outed’.²¹ This provision was also legally protected by the NDP’s Bill 24, which Alberta’s UCP Premier, Jason Kenney repealed in early 2019 ([Bellefontaine, 2019](#); [Clancy, 2019](#)). While some of the debate surrounded teacher judgement and agency and parents’ right to know what their kids are doing in school, the removal of this protection could have negative and harmful impacts on LGBTQ2IAP+ students and allies—especially where parents are unsupportive of their child’s gender identity or sexual orientation. It is worth stating that 25-40% of young people experiencing homelessness in Canada identify as LGBTQ2 ([Abramovich, 2019](#)).

Students. The most frequent collocates of *students* are *are* (117), *school* (101), *learning* (91), *their, students* (66), *all* (57). The bigram *all students* occurs 30 times, while *students who* occurs 50 times. The collocates with the highest MI score at 6.8 include *analysing, designs, heart, numbers, observing, and ownership*.

1. | **Teachers** monitor **students**’ actions on an ongoing basis | to determine and respond to their learning needs. They use a variety of | diagnostic methods that

²¹ For those unfamiliar with the term, ‘outing’ someone means to disclose their gender identity and/or sexual orientation without consent either publicly or privately. Whether intentional or not, it is often considered an act of violence, as it can and often does cause harm to the individual being outed.

- include **observing students'** activities, **analysing students' learning** difficulties | and strengths, and interpreting the results of assessments and information provided by **students, their** parents, colleagues and other professionals. (AMET, 2013, p. 4)
2. | **Students are** at the **heart** of | Alberta's Kindergarten to Grade 12 (K–12) education system. (2016, p. 3)
 3. | Provincial curriculum that intellectually engages **students** calls for **designs** that help **students** develop interconnected pathways within a | discipline and across disciplines. (2016, p. 5)
 4. Results are reported in such a way as to encourage improved learning, while minimizing possible harmful effects of testing for individual students. | The **numbers of students who** achieve the acceptable standard | and the standard of excellence are reported to facilitate interpretation of local results and to enable comparisons of local results to provincial and local targets. [...] Alberta Education encourages comparisons of local results with local targets, not comparisons of individual scores with other students' scores. (2018, p. 101)
 5. Course challenges are intended to: [...] | encourage **students' ownership** of their **learning**; | (2018, p. 126)

While I noted the divergence in the prosodies of *learner(s)* and *student*, the contrast in prosody between *student* and *students* is also apparent.

Excerpts one and four are found within a section entitled “Student Assessment: Kindergarten to Grade 9”. The first excerpt falls under the subsection “assessment as the basis for communicating individual student achievement” (p. 100) and makes reference to the monitoring and tracking of students: teachers *monitor, determine, and respond* to student needs; teachers *observe, analyse, interpret* students' work as *diagnostic methods*. *Diagnostic* appears only six times across the PTC, five of which are within Alberta's policy texts (the other instance can be found in OME, 2010). The term diagnostic is etymologically derived from the Greek *to distinguish* as it pertained to *diseases* and is linked to the term diagnosis—both of which are derived from and still tied to the medical field. *Diagnostic* has also expanded to the computer science and technology field, and in both medical and computer science fields, implies that

something is wrong. Although it falls outside the collocates range, the 2018 policy text states that “the terms ‘diagnostic instruction’ and ‘diagnostic teaching cycle’ are often used to refer to instruction that is closely linked to assessment” and are used to “ensure that learning difficulties are recognized early and that students receive the help they need” (p. 99). The term ‘diagnostic assessment’ appears to be closely related to needs analysis and benchmarking, and the surrounding text discusses Progressive Education ideals such as scaffolding and student involvement. However, in searching the term, I came across an Alberta Education curricular [resource](#) for early years learning (K-3) that has a section on diagnostic assessment which ties it to math and literacy. The section makes mention of “process-oriented activities that focus on higher level thinking skills rather than on product-oriented activities emphasizing the mastery of discrete skills” (p. iv). However, the provincial standardized testing (PATs) requirement of math and literacy complicates the intent of such teaching and assessment, and may be seen as a euphemism for ‘teaching to the test’. This connection is furthered by excerpt four, which falls under the subsection “provincial achievement testing program” (p. 101). While the excerpt makes effort to “minimiz[e] possible harmful effects of testing”, the weight placed on standardized testing and ‘diagnostic assessment’ leading up to the PATs likely does little to ameliorate the issues raised by those concerned about over-testing (in relation to both student anxiety and critical thinking) as well as standardized or official knowledge which privileges white affluent students (Apple, 2000; Giroux, 2016b; Robinson, 2010; Westheimer, 2010, 2015).

Both excerpts two and three contain metaphors. *Heart* appears 16 times across the PTC, five of which name the student(s)/learner(s)/children as at the heart of education. This is not an uncommon metaphor, but one that reinforces the student-centredness of progressive education. It also differs from the banking or empty vessel metaphors and models of schooling, as the heart

receives and gives. In running with this metaphor, we may ponder what parts or functions of the body or organs other education participants are. For instance, we might easily discern the education system or school to be the body that houses everything as the excerpt indicates, and we may see knowledge as the blood that the heart receives and pumps away, but we may ponder more conflictedly about whether the teacher is the brain, the lungs, the liver, or something else. Excerpt three also engenders progressive education ideals as it emphasizes the interconnectedness of knowledge through meta imagery of “interconnected pathways”, which may be considered another bodily metaphor—that of a neural network. In line with PE values, not only does the statement and metaphor acknowledge that although subjects are siloed in most educational contexts, they are still linked to one another, but it also uses Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL)-informed language (e.g., *curriculum design*). *Designs* only appears once in Alberta’s policy texts and nowhere else in the PTC—however, *design* and *designed* appear across the PTC.

The course challenge provision in excerpt five allows any student registered in senior high school to challenge the outcomes of a course by participating in a formal assessment process, rather than taking the course. This provision allows senior high school students who believe that they have acquired the knowledge, skills and attitudes as defined by the program of studies for a given course (and are ready to demonstrate that achievement) to participate in a summative assessment/evaluation process (p. 126). However, it is unclear under what circumstances and how often students engage in course challenges as well as what happens if a course challenge fails. While this provision may facilitate student agency and autonomy, or *ownership of learning*, it may also run counter to other aspects of classroom learning including

social and co-construction of knowledge and/or incidental learning (e.g., learning that arises out of discussions, digressions, teachable moments, etc.).

Summary

Alberta's PLETs are quite saturated in progressive education ideals and invoke the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL). However, this is underscored by a heavy neoliberal emphasis on assessment, accountability, and the economy. While Alberta's 2016 and 2018 PLETs were produced under the same NDP government and are closely aligned with the three goals of education outlined earlier (character development, intellectual development, and economic pursuit), the differences between them are striking and would benefit from further investigation. Although both texts are publicly available, the 2018 policy explicitly indicates that the intended audience is administrators, counsellors, and teachers, while the 2016 policy does not indicate an intended audience and seems to be more public-facing.

The AMET policy texts construct the 'ethical citizen' in close alignment to personally responsible citizenship (Westheimer, 2015), with some reference to community, collaboration, and the needs of others. However, this construction involves a brand of patriotism that disregards the harms of continued colonization and levies blame onto young people who were born into and grew up in a hyper-individualistic society (rather than the system that perpetuates hyper-individualism). This blind patriotism combined with the limitations on curricula, the renaming of school boards to school authorities, the disguised and softened imperatives, and the emphasis on respecting decisions raises concerns about authoritarianism. Aside from the utopian vision surrounding *learner*, much of the content surrounding *learners* and *student(s)* is focused on assessment, learner/student responsibility, and meritocratic ideals. Within all of this is a textual silence (Huckin, 2002) on systemic barriers that may impede *success* in school and society.

Saskatchewan

Of the three prairie provinces, Saskatchewan is in the middle and has a population of 1.17 million (StatCan, 2021a). The province has 18 public school divisions and one Francophone division, 557 public schools ([Saskatchewan Ministry of Education \[SME\], 2021a](#)), and 186,386 students enrolled in the 2019-20 school year—roughly 16% of the population ([SME, 2019](#)). In 2019, the overall graduation rate for students who complete Grade 12 within three years of starting Grade 10 was 77.3%—86.8% for non-Indigenous, and 43.4% for self-identified Indigenous students (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) (SME, 2020, p. 21). The poverty rate reported in 2018 was 18.8% overall and 26.1% for children (Hunter & Sanchez, 2020, p. 2). However, there is considerable variation across different demographics: for children in lone-parent families the rate is 59.9%, 49.4% for First Nations families, 28.4% for Métis families, and 23.8% for immigrant families (Hunter & Sanchez, 2020, p. 2). Saskatchewan’s required provincial assessments include the Early Years Evaluation (EYE) which “assesses the skills of children aged three to six years as they prepare for and make the transition to school” ([SME, n.d.](#), para. 4), and Grade 12 provincial exams (similar to Alberta’s) for core courses in English, Sciences, and Maths. Saskatchewan also participates in the Pan-Canadian Assessment Program (PCAP), and international testing through PISA and PIRLS (SME, n.d.).

The data collected from the SME published under the Saskatchewan Party (conservative) includes two short PLETs: *Education sector strategic plan, 2014-2020 Cycle 3 (2017-2019)* (2017) and *Plan for education 2018-19* (2018). The first is a one-page matrix that centres around a strategic intent and lists colour coordinated values, priorities, and outcomes. The second (14 pages) has five sections—statement from the Minister, response to government direction, operational plan, highlights, and financial summary—the last of which was removed. The

Table 18
SME PLETs Word Frequency List (Top 15)

Rank	Freq	Token/Word
1	47	students
2	42	education
3	39	first
4	36	Nations, Saskatchewan
5	33	school
6	28	will
7	27	Métis
8	25	graduation, ministry
9	23	grade, year
10	22	Inuit, learning, plan
11	21	all
12	20	student
13	19	government, June, level, per, sector, support, their
14	18	percentage
15	17	divisions, early

Something that stands out is the high frequency of *First Nations* (35), *Métis* (27), and *Inuit* (22), making up a collective total of 2.8% of the subcorpus and 3.9% after stoplisting. In fact, this is the largest textual space First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI) take up across the PTC, as in most other provinces and territories such instances represent under 1% of the respective subcorpus. This may be reflective of attempts to address (however implicitly) historical mistreatment such as the infamous starlight tours,²² as well as a particular policy initiative called “Following Their Voices” (which is discussed below). The three terms are generally grouped together as a noun phrase or word cluster, appearing as such 19 times throughout the SK policy texts (as is also hinted in Table 19 below). Interestingly, the only time the word *Indigenous* is

²² The starlight tours (also called starlight cruises or midnight rides) refer to a decades long practice carried out by Saskatchewan police officers. This practice included arresting (usually male) Indigenous persons under the pretense of drunk and/or disorderly conduct, driving them to remote locations out of town and dropping them off, leaving them stranded late at night in the middle of winter.

used is in *non-Indigenous*, which potentially shows further awareness of the term as a catchall (Animikii, 2020),²³ and also aligns with a reconciliatory approach.

The bigrams and trigrams in Table 19 below expand on the word frequency lists above, as they give a snapshot of how some of these words are used.

Table 19
SME PLETs 5 Most Frequent Bigrams and Trigrams

Rank	N-grams	Freq
Bigrams		
1	First Nations	35
2	school divisions	17
3	per cent	16
4	by june	15
5	education sector, grade level	14
Trigrams		
1	First Nations Métis, Métis And Inuit	22
2	following their voices	12
3	five year graduation	8
4	the education sector	8
5	above grade level, ministry of education, quality of life, sector strategic plan	7

Many of these n-grams are indicative of the goal or action-oriented nature of these two PLETs—for example, *by June*, *per cent*, *above grade level*. The following sections detail findings for *citizen(s)* and *citizenship* and *learner(s)* and *student(s)* respectively.

Citizen(s) and Citizenship

There are no instances of *citizen*, *citizens*, nor *citizenship* in Saskatchewan's two policy texts, which is considered an absolute and unknown absence from this limited set of texts (Duguid & Partington, 2018). Saskatchewan is the only province that does not make any mention

²³ The term—while generally preferred over Aboriginal, Native, or Indian—may be considered equivalent to using the term Asian or European rather than naming the particular nation (e.g., Japanese, Hungarian) as cultural and social practices differ from one nation to the next.

of *citizen*, *citizens*, or *citizenship*. In searching for possible covert references to citizen(s) and citizenship, I came across Saskatchewan’s “Strategic Intent”:

1. I am ready to learn: I am safe, healthy and hopeful.
 I am valued: I have a voice and am supported in my ways of learning.
 I belong: I contribute, am respected and respectful.
 I am successful: at levels appropriate for my ability and aspiration.
 I am preparing for my future: in education, in employment, in my community
 and in life. (2017, p. 1)

At first glance, this seems to be a positive affirmation meant for students, which is reflected in the I statements. Affirmations are a positive psychology-adjacent part of self-help discourse which are ritualized through repetition (written and spoken) and are meant to help in changing negative thought patterns and actualize personal goals. They have generic attributes: first person, present, positive—hence the *I am* structure ([Lively, 2014](#)). Self-help discourse has been shown to be deeply connected to neoliberal ideologies (McGee, 2005; see also Springer et al., 2016), and recent discussions note the detriments of “toxic positivity” (Chiu, 2020; Riddell, 2020).

This strategic intent contains several interconnected working parts and assumptions (presupposition) that require some attention. The cascading list structure of the whole excerpt and each individual statement aligns with globalized discourse (Fairclough, 2013). Thus, it is difficult to separate each element from one another. The present tense *I am* statements presume that all of these statements including their individual parts actually apply to all students (that they are true). Furthermore, these two elements combined in turn conflate things within the student’s control and things without—that is, students may have very little control over many of these elements (e.g., whether they are respected by others). While students should absolutely feel safe, that they have a voice, and are supported in their learning (to name a few), this is not always the case. Yet not only is responsibility downloaded to the student through these I statements, but most of the *I am*s and *I have*s are considered relational processes, leaving out any room for

individual thinking or feeling (mental processes; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). For example, the first statement could have been written: “I feel safe ...”. The only processes that are not relational are “I contribute” and “I am preparing,” which given the context, are categorized as behavioural. In addition, since affirmations are meant to be individually-generated based on individual context(s), it is concerning that the Ministry is essentially acting as gatekeepers of the possibilities of student identity or studenthood.

In this affirmation, belonging is determined through contribution. On first thought, one might say, ‘well, of course’—an engaged classroom is one in which all or most learners contribute to the conversation, which aligns with the progressive education model of co-creation of knowledge. But the word, *contribute* (meaning to give or add something) as derived from *contribution*, with synonyms such as *give, donate, grant, supply, provide*, etc. is a part of market/economic language, the language of money—one makes contributions to charities or causes, one contributes to savings accounts and retirement funds. *Contribute* is unidirectional and thus does not signify reciprocity; it still embodies the banking model of education (Freire, 1996). The word *participate* may show a contrastive example to change the underlying meaning: To participate means *to take part* which ontologically requires others, and thus more accurately reflects the idea that learning takes place in relation to others (Lemke, 2007, 2008). However, as Leal (2010) points out, *participation* preceded *contribute* as an en vogue buzzword at the start of the neoliberal era in the 1980s. Yet it is entirely possible to reclaim the word and its meanings—that is, “the merits of participation as a political and methodological approach that makes social transformation possible remain, but participation must be re-articulated to serve broader struggles,” in this case, education (Leal, 2010, p. 96). Finally, the “I am preparing for my future”

statement highlights the disconnect between student (as present) and citizen (as future) (see Marshall, 1950/1992) as well as the connection between citizenship and employment.

While practical in the sense that (for the most part) individuals cannot control the actions of others, these singular *I* statements are inherently individualist and align with personally responsible citizenship (Westheimer, 2015)—yet preclude individual agency. In and of itself, such a statement is cause for concern given the mentioned lack of control students have over many of the listed attributes, but with the added knowledge that this type of I statement has also featured in the 2012-13 code of conduct for a “no excuses” American charter school called Mastery (Mondale, 2016), my concern has grown. It reads: “I choose to be here. I am here to learn and achieve. I am responsible for my actions. I contribute to a safe, respectful, cooperative community. I come with a clear mind and healthy body. This is my school...I make it shine” (Mastery Charter School, 2012, as cited in Mondale, 2016).²⁴ Although it is unclear whether this is an example of direct policy borrowing, there are many parallels between the two statements—both of which suppress sociocontextual factors and systemic barriers to these states of being. Charter schools can be found in Saskatchewan’s neighbouring province, Alberta, thus there may be some implicit or explicit influence (intertextuality). If education is to make positive or emancipatory progress, more focus needs to be given to the future imaginaries of citizenship embedded in PLED (Couture et al., 2019; den Heyer, 2018, Giroux, 2016b).

Learner(s) and Student(s)

Table 20 below provides the raw and normalized frequency, range, and total percent of learners(s) and students(s) in Saskatchewan’s policy texts. These texts have an absolute absence

²⁴ Accessing any of Mastery’s policy level documents requires log-in credentials. This information was discovered through Mondale’s (2016) documentary *Backpack full of cash*, which blows the whistle on the rampant privatization of education in the United States.

of *learner* and relative absence of *learners* and *students* when compared to the PTC. *Students* however, occur 1.26 times more per thousand words than in the PTC.

Table 20

SME PLETs Frequency, Range, and Percent of Subcorpus Information for Student(s) and Learner(s)

	Learner	Learners	Student	Students
Freq	0	3	20	47
SK Nrm Freq	0.00	0.88	5.88	13.82
PTC Nrm Freq	0.30	1.49	7.42	11.58
Difference	-0.30	-0.61	-1.54	2.24
Range	0.00%	50%	100%	100%
PSoC	0.00%	0.09%	0.59%	1.38%
PoSLSC	0.00%	0.12%	0.82%	1.93%

Learners. Although there are three instances of *learners*, the first excerpt below appears twice in the 2018 text. The collocates with highest MI scores are *continues*, *patrons*, and *strengthened* (9.7), *wide* and *community* at a score of 8.3, *province* (7.5), and *success* and *supports* (7.3).

1. Through renewed relationships built on mutual respect and understanding we will continue work together to ensure the | **success** of our students, early **learners** and library **patrons continues** to | be a top priority. (SME, 2018, p. 1)
2. Ministry Goal: | Community supports for all **learners** province-wide are strengthened. | (2018, p. 7)

Interestingly, the SME is responsible for public libraries as well. As community sites of knowledge, this placement seems appropriate. The first excerpt, as the last sentence of the *Statement from the Minister*,²⁵ names *early learners* in a list of three distinct groups that includes *library patrons* as in need of continued success. The use of the deixis, *we* and *our* is also of import, as they add a level of synthetic personalization while also taking ownership which insinuates responsibility. In this case, *we* seems to be the Ministry and/or the education system

²⁵ Most policy texts at the Ministry level include a Statement from the Minister at the beginning.

and its various agents (divisions, boards, teachers, etc.). *Our* is more ambiguous—it may also refer to the Ministry but appears to extend to the public en masse. While responsibility is implied, the use of *we* extends this responsibility from the Minister outward. Furthermore, the sentence is constructed in a way that presumes that unnamed stakeholders have already been working together and that success has already been ensured.

The second excerpt names one of three “Ministry Goals” in the policy. Its passive construction marks it, as the goal is placed in the subject position (topical theme) and changes an otherwise imperative statement to declarative. The statement may have been written, ‘strengthen community supports for all learners province-wide’. In passive constructions, the agent can be removed—that is, it is uncertain *who* is strengthening community supports. This statement also constructs the goal itself as certain without using modals (e.g., will). For instance, it might also have alternatively been written: ‘Community supports for all learners *will be* strengthened’. If written this way, the statement would be expressing a strong inclination, but also situate the *doing* in the future. As it is, this goal is written as if it has already been carried out which aligns with the ever-present nature of globalized discourse (Fairclough, 2013).

If just this excerpt was considered, one may also wonder what such community supports are; thus, further context is needed. This goal is featured twice, under two different “Government Goals” categories (“meeting the challenges of growth” and “securing a better quality of life for all Saskatchewan people”) with two separate “Key Actions” and “Performance Measures” lists. The first set of subsequent key actions name other groups and policies (explicit intertextuality) including the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action*, the Ministry of Health, Poverty Reduction Strategy, Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan, harm reduction, Francophone minority initiatives, and the Curriculum Advisory Committee (2018, p. 7). In the

second instance, the “Key Actions” read “Continue to build and maintain relationships with northern school divisions and First Nations education organizations by supporting a northern approach to the Education Sector Strategic Plan” (p. 8). This mention of harm reduction is the only mention across the PTC and may signal a more critical approach to systemic issues.

Student. The most frequent collocates of *student* are *First Nations* (7), *Métis*, *Inuit* (6), and *engagement* (5).

1. By June 30, 2020, collaboration between First Nations, Métis and Inuit and non-First Nations, Métis and Inuit partners will result in significant improvement in | **First Nations, Métis and Inuit student engagement** and will increase the | three-year graduation rate from 35% in June 2012 to at least 65% and the five-year graduation rate to at least 75%. (SME, 2017, p. 1)
2. By June 2019, schools involved in FTV [*Following Their Voices*] for at least 2 years will collectively realize an 8% annual increase in **First Nations, Métis and Inuit student** graduation rates. (2017, p. 1)
3. We remain committed to reaching our shared goals outlined in the Education Sector Strategic Plan, including ensuring students are ready for learning in the primary grades, increasing the number of students at grade level in reading, writing and math, leading the country in graduation rates, and significantly improving in | **First Nations, Métis and Inuit student engagement** and graduation rates. | (2018, p. 1)

All of these excerpts are aimed at improving First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI) student engagement in school, test scores, and graduation rates—that is, these policies fall into the unfortunate trend in education policies that only or mainly mention FNMI students as in need of improvement. While the 2020 data has yet to be released by the Ministry, the 2019 on-time graduation rate overall was 77.3%—86.8% for non-Indigenous, and 43.4% for self-identified Indigenous students (including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) (SME, 2020, p. 21). The overall five-year graduation rate was 84.7%—91.2% for non-Indigenous, and 61% for Indigenous (p. 21). It seems Saskatchewan is unlikely to meet this target, but the on-time graduation rate for FNMI students has increased by 7.5% and the 5-year graduation rate has increased by 11.3%

since 2012 (p. 21). Saskatchewan also keeps a record of “eventual” completion “within eight years or more” in which the 2019 numbers show that 91.3% of FNMI students who started grade 10 in 2011-12 or later have graduated (p. 21). Something that potentially meters this criticism can be found in last listed item in the third excerpt: “significantly improving *in* First Nations, Métis and Inuit student engagement and graduation rates” (p. 1, emphasis added). This clause could have been written without *in*, but its placement may act as a hedge—that is, rather than an improvement target that Indigenous students need to fulfill, it may dually indicate an admission that the Ministry and key agents also need to improve.

There are 16 collocates tied for the top MI score at 6.9 and thus, three were randomly selected: *addressed*, *lifelong*, and *profile* (note that other top collocates are still bolded).

1. Renewal and implementation of the *Caring and Respectful School* policy to support student mental well-being and promote positive school climate. | In **addition**, plans for **student** safety will be **addressed**. | (2018, p. 7)
2. Establish new opportunities and supports to graduation including policy reviews, communicating leading practices within | school divisions, creating an **electronic student profile**, **recognition** of **dual** credits, | locally developed courses, modified courses and *Adult 12*. (2018, p. 8)
3. The literacy and library sectors play a key role in developing Saskatchewan residents’ literacy skills, as well | as supporting **lifelong** learning and **student** success. | (2018, p. 3)

The *Caring and Respectful Schools* policy is a bullying prevention policy published in 2006, which outlines a commitment to prevent bullying through distinguishing the rights of the child as per the United Nations (1989), defining bullying, and listing and discussing the roles and responsibilities of boards of education, educators, parents/caregivers, students, and education councils. Given the age of the policy, a *renewal* (rewriting) is likely necessary—especially with regard to digital and social media as sites of bullying. In this excerpt, *student safety* is an example of genericization and an abstract state of being. Furthermore, *addressed* assumes the

plans have already been produced, and also denotes that there is a problem or issue that needs to be considered and solved.

The second excerpt is the first of seven key actions that fall under the graduation rate and grade level goal. In line with globalized discourse, this excerpt lists a number of (mostly unrelated) *opportunities and supports* meant to raise the graduation rate—notably, creating an electronic student profile. It is unclear what information such a profile would hold and who might be able to access it, though the goal does seem to be easier access and information sharing across grades and schools. Along that vein, the term *leading practices* only appears in this excerpt and nowhere else in the PTC. It seems to be a quasi-synonymous alternative to ‘best practices’, and simply refers to practices that lead to successful or positive outcomes.

The third excerpt, although appearing as an informational statement, seems to be attempting to justify funding for public services such as libraries as crucial to lifelong learning, which ultimately bolsters the economy. This type of justification is symptomatic of the current neoliberal regime, wherein all ‘investments’, especially those that may benefit the lower echelons, must yield an economic benefit. It is also worth noting that many public services including libraries have undergone a slurry of governmental funding cuts over the past decade or more. In 2017, the government of Saskatchewan had tabled a multi-million dollar grants and funding cut to public libraries, but reversed the decision due to public backlash and opted for a funding freeze ([Langenegger, 2017](#)). Thus, this statement may also be considered an example of implicit intertextuality.

Students. The most frequent collocates of *students* include *grade* (11), *level* (10), *Inuit*, *percentage* (9), *above*, *First Nations*, *Métis*, *ourSCHOOL*, *reading* (6). Similar to the excerpts above, “First Nations, Métis, and Inuit” is a modifier of *students* and tends to signal goals that

the ministry has regarding their graduate rates, levels of engagement, and test scores. An additional goal that the Ministry mentions on several occasions is to raise the number of overall students at *grade level* or *above* in *reading* and math—e.g., “By June 30, 2020, 80% of **students** will be at **grade level** or above in reading, writing and math” (2017, p. 1, emphasis added). Again, these frequencies can tell us *how* important assessment and graduation rates are to the Ministry, especially in light of how the education system in Saskatchewan is ranked against the rest of the provinces and territories—in the 2015 round of PISA testing, Saskatchewan had the lowest scores (see [Appendix E](#)).

There are 26 collocates with the highest MI score of 5.7, of which, five were randomly chosen: *anonymous*, *exiting*, *interactions*, *managed*, and *structures*. Again, collocates of the same score have also been bolded.

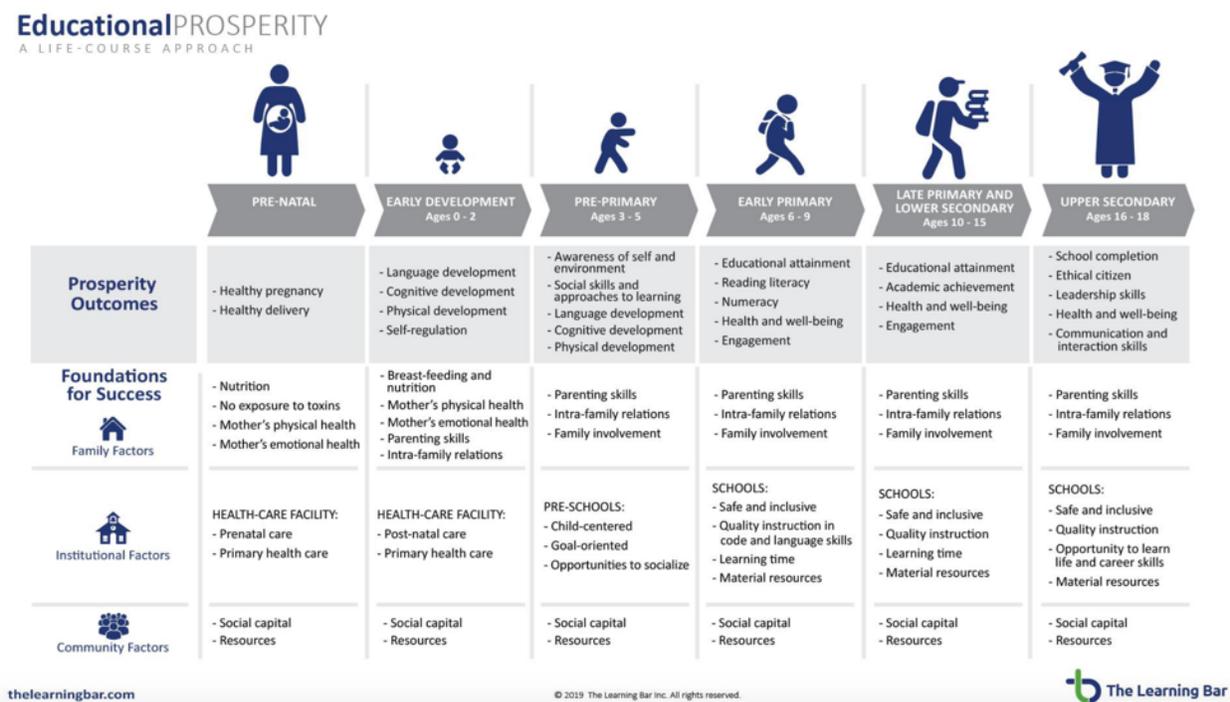
1. Work with school divisions to achieve parity between First Nations, Métis | and **Inuit** and non-Indigenous **students** on the **OurSCHOOL** engagement measures. | | The **OurSCHOOL** surveys for **students**, teachers and parents provide **anonymous** | and reliable data to support local school improvement planning. (SME, 2018, p. 5)
2. By June 30, 2020, children aged 0-6 years will be supported in their development | to ensure that 90% of **students exiting** Kindergarten are ready for | learning in the primary grades. (2017, p. 1)
3. Implement and expand *Following Their Voices* in provincial and First Nations schools. *Following Their Voices* | focuses on enhancing relationships between **students** and teachers, creating **structures** and | supports for teachers and school administrators to co-construct | **teaching** and learning **interactions** with **students** and creating safe, well-**managed** | learning environments. (2018, p. 5)

Since I was unfamiliar with what ourSCHOOL refers to, further information needed to be gathered. There was no related information on the SME website. An internet search led to a website for *The Learning Bar*—a for-profit corporation founded by J. Douglas Willms in 2004 that provides education “solutions” including the ourSCHOOL surveys. The About Me page

states: “The Learning Bar solutions are used worldwide. Our implementations can be school, district, province/state or country wide initiatives. Our mission is to empower educators by providing innovative solutions to increase educational prosperity for all children” (2020, [para. 4](#)).²⁶ The phrase *educational prosperity* is blatantly market language but also refers to a metrics framework that has been adopted by the OECD and PISA-Development. The OECD website hosts a [slide deck](#) presented by Willms (2019) which states that this Educational Prosperity metrics framework “monitor[s] children’s developmental outcomes and the key factors that drive these outcomes, as children develop from conception to adolescence. The outcomes, called **Prosperity Outcomes**, are indicators of children thriving at each stage of development” (p. 9, emphasis in original). The slide following this explanation is a matrix-like table of the ideal “life-course” from conception to high school graduation, with rows for family, institutional, and community factors for each developmental stage (see Figure 15). This matrix is alarming in its own right, but it also appears that while The Learning Bar collects and reports back on province/division-specific survey results, they are also using the data collected from all ‘customers’ to generate this “life-course” and develop corrective solutions to keep young people on track. Not only does this parallel the factory model metaphor of schooling (see Robinson, 2010), but it also exemplifies concerns about the ordinalization of citizenship raised by Fourcade (2016, 2019—discussed in Chapter 2).

²⁶ One could spend another dissertation’s-worth of time analysing the content of their website.

Figure 15
The Learning Bar (2019) Educational Prosperity Life-Course Matrix



Here, every aspect of one's life is reduced to measurable outcomes that determine and predict one's potential and success as they relate to societal productivity (ultimately measured by economic contribution and behaviour). Furthermore, while Saskatchewan's policy texts are the only ones that mention our SCHOOL, this investigation revealed that there are other provinces using this "solution" including New Brunswick and Manitoba (others may as well), yet the collected policy texts do not mention it.

Moreover, although falling outside the collocates range, the word *parity* piqued my interest and for good reason—it only appears in Saskatchewan's policy texts. Parity is an economic term and is typically used in economic discourse with reference to gender and/or purchasing power (enTenTen15). It is also unclear if parity is meant to be achieved in the number of Indigenous v. non-Indigenous students answering the survey and/or whether parity is meant to be achieved in the types of answers and (levels of) engagement between Indigenous and

non-Indigenous students (the customizable measures for grades 7-12 can be viewed [here](#)). With regard to the former, parity functions as a number, and it is important to consider access to a computer and stable internet connection (or mobile data) outside of school. With regard to the latter, parity functions as a measure of sameness. To complement my above discussion regarding the “life-course” matrix, concerns about assimilation are not unwarranted—especially in light of historical and ongoing colonization efforts.

The second excerpt parallels the above discussions of ourSCHOOL as well as a discussion in the [BC findings section](#) in its emphasis on young students being *ready for learning* or *ready to learn*. This emphasis again highlights the aim to standardize child development in such a way that eliminates and pathologizes diversity in a child’s learning trajectory (see Robinson, 2010). It also implies the need for deep and ongoing monitoring as a prerequisite for institutionalizing and standardizing early childhood development.

Similar to the first excerpt, I had to explore what the *Following Their Voices* initiative is and again had to search outside the SME website for answers—in this case, *their* refers to FNMI. The FTV [website](#) states that

Following Their Voices is based on research that was conducted with First Nations and Métis engaged and non-engaged students, parents/caregivers, teachers and school administrators about what is needed in order to be successful as a First Nations or Métis student in school. The ‘voices’ of these groups of people were profound in terms of the issues they identified. Their words and insights, along with international research, and guidance and advice from Elders and Knowledge Keepers formed the foundation of this initiative. (2020, para. 3)

This initiative seems like a positive step in decolonizing or Indigenizing the curriculum. There were initial concerns about whether the evidence informing the initiative was developed from the ourSCHOOL surveys, but the FTV website states that the research and data (interviews and

focus groups) informing the FTV initiative were conducted and collected with no ostensible relations with ourSCHOOL or The Learning Bar ([Saskatchewan Instruction and Development Research](#), 2014). Furthermore, the initiative has three sequential components: Seeking Their Voices, Hearing their Voices, and Following Their Voices ([FTV, 2020](#)). The excerpt summarizes the role of teachers as “co-construct[ing] teaching and learning interactions with students and creating safe, well-managed learning environments” which is meant to “enhance” teacher-student relations. In addition, FTV discusses this in depth, noting the need for commitment to a process of “learning, unlearning, and relearning” (para. 33) and expands on this description of teachers’ roles. The excerpt’s strategic use of “enhance” functions to avoid placing blame on *all* teachers—as the general use connotes that something is good but is being made even better—but in doing so, potentially minimizes or trivializes current or past tension or conflict within teacher-(Indigenous)student relationships. Finally, the last excerpt again indicates that one of the performance measures for this goal is school participation in the FTV initiative, but similarly does not indicate a goal percentage.

Summary

Saskatchewan’s heavily intertextual subcorpus is the smallest of the selected provinces yet has revealed some surprising findings including the standardization of the life from conception to adulthood through the ourSCHOOL surveys and lifecourse matrix which informs the discursive construction of students and citizens. Although there is an absolute absence (Duguid & Partington, 2018) of *citizen(s)*, *citizenship* and *learner*, the SME’s strategic intent written as an affirmation for students, defines the scope of students’ behaviour and attitudes toward school in alignment with personal responsibility (Westheimer, 2015). Moreover, there is no attention to context or control, which allows for blame to be cast on individuals if the

affirmations are not held. With regard to *learners* and *student(s)*, there is a focus on assessment as it relates to both readiness to learn for early learners and raising math and literacy scores. Furthermore, higher graduation rate targets are aimed specifically at FNMI students with little mention of context and systemic barriers. However, as discussed above, there is some language that mitigates some of the negative prosody, which is bolstered by the *Following Their Voices* (FTV) initiative; conversely, the emphasis on FNMI deficit may contradict the FTV initiative. Overall, both FNMI and non-Indigenous learners are constructed through deficit ideology (Gorski, 2011) and diversity across *students-to-be-citizens'* trajectories are pathologized and presented as in need of un- or vaguely defined intervention and standardizing through target setting and the lifecourse matrix.

Ontario

Ontario is the second largest province by landmass and the largest province by population at 14.7 million (StatCan, 2021a), and also has the largest Indigenous population (21.5%) across Canada (World Atlas, 2017). Ontario has ten school authorities, 72 school boards, and 4844 schools ([Ontario Ministry of Education \[OME\], 2021a](#)). In the 2019-20 school year, there were 2,056,058 students enrolled—roughly 14% of the population (OME, 2021a). In 2019, the four-year graduation rate was 81.4% and the five-year graduation rate was 87.2% ([OME, 2021b](#)). While the OME does not have recent data published on their website regarding FNMI student graduation rates, in 2011-12, the four-year graduation rates were 47.1% for First Nations (FN), 67.4% for Métis, and 59.7% for Inuit students. In 2018, People for Education ([P4E](#)) reported that the five-year graduation rate for FN students was 60%, 76% for Métis students, and 68% for Inuit students—an average disparity of 20%.

Ontario students participate in provincial Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) testing in Grades 3 and 6 for reading, writing, and math, as well as testing for math in Grade 9 ([EQAO, 2020](#)). Students must also pass the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) in order to receive their high school diploma (OME, 2021b). Ontario also participates in PCAP and PISA. Ontario generally scores at or above the Canadian PISA average but below Alberta and British Columbia (see [Appendix E](#)).

The overall low income (poverty) rate for Ontario in 2019 reported by Statistics Canada was 10.9%, while the child poverty rate was 12.1% ([StatCan, 2021b](#)). However, the Market Basket Measure used to calculate these percentages “doesn’t show the whole picture” and is considered a generous/flawed measure ([Ontario Campaign2000, 2020](#))—in contrast, Ontario Campaign2000 reported the child poverty rate as 18% in 2018 (Ontario Campaign2000, 2020), or 1 in 7 families. They further point out that for lone parent families this rate increases to 1 in 3 and that

Children whose families face marginalization and who are impacted by the ongoing legacy of colonization face higher rates of poverty than the provincial average, ranging from 21% for Métis children, 31% for Inuit children, 32% for non-status FN children, 37% for Status FN children off reserve, and 48% for Status FN children on reserve ([Ontario Campaign, 2000](#))

Again, these details help contextualize these policies, especially in terms of emphases on testing and standardization in PLETs.

The data collected from the OME includes three policy texts produced under Liberal governments—*Growing success: Assessment, evaluation, and reporting in Ontario schools* (2010); *Creating pathways to success: An education and career/life planning program for Ontario schools* (2013); *Achieving excellence: A renewed vision for education in Ontario* (2014).

Growing success is a 168-page policy meant to guide curricula for Grades 1-12 with an introduction, ten chapters—“fundamental principles,” “learning skills and work habits in Grades 1-12,” “performance standards,” “assessment *for* learning and *as* learning” (emphasis in original), “evaluation, reporting student achievement,” “students with special education needs,” “English Language Learners,” “e-learning, credit recovery”—three appendices, glossary, and references (the latter three removed). *Creating pathways to success* is a 48-page policy focused on embedding career and life planning into K-12 curricula with six chapters—“career development in the twenty-first century,” “an education and career/life planning program to support student success,” “program components and processes,” “transition planning,” “supporting education and career/life planning,” “program development, implementation, and evaluation”. *Achieving excellence* is a 23-page blended-genre, heavily-multimodal, strategic planning policy text made up of a mission statement, a description of past successes, overview of renewed goals, sections corresponding to each goal—achieving excellence, ensuring equity, promoting well-being, enhancing public confidence—and conclusion. However, after this study began, *Achieving excellence* was removed from the OME website by the Doug Ford PC Government.

These PLETs total 42031 and 28217 tokens after stoplisting. Figure 16 and Table 21 below illustrate and list the most frequent words. Of note are emphases on assessment and outcomes through quasi-synonyms (overlexicalization) such as *achievement*, *expectations*, *assessment* and *evaluation*, as well as employment through *skills*, *work*, and *career*.

Figure 16
Word Cloud: OME PLETs Top 75 Most Frequent Words



Table 21
OME PLETs Word Frequency List (Top 15)

Rank	Freq	Token/Word
1	613	students
2	532	learning
3	477	student
4	420	their
5	335	education
6	331	school
7	317	are
8	241	skills
9	234	will
10	207	achievement
11	204	report
12	202	all
13	194	they
14	187	expectations
15	174	program

Table 22
OME PLETs 5 Most Frequent Bigrams and Trigrams

Rank	N-grams	Freq
Bigrams		
1	the student	193
2	life planning	102
3	report card	91
4	credit recovery	88
5	the school	77
Trigrams		
1	education and career	114
2	knowledge and skills	66
3	skills and work	61
4	special education needs	36
5	life planning program	34

The bigrams and trigrams in Table 22 expand on the word frequency lists above, as they give a snapshot of how some of these words are used. While most of the bigrams seem fairly standard as they relate to education discourse, *life planning* stands out and is only found in the OME's 2013 policy. The trigrams show the emphasis on skills, work, and career. Many of these N-grams can be found within the vicinity of *citizen(s)*, *citizenship*, *learner(s)*, and *student(s)*.

Citizen(s) and Citizenship

Table 23 below provides the raw and normalized frequency, range, and total percent of *citizen(s)* and *citizenship* in Ontario's policy texts. There is an absolute absence of *citizen* and a small relative absence (Duguid & Partington, 2018) of *citizens* and *citizenship* within Ontario's subcorpora when compared to the PTC. It is notable that of the three collected PLETs, *citizens* only occurs in the most recent (2014).

Table 23

OME PLETs Frequency, Range, and Percent of Subcorpus Information for Citizen(s) and Citizenship

	Citizen	Citizens	Citizenship
Freq.	0	9	3
ON Nrm Freq	0.00	0.21	0.07
PTC Nrm Freq	0.04	0.23	0.15
Difference	-0.04	-0.02	-0.08
Range	0.00%	33.33%	100%
PoS	0.000%	0.021%	0.007%
PoSCL	0.000%	0.032%	0.011%

Citizens. The most frequent collocates of *citizens* are *engaged* (7), *actively* (5), *economically*, *productive* (3), *active*, and *capable* (2). The collocates with the highest MI scores include *compassionate*, *economically* (11.6), *productive* (11.2), *capable* (11.0), *actively*, *ready* (10.6), *engaged*, *equipped*, *graduate* (10.0), and *caring* (9.6). The frequent and significant collocates generally occur together in the excerpts below.

1. We can | develop **compassionate** and **actively engaged citizens** who **graduate** high school **equipped** | for the technology-driven, globalized world. (OME, 2014, p. 20)
2. Ontario is committed to the success and well-being of every student and child. Learners in the province's education system will develop the knowledge, skills and characteristics that will lead them to become personally successful, | **economically productive** and **actively engaged citizens**. (2014, p. 1)
3. Together, we will inspire our children and youth to become | **capable** adults and fully **engaged citizens**, **ready** and able to contribute | to their families and communities. (2014, p. 1)
4. Ontarians will continue to have confidence in a publicly funded education system that helps develop new generations | of confident, **capable** and **caring citizens**. | (2014, p. 3)
5. Ontario's education system needs to help students build the knowledge and skills associated with positive well-being and | become healthy, **active** and **engaged citizens**. (2014, p. 14)

It is important to point out some of the common elements amongst these excerpts such as repetition and overlexicalization, presupposition and high certainty (through modal verbs), and inclusive referents (Ontarians/Ontario and we) which function to spread responsibility (see Horrod, 2020; Mulderrig, 2012). Repetition and overlexicalization occur in *actively engaged citizens*, *active and engaged citizens*, *fully engaged citizens*, as well as *ready*, *equipped*, and *capable* as both repetitive and quasi-synonymous. Also of note is the repetition of the verbs *develop* and *become* (3), and their alternative, *build*. In excerpt two, student and child are quasi-synonymous—the former, a functionalization of the child’s role in society. Furthermore, “personally successful, economically productive and actively engaged citizens” occurs three times on the first page of the 2014 PLET, lending both to repetition and a sense of over-persuasion (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Although such phrases are repeated, it is unclear what *actively engaged citizenship* means or looks like, but through the immediate surrounding context there is emphasis on characteristics such as *caring* and *compassionate* as well as participation in the economy through *economically productive* and *contribute*.

The use of *we* in policy texts is notable because it signals synthetic personalization wherein the audience is both addressed and included in the action and/or circumstances of the sentence(s) and power imbalances between the interlocutor (the OME) and the audience become generally obfuscated (Fairclough, 1993). *We* occurs in the first and third excerpts above, and in both cases, *we* is in the subject position and thus responsible for the action of *developing* and *inspiring*. Additionally, the third excerpt prefaces *we* with *together* which is another example of overlexicalization that intends to cue in and persuade the audience (parents and guardians) to *do their part*. These excerpts’ incorporation of modal verbs such as *can* and *will* signal relatively high certainty that the outcome will be met. Thus, not only is responsibility for *actively engaged*

citizenship placed on the audience, but if this outcome is not achieved, blame can be spread to the public as well—effectively distancing the OME from direct or sole blame.

Rather than using *we*, excerpt four uses *Ontarians* inclusively, which signals a sense of belonging and type of regionalism that invokes taking pride in the province and one's role (see above) in the province's initiatives. Furthermore, it presupposes that 1) Ontarians already have *confidence* in Ontario's (publicly funded) education system through the use of "will continue to," and 2) the education system *helps develop* "confident, capable and caring citizens" (alliteration). Again, the OME distances itself from responsibility/potential blame by hedging *develops* to *helps develop*—that is, there are unnamed others responsible for developing "confident, capable and caring citizens" (perhaps teachers, family, and the public). Finally, excerpt two anthropomorphizes *Ontario* as an agent—one "committed to the success and wellbeing of every student and child". Ambivalence is key here as *Ontario* may function to 1) extend the commitment to the purview of all of Ontario's *powers that be*, and/or 2) extend the commitment to all Ontarians—once again, distancing the OME from direct or sole responsibility and/or blame.

Excerpts one and four also stand out for their positive semantic prosody through *compassionate* and *caring*. While there are 61 mentions of *caring* across the PTC, there are only four in Ontario's policy texts, two of which are aimed at students and citizens (the other two regard developing or fostering caring learning environments; OME, 2014). Furthermore, there are only two instances of *compassionate* across the PTC. The other belongs to Alberta's (2016) policy in regard to the development of young children: "Questions of morality, fairness, mercy and justice fascinate young students as they become more socially oriented and compassionate towards others" (p. 6). Although Ontario's use of *compassionate* is connected to globalization and technology (with possibly a light reference to online bullying and trolling), Alberta's seems

to address the essence of engaged citizenship more directly without actually saying the words. To be compassionate is to be aware and concerned for the well-being of those around you, and in the 21st century—that is, a digital and globalized world—that means everyone. This incorporation of non-individualist sentiment attaches some promise of social-justice oriented citizenship (Westheimer, 2015), but this promise rubs against the hyper-individualist, economy focused aspects of these policy texts and the PTC as a whole.

Citizenship. All three instances of citizenship in Ontario’s PLETs are excerpted below. The most frequent collocate of *citizenship* is *career* (2), while the collocates with the highest MI score include *civics* (13.2), *good*, *interpersonal*, *valuable*, (10.4), *studies* (10.0), *relationships*, *responsible* (9.4), and *demonstrate* (8.5).

1. The goals of the guidance and career education program are to enable students to: understand the concepts related to lifelong | learning, **interpersonal relationships** (including **responsible citizenship**), and **career** planning; | (OME, 2010, p. 14)
2. In a secondary school, it [The Education and Career/Life Planning Program Advisory Committee] could identify opportunities to explore the four inquiry questions through compulsory courses such as English in Grade 9 and | **Career Studies** and **Civics** and **Citizenship** in Grade 10; | (2013, p. 38)
3. Children and students of all ages will achieve high levels of academic performance, acquire | **valuable** skills and **demonstrate good citizenship**. (2014, p. 3)

In the first excerpt, responsible citizenship is listed alongside lifelong learning, and career planning and is framed as an aspect of interpersonal relationships. Interestingly, *interpersonal* only occurs nine times across the PTC, 7 of which occur in the OME’s 2010 and 2013 PLETs (NB, 1; QC, 1). Here, students are meant to understand the concepts related to these three ‘goals’, and further down the page, the OME (2010) describes *interpersonal development*:

Students will learn to demonstrate self-discipline, take responsibility for their own behaviour, acquire the knowledge and skills required for getting along with others

both within and beyond the school, and choose ways of interacting positively with others in a variety of situations. They will also learn about thoughtful and non-violent problem resolution, social responsibility, working cooperatively with others, and caring about others. (p. 14)

Recalling the discussion of citizenship in Chapter 2, the alignment between this description and responsible citizenship may be noted—that is, individualized responsibility for one’s habits, behaviours, and actions with little consideration of context. There is nothing inherently negative or problematic about *getting along with others*, striving for *positive interactions*, *non-violent problem resolution*, nor cooperation and caring for others. However, this positioning of citizenship as only about personal/interpersonal responsibility leaves out (textual silence) for example, one’s relationship to the environment and community as a whole, civic engagement such as voting, lobbying or volunteering for important causes, protest/demonstrations against injustice, critical thinking and questioning, doing good for goodness’ sake, and so on. It also downplays the fact that there will be situations in which *getting along* and *cooperation* violate one’s needs and/or safety, the needs of others, and/or environmental needs as well as moral/ethical values. Thus, it may be said that most of the description above can be distilled into pleasant compliance and complacency.

Excerpt two only mentions *citizenship* with regard to the compulsory civics and careers course in Ontario high schools—the OME’s mention of *civics* is one of two mentions across the PTC (the other belongs to Nova Scotia). The “four inquiry questions” referenced in the excerpt are: “who am I?”; “what are my opportunities?”; “who do I want to become?”; and “what is my plan for achieving my goals?” (OME, 2013, p. 15). These questions, when amalgamated, may reflect ‘what kind of citizen’ the student wishes to become, yet are tied to career planning—e.g., joining the workforce and contributing to the economy. Given the Western context and culture,

career planning as a part of general life planning is practical; however, this excerpt shows another example of how citizenship is often subsumed within economic pursuit.

Excerpt three falls under the 2014 policy's first goal, *achieving excellence*, and shares some parallels with the description of *interpersonal development* through the phrase *students will* as well as *demonstrate*. While both statements are declarative, the use of *will* lends to a sense that what follows is imperative: "achieve high levels of academic performance", "acquire valuable skills", and "demonstrate good citizenship". These align with the three goals of schooling discussed in Chapters 2 and 4 (intellectual development, economic pursuit, and character development). While it is easy to determine that academic performance relates to testing and assessment and graduation rates, it is a little more difficult to pinpoint what skills are considered valuable and what good citizenship looks like. Although *skills* occurs 29 times in the 2014 policy, often in a list—*skills and knowledge, knowledge and skills, knowledge, skills, and characteristics*—there is generally little in the way of naming or describing them. However, in a descriptive impetus for the policy, the OME states: "Achievement also means raising expectations for valuable, higher-order skills like critical thinking, communication, innovation, creativity, collaboration and entrepreneurship. These are the attributes that employers have already told us they seek out among graduates" (p. 3). Given that these named skills are directly linked to the workforce, it may be concluded with relative certainty that *valuable skills* mean those that are *valuable* to the economy. And given the 2014 policy's emphasis on "personally successful, economically productive and actively engaged citizens", it may be further concluded that *good citizenship* is thus also related to or in support of the economy. This again links back to earlier discussions regarding *what kind of citizenship* (Westheimer, 2010, 2015) and the *ordinalization of citizenship* (Fourcade, 2016, 2019), which are critical of how citizenship is

constructed and framed as a vehicle to production and capital and little more—that is, one’s membership and value to/within society is based on their production and capital value and potential (e.g., the human capital model within a knowledge economy; Olssen & Peters, 2005).

Learner(s) and Student(s)

As can be seen in Table 24 below both *student* and *students* occur more frequently in the OME PLETs than the PTC.

Table 24

OME PLETs Frequency, Range, and Percent of Subcorpus Information for Student(s) and Learner(s)

	Learner	Learners	Student	Students
Freq	6	57	477	613
ON Nrm Freq	0.14	1.36	11.35	14.58
PTC Nrm Freq	0.30	1.49	7.42	11.58
Difference	-0.16	-0.13	3.93	3.00
Range	33.33%	100%	100%	100%
PSoC	0.014%	0.136%	1.135%	1.458%
PoSLSC	0.021%	0.202%	1.690%	2.172%

Learner. The most frequent collocates of *learner* are *English* and *language* (2)—as in *English Language Learner*—while the collocates with the highest MI scores are *releasing* (13.3), *directed*, *acts* (12.3), *gradually* (11.7), *he*,²⁷ *adjust* (10.7), *enables* (10.3), and *lead* (10.1). As shown in the excerpts below, *learner* is only found in the OME’s 2010 policy.

1. The | teacher **acts** as a “**lead learner**”, providing support while **gradually releasing** | more and more responsibility to the student, as the student develops the knowledge and skills | needed to become an independent **learner**. | (OME, 2010, p. 30)

²⁷ Gender specific pronouns are not heavily used across the PTC, including the OME and are often part of quoted materials or in reference to a person. It is notable, however, that these pronouns refer to a gender binary that has been called in to question over the past decade and that a preference for gender neutrality and/or the use of singular *they* has developed.

2. Information about a student’s development of these skills and habits also provides a strong indication of the student’s | development as a self-**directed learner**. | (2010, p. 45)
3. According to | Davies (2007, p. 2), descriptive feedback “**enables the learner to adjust** what **he** or | she is doing in order to improve.” (2010, p. 34)

All of these excerpts are quite deeply aligned with Progressive Education, as they emphasise scaffolding and self-efficacy (Vygotsky, 1986; see also Hartman, 2007). The first excerpt also hints at critical pedagogy through its characterization of the teacher as *lead learner* (the only occurrence in the PTC)—which encodes a dialogical or recursive relationship between the teacher and students, and ultimately resists or rejects the banking model in which the teacher knows all and deposits the knowledge into students (Freire, 1996). The third excerpt promotes descriptive feedback through a quote from Anne Davies, an education and assessment expert. Descriptive feedback is a form of scaffolding as it focuses on guiding the student to corresponding areas of improvement and often includes suggestions on how to do so.

The second excerpt, without explicitly stating it, reveals the goal of producing self-directed learners through a reference to skills and habits. Though not directly listed in the vicinity of this excerpt, the *Learning Skills and Work Habits* for grades 1-12 as outlined at the beginning of the 2010 policy are responsibility, organization, independent work, collaboration, initiative, and self-regulation (p. 11) which also appear on current report card templates (OME, 2019) and are evaluated as “E – Excellent, G – Good, S – Satisfactory, N – Needs Improvement” (p. 45). Following the table of *Learning Skills and Work Habits* is a few pages of discussion which include reasoning and evidence for these particular skills and habits and how they will benefit students after they graduate. The OME (2010) states “as students move through the grades, they develop and then consolidate their learning skills and work habits in preparation for post-secondary education and the world of work” (p. 12). Subsequently, the discussion moves to

“employability skills” and references the Conference Board of Canada and the OECD, stating: “The learning skills and work habits described for Grades 1 to 12 align closely with the goals and areas of learning of the guidance and career education program [...]” one of the goals of which is to “[...] enable students to: understand the concepts related to lifelong learning, interpersonal relationships (including responsible citizenship), and career planning” (p. 14). This textual (and intertextual) context provides an example of how this discourse encodes skills and habits as requisite for success in grade-school education (p. 12) and prerequisite for success in life which includes one’s employability and career prospects (p. 14). While it may be argued that equal emphasis is given to lifelong learning, interpersonal relationships, and career planning, these seemingly distinct categories are all interrelated facets of human capital in the knowledge-based economy (Olssen & Peters, 2005) or socio-cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986). In other words, neoliberal ideologies, though less explicit than in some of the more recent policies in the PTC, are evidenced in this policy and do not necessarily oppose, but may indeed undermine, progressivist ideals.

Learners. The most frequent collocates of *learners* include *English* (25) followed by *language* (23). The collocates with the highest MI score is *publication* (10.0). Since there are 12 collocates at the next score down (9.0), I have randomly chosen *catch*, *enjoy*, *turn*, and *youngest* (other collocates of the same score are also bolded). Of the 57 instances of *learners* in the Ontario policy texts, 22 are modified by *English language—English Language Learners—*and many of the collocates are related to *ELLs* as well. *Publication* is one such example:

1. For further information about provisions related to **English language learners**, see the ministry **publication** *English Language Learners / ESL and ELD Programs and Services: Policies and Procedures for Ontario Elementary and Secondary Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12, 2007*. (OME, 2010, p. 76)

Publication stands out for three reasons: first, it is the only instance of *publication* in the Ontario policy texts, second and third, it carries a procedural tone (re)directing the reader and in making reference to another policy text (an explicit instance of intertextuality).

Excerpts with the other collocates include:

2. However, if we are to fully support the whole child and the well-being of children | and youth from our **youngest learners** to our soon-to-be | graduates, we need to take further action. (OME, 2014, p. 15)
3. How | **students** feel about themselves as **learners** and whether they **enjoy learning** | and strive for excellence are closely related to their teachers' professional skills both in differentiating instruction and assessment and in helping students understand how they can improve. (2010, p. 8)
4. When curriculum expectations are modified in order to meet the language- | learning needs of **English language learners** (often referred to as **ELLs**), | assessment and evaluation will be based on the documented modified expectations. [...] Research has shown that it takes five to seven | years for most **English language learners** to **catch** up to their | English-speaking peers in their ability to use English for academic purposes. (2010, pp. 76-77)
5. To help answer the question “Who am I?”, students will: identify the characteristics that describe who they are (e.g., interests, strengths, intelligences, accomplishments, values, and skills, which include the learning skills and work habits evaluated on the provincial report cards and may include the Essential Skills described in the Ontario Skills Passport); identify factors that have shaped who they are and that are likely to shape who they become over time; reflect on how these characteristics influence their thoughts and actions, and how those thoughts and actions may in | **turn** affect **their** development as **learners**, **their** relationships, and their **education** | and career/life choices. (2013, p. 15)

As above, most of the excerpts for learners are found within the OME's 2010 policy, which points to its distinctness from the rest of the Ontario policy texts.

The use of *our* in excerpt two gives possession of “soon-to-be graduates” to the OME and the audience, which connects to the earlier discussion of responsibility and synthetic personalization (Fairclough, 1993). The excerpt is taken from the policy's third goal, *promoting wellbeing* and “further action” is followed by the heading “Plan of action” which lists seven bullet points that involve working with “partners inside and outside the education sector” as well

as parents/guardians to raise awareness, provide and inform students and parents about resources and support, and encourage parent involvement in learning (OME, 2014, p. 16). While these to-do items are fairly innocuous, both the title of the goal itself and one of the bullet points highlight the marketized/neoliberal nature of *wellbeing* in this policy. The word *promote* is linked to marketing, branding, advertising, entrepreneurship, and the like; alternatives include encourage, foster, support, nurture, and so on. The bullet point “support all students and staff in finding ways to be leaders and contributors to the school and broader community” (p. 16) stood out, as there is no explicit explanation about how leadership and contribution are connected to wellbeing. Below the surface here, is the inherent value that tends to be placed on individual’s ability to contribute to society as human capital—that is, when one is contributing/being productive, their sense of self-efficacy, motivation, confidence, and so on are bolstered, and when one is not contributing/being productive they may have feelings of guilt, lower self-esteem, etc. Crawford (1980) blew a whistle on what he coined as “healthism,” wherein health had become a personal responsibility and thus any lack of health became a personal failure or fault and subsequently pathologized. Similarly, Sparke (2017) points out that people are “routinely told that their health is simply their own responsibility, a form of resilience that will only endure if they invest in it with the same individualistic and entrepreneurial prudence that is the trademark of personalized neoliberalism more generally” (p. 237). With this understanding, the underlying expectation for constant/consistent contribution or productivity errs on the side of ableism and actually undermines genuine or critical discussions of wellbeing in which value is placed on human life regardless of ability or willingness to contribute, rest and balance are emphasized, and health/wellbeing is understood as intricately connected to social and individual

context(s) (e.g., access/barriers to basic necessities, community, and resources in addition to biological traits and individual and cultural behaviours).

Excerpt four regards ELLs and is excerpted from a section in the OME's 2010 policy entitled, "English Language Learners: Modifications and Accommodations". The section is split into two subsections—policy and context. ELLs are not afforded any agency within this excerpt (i.e., they are the receivers of instruction, modifications and/or accommodations). The first part of the excerpt is fairly procedural in tone and upon first glance, seems circular. However, it is indicative of the push for educational alignment between curricula and assessment (Biggs & Tang, 2007). The second part of the excerpt states a quasi-statistic regarding the performance gap between ELLs and 'normative' or native English-speakers, which by itself and at first glance may seem alarming. Yet within the surrounding text, there also appears to be a call for understanding and empathy and an attempt to dispel the idea that all ELLs are immigrants:

Many English language learners were born in Canada and have been raised in families and communities in which languages other than English are spoken, or in which the variety of English spoken differs significantly from the English used in Ontario classrooms. Other English language learners have arrived in Ontario as newcomers from other countries. These students may have experience of highly sophisticated educational systems, or they may come from regions where access to formal schooling was limited. (2010, p. 77)

This statement acknowledges the diversity in who might be considered an ELL and hints at the variety of English vernacular and dialect, which is generally influenced by class and race, and likely includes rural, urban, and now digital vernaculars, as well as Black Vernacular English (BVE). However, it is clear that the Ministry prizes standard or academic English as the dominant/prestige language, which recalls debates surrounding assimilation (Baldwin, 2008; see also [Educational Linguist, 2015](#)). Furthermore, the statement's purpose appears to be quashing a

myth that only immigrants are ELLs and in doing so is addressing a particular audience, namely one that may be white and affluent and/or harbour anti-immigration sentiments.

Still, it is important to understand that native English-speaking students, as embedded in English-speaking contexts even before birth, are continuously developing their grammatical and conceptual language capacity into their teens, and context-specific language capacity (including English for academic purposes) develops throughout one's life (Baker & Wright, 2017; see also [Magrath, 2016](#)). And with regard to immigrant ELLs, given the potential culture shock, general lack of resources and support, and potential trauma associated with refugees and asylum seekers, amongst other individual circumstances, this performance gap is fairly unsurprising. Thus, working to 'close this gap'—or more realistically, minimize this gap—requires more than just curricular and/or classroom support.

Finally, excerpts three and five regard learners' thoughts and feelings about themselves. Excerpt three ties learner's self-esteem and motivation to teacher's "professional skills", specifically whether their *instruction* and *assessment* is interesting/has variety and whether feedback is constructive and forward facing. Here, an admission that students' sense and value of self are deeply linked to and often determined by their grades and assessment feedback may be detected. Yet the burden and thus potential blame is placed on teacher's professionalism (or lack thereof) rather than the systemic and institutional requirement for constant and often high stakes assessment (e.g., over-emphasis on summative assessment, standardized testing, and up until recently, streaming based on grades).²⁸

Excerpt five falls within a table entitled "Conceptual Framework: Knowledge and Skills in the Four Areas of Learning in Education and Career/Life Planning" under the first "inquiry

²⁸ In the summer of 2020, the Ontario government announced it would no longer place or make students choose between academic and applied streaming in grade 9 ([CBC, 2020](#)).

question”, “who am I?” (2013, p. 15). Here, students are meant to identify their characteristics, and then reflect on how their characteristics influence their thoughts and actions, and how their thoughts and actions “affect their development as learners”—that is, their identity as *learners* is constructed as a sub-identity to being a student. The bullet points listed in this excerpt all begin with verbs (identify and reflect) which affords some agency to students. However, the use of *will* (*students will identify, students will reflect*) constructs a high certainty obligation on the part of students, thus removing room for choice or dissonance. *Characteristics* seems to be used as a catch-all term, as can be seen from the examples listed in the brackets—interests, values, skills, etc.—including a particular list of skills and work habits from the Ontario Skills Passport (OSP).

The OSP website states that:

The **Ontario Skills Passport** (OSP) is an online bilingual resource designed to help learners, job seekers, teachers/facilitators, employment specialists, employers and anyone interested in learning more about how **Essential Skills and Work Habits** (ESWH) enhance opportunities for success in work, learning and life. ([SkillsZone](#), n.d., para. 2, emphasis in original)

Although most of the OSP webpages are no longer functional and/or have been removed, a promotional video shows an image of the OSP classroom worksheet where “essential skills” and “work habits” are listed in tables with space for students to fill in how they “demonstrated” the skill or work habit. The list of essential skills (in the order in which they appear) are “reading, writing, document use, digital technology, oral communication, money math, scheduling or budgeting and accounting, measurement and calculation, data analysis, numerical estimation, job task planning and organization, decision making, problem solving, finding information, and critical thinking”, while the list of work habits are “working safely, teamwork, reliability, organization, working independently, initiative, self-advocacy, customer service, and entrepreneurship” (OSP, n.d., 02:30). While these skills and habits are considered important for

everyday life and are part in parcel of the broader self-identification and reflection, there is potential for such an activity—especially when conducted in a room full of peers, and/or as a career/life planning tool—to be reduced to a comparative and competitive self-assessment and ranking rather than a self-knowledge and growth activity. This may in turn, hinder or harm learners’ sense of self and development.

Student. The most frequent collocates of *student* include *achievement* (89), *learning* (85), *student* (52), *teacher* (41), *parent* (29), *evaluation* (28). Most occurrences take the form of *student achievement* (41), *student’s achievement* (28), *student learning* (42), and *evaluation of (the) student* (9). *Achievement* and *evaluation* co-occur: *evaluation (and reporting) of student achievement* (6). *Teachers* and *parents* also co-occur: *teacher-parent-student conference* (2) *teacher-student-parent conferences* (1) and *student-led teacher/parent conference* (2).

The collocates with the highest MI score (6.9) include *biannual*, *develops*, *fellow*, *maturity*, and *registered*.

1. Teachers can enhance their understanding of success criteria and build common knowledge about levels of achievement through teacher moderation – | that is, through assessment of **student** work done collaboratively with **fellow** | teachers. (OME, 2010, p. 33)
2. The teacher acts as a “lead learner”, providing support while gradually releasing more and more responsibility | to the **student**, as the **student develops** the knowledge and skills | needed to become an independent learner. (2010, p. 30)
3. Develop and implement strategies and procedures for measuring program effectiveness in terms that align with the indicators for pathways programming provided in board and school improvement planning resources (e.g., the School Effectiveness Framework) and that draw on both quantitative data (e.g., the number of students in Grade 9 who have completed the required components in their IPP, as established by the school | board) and qualitative data (e.g., **student** feedback during **biannual** reviews and | in Student Exit Surveys) (see section 6.5). (2013, p. 37)
4. This item is to be completed in the June final report. Write in the grade in which the **student** will be **registered** the following year. | (2010, p. 54)

5. [Cheating and Plagiarism] Policies will reflect a continuum of behavioural and academic responses and consequences, based on at least the following four factors: (1) | the grade level of the **student**, (2) the **maturity** of the **student**, | (3) the number and frequency | of incidents, and (4) the individual circumstances of the student. (2010, p. 43)

All of these instances of *student* are genericized and/or impersonalized. In every excerpt except the second, the bolded collocate only occurs once within the Ontario subcorpus which lends reasoning to their top MI score. Excerpts one and two exemplify some Progressive Education values through emphasis on teacher collaboration and triangulation (excerpt one) and scaffolding (excerpt two). Although I have already unpacked excerpt two [above](#) with regard to *learner*, it is important to point out that scaffolding responsibility does not necessarily equate with more agency or (perhaps more accurately) autonomy for the student.

Excerpt three emphasizes the perceived need for regular (and mixed-methods) evaluation of the *Education and Career/life Planning Program*, which ultimately aligns with audit culture (the overzealous drive to measure the effectiveness of every component of education) (Apple, 2005). Here, biannual reviews and student exit surveys are mentioned as a qualitative source of evaluation data—which potentially affords students agency (if they are anonymous). However, it is unclear what is covered or asked in both types of feedback opportunities and whether such feedback has actually been used as a catalyst for improvement.

Excerpt four is quite procedural as it directs teachers to fill in which grade the student will be entering in the following school year on the final June report card. Although innocuous, it is, however, notable that the second sentence begins with a verb which makes it an explicitly imperative statement aimed at teachers. This type of construction is quite rare in Ontario's policy texts and across the PTC and is typically used for action items in bullet point lists or when the policy is directing the reader to another section or separate document (which can be seen in

excerpt three above). However, as has been pointed out, there are several cases wherein declarative statements are actually implicitly imperative.

The final (fifth) excerpt brings up the matter of cheating and plagiarism—another, albeit semi-surprising, rarity within the PTC, as *cheating* and *plagiarism* and their lemmas only occur in the OME’s 2010 policy and nowhere else. Although the policy and approach may have changed since 2010, it is also notable that this type of ‘continuum response’ to the issue of cheating and plagiarism is fairly progressive and seems to err on the side of rehabilitation rather than punishment.

Students. The most frequent collocates of *students* include *their* (99), *learning* (87), *all* (75), *are* (68), *education* (65), *needs* (56), and *teachers* (51). *Students* are often directly preceded by *all* (57), which is a genericized aggregation and are also often listed together with *teachers*, both of which are exemplified in excerpt two below. Additionally, *students* are often followed by *their* which is an both anaphoric reference and a possessive determiner (gives possession)—exemplified in excerpt five below. The collocates with the highest MI scores at 6.5 include *communicated*, *implications*, *profound*, *puts*, and *recovering*.

1. To ensure that assessment, evaluation, and reporting are valid and reliable, and that they lead to the | improvement of **learning** for **all students**, **teachers** use practices and procedures | that: [...] | **are communicated** clearly to **students** and parents at the beginning | of the school year or course and at other appropriate points throughout the school year or course; (OME, 2010, p. 6)
2. On a daily and hourly basis, teachers make professional judgements that ensure effective implementation of these principles, making decisions with respect to | individual **students** and groups of **students** that have **profound implications** for | them. (2010, p. 8)
3. While we know that some | Aboriginal students, youth in care, **students** with special **education needs** and some **students** who are **navigating** a transition | continue to struggle, we also know that there are other students at risk of not succeeding. (2014, p. 12)

4. | **Students** may work on **recovering** more | than one credit concurrently through the credit recovery process, and there is no limit on the number of credits a student may recover. (2010, p. 84)
5. *Creating Pathways to Success* **puts students** at the centre of **their** | own learning, viewing them as the architects of their own lives. (2013, p. 7)

All of the high MI scoring collocates occur only once within these PLETs and are fairly rare within the PTC as well.

The latter half of excerpt one is a bullet point that emphasizes communication with students and parents regarding assessment, evaluation, and reporting—which seems to parallel ideas surrounding explicit or overt instruction (a somewhat contested facet of Progressive Education; see Macleod & Golby, 2003). The impetus, as stated in the text leading up to the bullet points, is to ensure validity and reliability, which do not necessarily align with clear communication. A teacher could communicate that students will need to juggle or ride a unicycle while describing Newton’s laws of motion, but the act of communication does not offer validity or reliability to evaluating students on their ability to juggle or ride a unicycle whilst orating scientific theory. Aside from this, clear and consistent communication can lead to improved learning, but the above example illustrates how meaning can be muddled through cascading lists (a feature of globalized discourse).

Excerpt two positions students on the receiving end (beneficiaries) of teachers’ professional judgement and decision-making. The statement is marked by the inclusion of circumstantial indicators “on a daily and hourly basis”, which emphasize the “profound implications” of teachers’ actions in line with “the seven fundamental principles” also outlined in this section—mainly to do with fairness, inclusion, scaffolding, and assessment (see OME, 2010, p. 6). *Profound* occurs only once in the Ontario policy texts and five times across the PTC.

Likewise, *implications* occurs only once in the Ontario policy texts and 17 times across the PTC. However, what such *profound implications* may be are left implicit.

Excerpt three names four groups of students who “continue to struggle”, while also pointing out that there are other unnamed students “at risk of not succeeding”. Those aware of the ongoing discourse regarding the shifts in Indigenous naming and terminology may furrow at the OME’s use of *Aboriginal* to name a group of students ([Whitehawk, 2008](#); see also [Animikii, 2020](#); [Marks, 2014](#)). The term *Aboriginal* is considered an oversimplified and convenient colonial catchall for First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI)—made up of a myriad of different cultures and peoples. However, the term actually means ‘not original’, which is categorically incorrect (Animikii, 2020). The term began to be retired from use prior to the 2010s and is largely attributed to a Grand Council Assembly of the Anishinabek Nation in 2008—held on Manitoulin Island, Ontario—wherein its use was condemned as a colonial catchall (Whitehawk, 2008). For the OME to continue using this term well after one of the largest First Nations in Ontario rejected it is questionable at the very least.

Excerpt four is procedural in stating the options students have for credit recovery—that is, students are permitted to recover as many credits as they want or need (at the high school level). Credit recovery is the process of retaking a previously failed course. While this excerpt is fairly innocuous, it is rather exceptional within the Ontario policies, as there are few instances where students are positioned as the subject of a sentence (or clause) and carrying out action. However, in cases where students are the subject, their action is often metered by modals that indicate obligation such as *will*, *should*, *must*, and in this case *may*. In this excerpt, *may* indicates permission, yet *may* is generally considered low certainty modality, which could signal reservations about students’ ability to excel in recovering more than one credit at a time.

Excerpt five is notable for a number of reasons including referencing itself as an agent, the overlexicalization of *own*, and the presence of two metaphors. The first metaphor is common in Progressive Education discourse and spatially situates students at the centre of education (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Schwab, 1973). With regard to the architect metaphor, it is first, important to note that this particular policy focuses on career and life planning and that architecture is considered a respectable and prestigious field (as are other STEM fields). Characterizing students as “architects of their own lives”—that is, masterful and expert designers and builders who are in charge—seems to explicitly imbue them with agency and autonomy. However, in considering this metaphor more deeply, some concern arises. Chiefly, that of the intersections of privilege. In running with this metaphor, one might consider access to design technology, space, building materials, and a support team. While some students may have access to all of these elements, others may have access to only some (or even none) of these elements, and the quality of each element may vary widely from student to student as well. Thus, both the relative ‘success’ of the process and product may vary significantly from one student to the next—a student with access to the best of the best may design and build efficiently, while another with fewer resources may take longer and/or end up with a poorer quality product. Yet the architect is likely to be blamed for poor execution and quality. Furthermore, this metaphor also suppresses other related contexts such as parental and social pressures as well as economic climate—in many cases parents have more steering force in choosing a future trajectory than the student does, and students are also made to weigh the economic ‘value’ of their post-secondary and/or career interests. These considerations highlight the inherent hyper-individualism of such a metaphor and thus its alignment with neoliberal values.

Summary

Similar to Alberta, although Ontario's PLETs were produced under Liberal governments, they also have interesting discursive differences between them. Particularly notable is the acutely strategic nature of *Achieving excellence* (2014) including repetition and synthetic personalization. The PLETs are closely aligned with the three goals of education outlined earlier (character development, intellectual development, and economic pursuit), and are also quite saturated in progressive education ideals and some hints of critical pedagogy. However, this is again underscored by a heavy neoliberal emphasis on economic productivity (see Allais, 2012).

The OME's policy texts emphasize "personally successful, economically productive, and actively engaged" (2014, p. 1) citizenship, which is closely aligned to personally responsible citizenship (Westheimer, 2015). Within this is a push for lifelong learning to remain employable (see Mulderrig, 2003). The OME also constructs the ideal citizen as compassionate and caring which may invoke other models of citizenship such as participatory and/or social justice-oriented citizenship (Westheimer, 2015). Instances of *learner(s)* are often surrounded by pedagogically informed progressive education concepts such as scaffolding and mainly discuss ELLs in relation to defining the term and as in need of particular supports. Much of the text surrounding *student(s)* is procedural in tone and often invokes teachers' roles in relation to students. Metaphors position students as the centre of education as well as architects of their lives.

Québec

Québec is the largest province by landmass and has the second largest population (8.57 million) in Canada. As a predominantly French province (both in culture and language), Québec has enforced the Charter of the French Language (Bill 101) since 1977, which for the most part imposes French-only schooling. There are 17 school regions, 72 school boards, 2740 educational

Table 25
QME PLET Word Frequency List (Top 15)

Rank	Freq	Token/Word
1	302	educational
2	178	their
3	171	students
4	167	success
5	161	school
6	140	education
7	118	are
8	108	children
9	107	must
10	96	they
11	94	development
12	85	all
13	84	schools
14	81	social
15	79	learning

While these words are again easily connected to education, Quebec’s PLET word frequency stands out amongst the other provinces as the top word—*educational*—is an adjective, which is not seen as the most frequent word in any of the other provinces or territories. Furthermore, the second most frequent word is *their* (most often referring to students), surpasses the frequency of *students*. Given that this policy was likely written in French first and then translated to English, these variations may be a result. Furthermore, *student* usually falls higher on the frequency list in the other provinces and territories policy texts.

Table 26 below shows the top five most frequent bigrams and trigrams in this text and provides a bit more *aboutness* of Quebec’s policy. Some of these phrases also appear within collocational range of *citizen(s)*, *citizenship*, *learner(s)*, and *student(s)*, and can be seen in the excerpts that are presented and critically analyzed below.

Table 26
QME PLET 5 Most Frequent Bigrams and Trigrams

Rank	N-grams	Freq
Bigrams		
1	educational success	110
2	educational childcare	65
3	must be	41
4	vocational training	32
5	based on, young people	25
Trigrams		
1	educational childcare centres	38
2	children and students	36
3	their full potential	18
4	his or her, stakeholders and partners	17
5	diploma or qualifications, educational and pedagogical, educational childcare services	15

Québec’s policy text makes 96% of the 115 mentions of *educational success* within the PTC. In comparison, the bigram *student success* only has 83 mentions across the PTC, but is more evenly represented/distributed across the PTC. Québec’s emphasis on *educational success* may exemplify the removal (backgrounding) of *students* (and *teachers*) as social actors, since by virtue of the necessity for social actors to be involved in both education and success, we know they are implicated.

Citizen(s) and Citizenship

Table 27 below provides the raw and normalized frequencies of *citizen(s)* and *citizenship*, compares the normalized frequencies to the PTC, lists the range, and percent of subcorpus (PoSC) and stoplisted subcorpus (PoSLSC). While there are few instances of *citizen* and *citizenship*, Québec has the highest normalized frequency of *citizens* of the selected provinces. Furthermore, the QME mentions *citizen(s)* more than the PTC but mentions *citizenship* slightly less. Interestingly, the French version contains more mentions of citizen(s)—*citoyen* (1),

citoyenne (9), *citoyens* (22), *citoyennes* (15). Future research might compare the English and French versions of these policy texts.

Table 27

QME PLET Frequency, Range, and Percent of Subcorpus Information for Citizen(s) and Citizenship

	Citizen	Citizens	Citizenship
Freq.	1	10	2
QC Nrm Freq	0.05	0.54	0.11
PTC Nrm Freq	0.04	0.23	0.15
Difference	0.014	0.31	-0.04
Range	100%	100%	100%
PoSC	0.005%	0.054%	0.011%
PoSLSC	0.008%	0.081%	0.016%

Citizen. Given the single instance of *citizen* in this policy text, there are no frequent collocates and all content collocates have high MI scores: *achievement* (11.0), *active* (10.3), *engagement* (9.9), *professional* (9.6), and *skills* (8.0).

1. This vision also incorporates personal | **achievement, professional skills and active citizen engagement.** | It focuses on students' well-being in and outside the classroom and pays particular attention to digital technology, which is considered a strategic lever in implementing the vision for education. (QME, 2017, p. 14)

Interestingly, the *vision* that the Québec Ministry invokes is borrowed from the OME's (2014) 'renewed vision' in *Achieving Excellence* (as stated in QME, 2017, p. 14).²⁹ Thus, parallels to the phrase "personally successful, economically productive, and actively engaged citizens" may be noticed (OME, 2014, p. 1). However, Quebec's (re)*vision* seems to emphasize potential rather than outcomes—that is, personal achievement may lead to success and professional skills may lead to economic productivity. Furthermore, all of these envisioned ways of being are

²⁹ This policy also features references to other policy-based education initiatives including France's (2013) *Pacte pour la réussite Educative* (Pact for Educational Success), and Australia's (2015) *Education State*—all explicit acts of policy borrowing.

nominalized; most noticeably, *actively engaged citizens* (adverb, verb, noun) has become *active citizen engagement* (adjective, noun/nominal group). Again, nominalization allows for the removal of agency (Fairclough, 1992a).

Citizens. The most frequent collocates of *citizens* are *responsible* (6) and *who* (4). There are six collocates tied for the highest MI score of 10.3: *educate, equips, expects, join, mould,* and *see*, and four collocates tied for the second highest MI score of 9.3: *actively, democratic, equipped,* and *prepared*. Both the frequent and high MI score collocates appear in the excerpts below.

1. Educational success is also intended to instill values and attitudes, and to impart competencies | that will help **mould responsible citizens who are prepared** to play | an active role in the labour market, the community and society as a whole. (QME, 2017, p. 26)
2. Vocational training enables many people to achieve their full potential and | **join** the workforce as **active citizens**. | It allows some people to change, or advance in, their career, while others use it as a springboard to higher education. In any case, it is essential that it be restored to its rightful place as a short training path leading to the labour market or higher education. (p. 45)
3. | Society **expects to see responsible citizens who** participate **actively in democratic**, | social, community, economic and cultural life. (p. 12)
4. As a vital part of everyday community life, schools and educational childcare centres cater to a wide variety of people from different socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds and with different needs. They offer a living environment that transmits the values of Québec society, which fosters identity formation and | **equips** Quebecers to be **active citizens**. (p. 12)
5. [This policy] goes well beyond obtaining a diploma or qualification by focusing | on the need to **educate citizens** who are **equipped** to meet | the challenges of the 21st century. (p. 20)

The most frequent modifier of *citizens* in Québec's policy is *responsible*, which recalls Westheimer's (2015) personally responsible citizenship. The first three excerpts connect responsible and active citizenship to the workforce, while the second excerpt further connects active participation in the workforce as a prerequisite for achieving one's *full potential*. The

fourth excerpt makes explicit mention of schooling's function as social conditioning with emphasis on Québec's (unnamed) values, and the fifth excerpt invokes a *token future*, which Gough defines as mentions of futures which are "chiefly rhetorical" and often serve as economic rationalizing (Gough, 1990, p. 303). The fifth excerpt also follows a similar pattern across the selected provinces and PTC in invoking unnamed *21st century challenges* that students-to-be-citizens must be prepared for, which again implicitly links to adaptability and resilience.

With regard to the first excerpt, *mould* is only found once in the entire PTC, and its usage is particularly interesting as it reveals a metaphor of young people as clay-like—malleable, not yet solidified. Though technically true—that is, neurologically, the brain is still developing—the clay metaphor begs a question about uniformity: If children and young adults are mouldable, are they factory or handmade? Are they all meant to be the same or can they take different shapes? Are they all made from the same ingredients? The point here is that if we take this metaphor seriously, we might understand that the ingredients are the child's culture, background, and experiences, (which cannot possibly be all the same), and that because the ingredients are different, they may require different processes, time, and dedication, and that their 'final form' or 'function' may vary. If different ingredients are used in a standard mould, with standard time and process, the result is likely to be hit or miss—that is, whichever ingredients the standard is aimed at will have great results, while the rest may end up a mess. The presupposition of a final form or function also plays into the ideology of human capital within the knowledge economy in which children are the raw materials—inanimate objects with no agency—'moulded' into the desired product. Furthermore, where previous iterations of this metaphor positioned the teacher as the sculptor (Cook-Sather, 2006, p. 159; Scheffler, 1960/1991) in reading the excerpt as a whole, what comes before *mould* has been nominalized into abstraction—*educational success* is the

grammatical and anthropomorphized actor, while the goals are (the unnamed) *values*, *attitudes*, and *competencies* which make up the *responsible citizen* (the ultimate goal). Thus, the teacher (sculptor) has been removed.

Vocational training is a post-secondary option that offers 1-2 year programs that are specifically geared to particular occupations including those requiring certification or licensing (e.g., electrician, surveyor, hair stylist) (see [Vocational Schools & Colleges](#), 2021). Out of the 47 mentions of vocational across the PTC, Quebec makes 75% of them, and *vocational* is nearly always followed by *training*—as is shown in Table 26 (bigrams and trigrams) above. Since vocation is a French word, the high use of *vocational* in the QME’s policy seems natural, yet it does not appear at all in the French version. Rather, the French policy refers to “formation professionnelle”, or professional training. Prior to the 16th century, the term vocation meant ‘a call by God’ (Oxford English Dictionary [OED], 2020). Although its religious affiliations have mostly been backgrounded and simple definitions signify one’s main occupation, the term vocation often still implies ‘one’s calling’, which harbours a kind of moral obligation or duty (OED, 2020). While reference to employment or the economy is commonplace in the PTC, these excerpts, when compared to the citizen(s)(hip) related excerpts from the other subcorpora, appear to be the most job focused with references to the workforce, labour market, and vocational training—also an example of overlexicalization. However, the terms *workforce* and *labour market* only come into usage in the PTC from 2015 and 2016 respectively, while the terms *career(s)*, *employment*, and *economy* span the years included in the PTC. Circling back to moral obligation and religious affiliations: the connection of employment to moral obligation has been found in many education discourses (see Lee, 2015; Lim 2014), and arguments that modern capitalism forms a religion also exist (see Benjamin, 2005/1921; [Tarnowski, 2017](#)).

The third excerpt stands out for its forcefulness in the phrase “expects to see”. *Expects* only occurs once in the PTC. However, the listed aspects that citizens are meant to take part in are more robust than most others, which may signal participatory and possibly social justice oriented citizenship (Westheimer, 2015). The fourth excerpt invokes character education in its explicit defining of schools as transmitters of “the values of Québec society” as connected to “identity formation”. This statement rests on an assumption that Québec has a cohesive set of values (akin to culture), yet they go unnamed. The invocation of *Quebecers* is an example of *objectivation*, particularly *spatialization*—in which social actors are named by their location (van Leeuwen, 2008). Taken together, such a statement exerts a form of provincial patriotism that potentially seeks to assimilate “people from different socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds” (QME, 2017, p. 12).

Citizenship. With only two instances, all of the content collocates of *citizenship* have high MI scores: *reflection* (11.6), *itself* (10.6), *form* (10.0), *active* (9.3), *values* (9.2), *society* (7.1).

1. Promoting education, parental involvement, schools, the value of school staff and the role of educational childcare services is | **itself a form of active citizenship.** | It reaffirms the values of equity, universality and accessibility, which, while contributing to the development of the education system, also enable society to achieve its full potential. (QME, 2017, p. 67)
2. If everyone is to benefit from this diversity in an atmosphere of openness and trust, educational settings must be a | **reflection of society and the citizenship values** on which it is | based. In this respect, efforts must be made to integrate people with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning difficulties into regular classrooms to improve their chances for success. This approach stems from the principles of inclusion and social diversity that underpin this policy. (p. 47)

Quebec’s instances of citizenship are particularly interesting as the first invokes the promotion of education as an act of good citizenship, which aligns with Progressive Education views that universal education is the bedrock of democracy (Dewey, 1916; Marshall, 1950). The second

emphasizes that education should reflect the diversity of society and societal values. However, the terminology (handicaps and social maladjustments) used to describe dis/ability in the second excerpt, though enshrined in the DSM and legal precedent, is generally considered out-of-date and has been called exclusionary and harmful (Center, 1990). While touting inclusion and diversity, this terminology does not bode well—and may reveal latent aversion to genuine inclusion. Furthermore, the word *integrate* recalls earlier discourses surrounding the integration of Black students into previously ‘Whites-only’ schools, especially in relation to *regular classrooms*. Integration without proper knowledge and support—changing ideas about what the ‘regular classroom’ is and how such diverse classrooms function—has proven to be ineffective and even harmful, particularly in regard to safe environments for those being ‘integrated’ (Delpit, 2011; [Joffe-Walt, 2020](#); [Rizga, 2018](#); Sefa Dei, 2008). This critical conversation also extends to dis/ability studies, wherein inclusion and integration have different meanings and processes. While inclusion involves an acceptance of diversity and programmatic and systemic changes to accommodate all needs, integration tends to merely absorb students with special needs into the *regular classroom* within a deficit ideology (see [Harman, n.d.](#)).

Learner(s) and Student(s)

As can be drawn from Table 28, there is an absolute absence of *learner* (Duguid & Partington, 2018). When compared to the PTC and other subcorpora, there is a discernable relative absence of *learners* and *student(s)*—Québec’s policy text has the least mentions of learner(s) and student(s) of the selected provincial subcorpora.

Table 28

QME PLET Frequency, Range, and Percent of Subcorpus Information for Learner(s) and Student(s)

	Learner	Learners	Student	Students
Freq	0	7	42	171
QC Nrm Freq	0	0.38	2.29	9.31
PTC Nrm Freq	0.3	1.49	7.42	11.58
Difference	-0.3	-1.11	-5.13	-2.27
Range	0	100%	100%	100%
PoSC	0%	0.038%	0.229%	0.931%
PoSLSC	0%	0.057%	0.342%	1.391%

Learners. The most frequent collocates of *learners* are *adult* (7), *youth* (5), *need*, and *children* (2), which are generally listed together. The collocates with the highest MI score include *situation* (10.8), *youth* (10.1), *forms* (9.2), *adult* (8.8), *flexible*, *regardless* (8.5), *balance*, and *immigrant* (8.2). As has been established, the modifier, *English Language* often precedes *learner(s)*. Since Québec's only official language is French, it is natural that there are no references to ELLs. Instead, there is mention of *francophones* (2), *anglophones* (1), *allophone(s)*³⁰ (3), and *immigrants learning French* (3). It is of note then, that the most frequent modifier of *learners* in Québec's policy text is *adult*.

1. Adult education centres must be | **flexible** and adapted to **adult learners'** **need** to **balance** work, family | and studies. (QME, 2017, p. 18)
2. This vision of educational success involves taking multiple realities into account, in particular with respect to the following: [...] the educational paths | of **immigrant youth** and **adult learners** in a situation of academic | delay. (p. 27)
3. | **Adult learners'** success can take different **forms**: | obtaining a diploma or other qualification, achieving a learning objective, making progress at the personal or vocational level, enrolling in another education or training sector. (p. 18)

³⁰ Here, allophone refers to someone whose first language is neither English nor French.

4. All | children and **youth** and **adult learners**, **regardless** of where they live, must | have full access to the various strategies, action plans, measures and investments that will turn our vision of educational success into reality in the coming years. (p. 28)

Overall, these excerpts emphasize the need for contextual attention as well as *flexibility* both in how *adult learners* approach their learning and in what is considered *success*—a fairly progressive approach. For example, the final excerpt emphasizes *full access*, which potentially acknowledges barriers (geographic, in particular) that have existed and/or currently exist. Much of the underlying context and initiatives within these excerpts are directly connected to Québec’s low high school graduation/high drop-out rates—in 2018, only 64% of students graduated within 4 years, and the dropout rate, though steadily decreasing (22% in 2000) was at 13% ([CTV, 2018](#); [Motskin & Gallinger, 2015](#)).

The second excerpt makes explicit mention of *immigrants* in association with the *reality* of *academic delay*. While acknowledging contextual factors is important, it is of note that the word *immigrant(s)* is rarely used by other provinces—Québec makes 65% of the 17 mentions. The closest synonyms/relatives, *newcomer(s)* and *refugee(s)* occur 21 times and twice respectively across the PTC. Usage of the term *immigrant* often takes on a negative prosody in public discourse ([Shariatmadari, 2015](#)), and while many of Québec’s mentions are contextualized and some call for robust support services and welcoming environments, they often point to lower success and graduation rates. There are two other important excerpts from this policy that help connect this discussion to Québec’s broader context: 1) in the same section as the second excerpt above which lists *multiple realities*, is another bullet point that reads “people’s linguistic, cultural or religious backgrounds” (p. 27); 2) Under the heading “the role and expectations of parents and society” the QME states “Educational settings are also expected to play a societal role. We expect them to promote equal opportunity and social equity, counter

exclusion and various forms of violence, help fight poverty and integrate newly arrived immigrants into the community” (p. 15). Here, the QME seems to be taking a stance against the backlash, violence, and hate that immigrants are often subjected to. However, this stance is underscored by Québec’s controversial legislation requiring ‘bare face for service’ ([CBC, 2010](#); [CTV Montreal, 2010](#)) and various cases in which girls and women have been told to remove their head and face coverings (hijabs, niqabs, and burkas) or have had them forcibly removed ([Naqvi-Mohamed, 2014](#); [Rukavina, 2015](#)). Furthermore, the Québec government recently passed Bill 21, which bans *all* religious symbols from places of work including public schools ([Curtis, 2019](#)), and which also disproportionately affects/targets Muslims and Sikhs ([Montpetit, 2020](#)). Although I have highlighted contradictions across governmental authorities, this PLET may represent an instance of internal resistance or mitigation.

Student. The most frequent collocates of *student* include *success* (18), *child* (11), *retention* (9), *educational* (8), *school*, *each*, and *development* (5). These frequent collocates are represented through several n-grams: *student success* (10), *student retention and success* (4), and *student retention and educational success* (3). Furthermore, *student* is often listed with *child* as in *child or student* (3), *child and student* (2), as well as *child development and student success* (3). The collocate with the highest MI score is *retention* (8.4). There are 22 collocates tied for the second highest score of 8.2, three of which have been randomly chosen: *alienated*, *jointly*, and *pressure*.

1. The evolution of children’s and students’ profiles must also be examined in the context of certain persistent realities involving overall development and the drop-out rates in disadvantaged areas, Indigenous communities and remote regions, especially among boys. | In all these cases, **student retention and educational success pose** | a serious challenge that requires the mobilization and collaboration of all stakeholders and partners in the education system and the community, particularly those partners in the health and social services sector. (QME, 2017, p. 13)

2. The government, the school system and educational childcare services must be vigilant in making sure that public policies, administrative and regulatory frameworks, and action plans and measures for children and students ensure equal access to quality education services. In the 21st century, no **child** or **student** in Québec should be **alienated** from the Québec school system for economic or any other reasons. (p. 49)
3. The performance evaluations that take place throughout the student's time in school should foster the accurate monitoring of his or her learning, in order to identify strengths and points in need of improvement without placing **undue pressure** on the **student**. (p. 54)
4. Research in education and early childhood has shown that certain determining factors can have a substantial impact on child development and educational success. [...] Personal factors, which are specific to the **child** or **student**, are **shaped jointly** by **heredity** and experience. (p. 16)

In this text, the bigram *student retention* occurs eight times (and only once elsewhere in the PTC—NS, 2016). The excerpts make use of high certainty modals (*must* and *should*) to add stress to the statements. In addition to these modals, excerpt two also includes *making sure* and *ensure*, lending to a sense of overlexicalization. Furthermore, many of the collocates in these excerpts (*alienated*, *undue pressure*, *heredity*) are the only mentions in the PTC.

The first excerpt, like many other provinces, names groups of students (genericized identification) that require more support to achieve success, including Indigenous students and boys. However, unlike many other provinces, Québec acknowledges that contextual realities and disadvantages need to be considered and that coordinated effort is needed to address these realities. Of the 37 mentions of *reality/realities* across the PTC, Québec makes 46% of them. The statements in this excerpt are also constructed actively and while they call on *all stakeholders and partners* to *mobilize* and *collaborate*, they do not single out particular stakeholders (e.g., teachers) to assign blame, nor do they implicitly blame affected student groups. Still, there is uncertainty around *how* such mobilization and collaboration will take place and *who* will take initiative.

The second through fourth excerpts follow a similar pattern through naming particular issues or initiatives and acknowledging context as a contributing factor. The fourth excerpt also uses utterance autonomization (van Leeuwen, 2008)—“the research shows”—to legitimate the subsequent statement on child development. However, while the second excerpt makes a statement that students should not be or feel alienated, the third excerpt makes use of the phrase *his or her* which reinforces a gender binary. Although it occurs in other policies across the PTC (including some recent ones—e.g., MB, 2018; NB, 2016), the continued use of gender binaries is unnecessary and potentially harmful (Clarke, 2019; [Ford, 2017](#); [Jamina, 2016](#)). Given that this policy states its aims for inclusion and that the Quebec Government (2020) has a [webpage](#) and [action plan](#) dedicated to ‘fighting’ Homophobia and Transphobia, it is important that the move toward more inclusive language is taken seriously by organizations in/with power.

Students. The most frequent collocates of *students* include *children* (58), *all* (24), *educational* (21), *social* (18), and *needs* (16). Referring back to Table 26 above, there are several n-grams that include these frequent collocates including: *children and students* (36), *all students* (8), *all children and students* (7), *students’ educational path(s)* (6), and *educational success of Indigenous students* (3). Furthermore, the phrase *students with handicaps, social maladjustments or learning difficulties* occurs six times in the Québec policy—see above for discussion on this terminology. Finally, *needs* appears in phrases such as *students’ needs* (3) and *needs of all students* (2).

Of the 56 collocates with the top MI score (6.2), three were randomly chosen: *carrying*, *realized*, and *remember* (other collocates of the same score are also bolded).

1. Entrepreneurship, in the form of | **carrying** out a project, helps **students** develop **confidence** in their ability | to successfully complete what they start and to enter the job market. (QME, 2017, p. 58)

2. This potential cannot be fully **realized** for children's and **students'** benefit, however, if technological infrastructures, notably Internet access, are insufficient or inadequate. Access to digital technologies is a matter of equity for communities limited by their geographical location, among other factors. (p. 60)
3. The actions that stem from this policy will serve to benefit First Nations and the Inuit. It is important to **remember** that young Indigenous **students** learn in a variety of educational settings: schools in the Québec school system, First Nations schools, and schools under the jurisdiction of the school boards of the three Indigenous nations under agreement. (pp. 27-28)

The first excerpt reduces and coopts the term *entrepreneurship* to “carrying out a project”. While goal setting and project management are important skills in and of themselves, they are not solely tied to entrepreneurship, the general understanding of which requires risk-saturated business models (a gamble for ample returns) wherein business ideas, management, and economic responsibility are individually generated. A 2010 Industry Canada report states that the five-year survival rate of entrepreneurial start-ups was only 51% ([Fisher & Reuber, p. 9](#)).³¹ While this statistic may be outdated, it depicts the stark reality of entrepreneurial pursuits—that is, many folks, even with project management (amongst a host of other) skills, will end up with heavy financial and social burdens from unsuccessful attempts at starting/building businesses. Given that most readers would not be opposed to curricula that facilitates project management for the purposes of confidence building and reliability, this statement may get away with conflating project management and its underlying skills with entrepreneurship.

The second excerpt falls within a short discussion of “access to quality educational and pedagogical resources and technological infrastructures” (p. 60). Here, *potential* refers to “foster[ing] the optimal use of digital technologies” (p. 60) and the excerpt acknowledges the disparity in technological access—particularly the internet in northern and remote communities—and frames this disparity as a matter of equity. Again, such explicit discussions

³¹ Industry Canada (a branch of the federal government) does not have a more recent report.

are lacking across the PTC, making this one stand out. A recent [news release](#) from Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED, 2020) states the importance of access to high-speed internet and details developmental projects to bring fibre optic internet to rural Québec. Although the COVID pandemic slowed progress on this front, the Federal and Québec governments renewed funding to continue this project ([Authier, 2021](#)). However, another perspective may point out the colonizing force of technology and ask whether these remote communities wish to be fully networked.

The third excerpt falls within Québec's vision section of the policy. Here, the policy invokes the reader through the strategic use of *remember*—another rarity in the PTC. *Remember* only occurs once in the Québec policy and a total of six times in the PTC. Given that “it is important to remember” could have easily been left out of the sentence, its inclusion necessitates analysis. Here, the policy strategically addresses potential ignorance about and/or prejudice toward Indigenous children and communities (particularly how they access education) through a gentle (passive) but emphasized reminder. The statement could have also been written ‘Remember, young Indigenous students learn in a variety of educational settings’ (p. 27), which would make it explicitly imperative rather than implicitly imperative. However, this excerpt does frame *educational settings* solely as schools, leaving out cultural and spiritual ceremony, events, and oral traditions as sources of education, thus solidifying a colonial/Western understanding of knowledge and education.

An additional area of interest in the third excerpt is in Québec's omission of Métis in naming Indigenous peoples. The phrase *First Nations, Métis, and Inuit* is used in many of the central and western policies in the PTC. Métis—generally referring to those of mixed Indigenous and French heritage—does not appear at all in this policy text. In fact, Québec does not

recognize *Métis* as a culture, ethnicity, nor community in Québec, nor does the Métis National Council ([Deer, 2019](#); see also Leroux, 2021). The Métis National Council maintains that Métis are tied to upper-Western lands (what was settled as Rupert's Land) and is concerned with the dilution and appropriation of what it means to be Métis. While I do not have the space, nor the background to adequately unpack and address the discourse surrounding this decision, those interested might read Leroux's (2021) *Distorted descent: White claims to Indigenous identity*.

Summary

Québec's policy text stands out for its acknowledgement of social contexts in relation to discussed educational issues including retention and performance gaps. In the selected excerpts, social actors are generally functionalized and part of nominal or identified groups and generally lack agency. As pointed out above, this policy appears to be the most job/economy focused with repeated and overlexicalized mentions of the workforce, vocational training, entrepreneurship, and the like. *Citizen(s)* and *citizenship* are constructed in alignment with personally responsible citizenship (Westheimer, 2015) and overtly and repeatedly connected to the workforce. However, there are also hints at participatory and social justice-oriented citizenship. This policy text also leans into a provincial patriotism which is overtly disseminated through schooling.

In this text, *learners* are mainly referred to as adults who require flexibility to complete their studies. In the excerpts above, *student* is always used in relation to ongoing issues within Québec's education system—*retention, educational success*. However, the QME acknowledges context and systemic barriers and tends to position itself as responsible for the solution of these issues. The excerpts surrounding *students* also frame issues such as internet access as matters of equity that require both governmental and public attention. While not in direct contradiction, the use of outdated and harmful terminology (regarding persons with disabilities and gender

binaries) as well as the push for *students* to become entrepreneurs may function to hollow out some of the more progressive values and initiatives represented in this policy. Finally, while there are many positive and progressive aspects to this policy text, much of the commitment to equity is framed as a necessary step in the removal of barriers to contribution to the economy rather than for the sake of those particular individuals and groups. This again, aligns with neoliberalism's colonizing effect on all aspects of life.

Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia is made up of two islands on the southeastern (Atlantic) coast and has the largest Atlantic province population—982,326 ([StatCan, 2021](#)). In 2018, the government of Nova Scotia passed the heavily debated [Nova Scotia Education Reform Act](#) ([CUPE Nova Scotia, 2018](#); [Gorman, 2018](#)), which eliminated elected school boards (see also [Hurd, 2021](#)). At the time of writing, Nova Scotia has seven Regional Centres for Education and one French language school board (Conseil Scolaire Acadien Provincial), 375 public schools, and 121,600 students—roughly 12% of the population. In 2015-16 (the most recent available data), the graduation rate was 90.7% ([NSDEECD, 2017](#)).

The Program of Learning Assessment for Nova Scotia (PLANS) carries out all provincial, national, and international testing. Students must participate provincially in testing for literacy and math in Grade 3, reading, writing, and math in Grades 6 and 8, and examinations for English and Math in Grade 10 ([PLANS, n.d.](#)). Students also participate in PCAP, PISA, and PIRLS. Nova Scotia's PISA scores, while coming in under the Canadian average, are generally the highest of the Atlantic provinces (see [Appendix E](#); see also Stack, 2016).

The overall poverty rate in Nova Scotia reported in the 2016 census was 17.2% ([Devet, 2017](#)). The overall child poverty rate in 2018 is 24.6% ([Frank et al., 2020](#)), up from 22%

reported in the 2016 census data (Frank et al., 2020). However, these numbers were again higher for visible minority children (37.4%), off-reserve Indigenous children (25%), recent immigrant children (56%), as well as lone-parent families (53.1%) (CCPA, 2020, pp. 21-23).

The Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (NSDEECD) data (subcorpus) includes two policy level education texts (PLETs) both published under a Liberal government—*The 3 Rs: Renew Refocus Rebuild* (2015) and *From School to Success: Report of the Transition Task Force* (2016). *The 3 Rs* is a 47-page action plan that has a similar blended-genre format to the OME’s *Achieving excellence* with an introduction that discusses and rationalizes the new vision for education and then lists, describes, and discusses the “four pillars”: a modern education system, an innovative curriculum, inclusive school environments, and excellence in teaching and leadership. *From school to success* is a 51-page report that discusses “15 detailed recommendations” from the “Transition Task Force” that focused on “helping young Nova Scotians move more successfully from school to post-secondary education, training, and the workforce” (p. i). The report has seven chapters and addresses five preselected themes: career decision-making information, meaningful hands-on experience, transitions for youth with low marks or no high school diploma, post-secondary retention and completion rates, and how education, training, and apprenticeship programs match labour market needs (p. vii).

These two PLETs total 18150 tokens and 13030 tokens after stoplisting. Figure 18 and Table 29 show the most frequent words in Nova Scotia’s PLETs, of which *students* is the most frequent, followed by *school* and *education*. While again, fairly standard for an educational text, some indications of change or reform can be seen through *will*, *transition*, and *task force*.

Table 30
NSDEECD PLETs Top 5 Bigrams and Trigrams

Rank	N-Gram	Freq
Bigram		
1	Nova Scotia	106
2	high school	62
3	task force	60
4	post secondary	37
5	Nova Scotians	30
Trigram		
1	the task force	29
2	early childhood development, transition task force	22
3	math and literacy	14
4	across the province, the action plan, the public school	12
5	labour market needs, post secondary education	11

In fact, *task force* is a frequent bigram in these policy texts and of the 87 mentions across the PTC, 60 belong to Nova Scotia (71%). Table 30 reinforces and expands on the word frequency list in Table 29 above, as it lists some of the key phrases which reveal themes within Nova Scotia's PLETs—*post secondary*, *transition task force*, *math and literacy*, *the action plan* and *labour market needs*—some of which appear within collocational range of *citizen(s)*, *citizenship*, *learner(s)*, and *student(s)* and can be seen in the excerpts that are presented and critically analyzed below.

Citizens and Citizenship

As shown in Table 31 below, there is a notable absolute absence of *citizen* (Duguid & Partington, 2018), yet the Nova Scotia policy texts have the highest normalized frequency of *citizenship* of the six selected provinces.

Table 31

NSDEECD PLETs Frequency, Range, and Percent of Subcorpus Information for Citizen(s) and Citizenship

	Citizen	Citizens	Citizenship
Freq	0	2	5
NS Nrm Freq	0.00	0.11	0.28
PTC Nrm Freq	0.04	0.23	0.15
Difference	-0.04	-0.12	0.13
Range	0.00%	50%	100%
PoS	0.000%	0.011%	0.028%
PoSCL	0.000%	0.015%	0.038%

With only two instances of *citizens*, there are no frequent collocates and nearly every content word is considered significant: *responsible*, *socially*, *well-educated* (12.7), *promoting* (11.7), *helps* (11.1), *global*, *healthy* (10.3), *build*, *economy*, *growth* (9.5), *create* (7.5), *program* (6.5), *education* (5.1).

1. The | **program helps to create global citizens by promoting the growth of** | intercultural understanding and increased international educational opportunities for Nova Scotia’s students and students from around the world. (NSDEECD, 2015, p. 29)
2. Nova Scotia’s future depends on | healthy, **well-educated** and **socially responsible citizens to build the economy**. (2015, p. 34)

The first excerpt falls within “Pillar Three[:] Inclusive School Environments” under the subheading “Cultural Awareness and Equity”, and refers to Nova Scotia’s International Student Program (NSISP) which facilitates international student exchanges for a semester, a full school year, as well as an ESL summer camp ([NSISP, 2021](#)). The term *global citizens* and *intercultural understanding* recalls Alberta’s use of *cultural and global citizenship* and the discussed tension between diversity and inclusivity understandings and cultural and global capital-based understandings of these terms. Given the market language of the surrounding collocates, it seems the latter takes precedence in this case—in other words, intercultural understanding (tolerance of

diversity) is a component and outcome of global travel, which also bolsters one's potential and realized capital in a global market (Bourdieu, 1986).

As has been a pattern across the provinces, the second excerpt names characteristics (*healthy, well-educated, socially responsible*) of the ideal *citizen* insofar as they aid the economy. A sense of urgency may also be noticed through the phrase “future depends on”, which further frames this economic drive as almost ‘life or death’.

The most frequent collocates of *citizenship* are *course* (3), *grade* and *new* (2). The collocates with the highest MI scores are *century*, *civics* (11.4), *volunteering*, *volunteerism* (10.4), *media* (9.8), and *course* (9.6).

1. Among the key initiatives, we will [...] Incorporate personal development education into subjects such as health, social studies, and family studies, in | order to teach students about **citizenship**, service learning, leadership, **volunteering**, and | personal financial management. (NSDEECD, 2015, p. 23)
2. We will [...] Create a | mandatory **course** in 21st **century citizenship** at the **grade** 10 level. | Topics | will include **civics**, Canadian government, **citizenship**, personal financial management, **volunteerism**, **media** | and digital literacy, and service learning. (2015, p. 24)
3. Students can also gain valuable experience, and test their interests through volunteering. Volunteerism will be | a part of the **new Citizenship course**, now under development for | grade 10 students. (2016, p. 9)

As these excerpts indicate, Nova Scotia has developed a new mandatory citizenship course which is common in many Canadian provinces. Many of the stated topics of study are also common within such courses. Interestingly though, Nova Scotia is the only province to use the term *volunteerism*. Individually and together, these excerpts emphasize volunteer work as part of citizenship education, which aligns with the *participatory citizen* (Westheimer, 2015). While participatory citizenship is decidedly more action-oriented than solely responsible or individualistic citizenship, it is important to be wary of the ways in which volunteering can fall

short of social justice: un/under-trained and/or saviour-oriented volunteers may do more harm than good in vulnerable and/or marginalized communities (Bandyopadhyay, 2019; [Cole, 2012](#); [Griffin, 2017](#); [Morse, 2015](#)); volunteering often acts as a band-aid or stopgap to larger social and systemic issues that should be addressed and/or (publicly) funded by the government (Toscano, 2013; Westheimer, 2015); and forced volunteerism (e.g., mandatory volunteer hours in order to graduate high school) is both an oxymoron and may disadvantage students who increasingly have other/additional responsibilities ([Anderson, 1999](#); see also [Chatterton Luchuk, 2006](#); Llewellyn et al., 2007). Nova Scotia does not require volunteer/community service hours for high school graduation, but does have an optional “Options and Opportunities (O2) Certificate” which, in addition to the standard credit requirements, requires career development, community-based learning, three co-operative education credits, and a completed portfolio ([Nova Scotia Student Information System, 2020](#), p. 8).

Service learning—mentioned in the first two excerpts above outside collocate range—incorporates service and/or community-based action items or projects into a course or subject. The NSDEECD (n.d.) defines service learning as “a structured learning experience integrating curriculum with active voluntary service opportunities in the community so that service experiences are directly connected to learning outcomes and in-school learning” (p. 2). The Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) also stresses that “Service Learning [sic] increases the capacity of our communities to maintain programs and services that are vital to Social [sic] and economic development in Nova Scotia” (2017, p. 1). While also potentially beneficial to students and in the spirit of participatory citizenship, it is important to be wary of the conflation of economic development with ‘social good’. Furthermore, that social development often requires

unpaid labour is part of the on-going problematic of the decentralization and defunding tactics of neoliberalism (de Lissovoy, 2015).

In addition, the first two excerpts make mention of “personal financial management” which most see as both practical and necessary. However, the reader may be aware that PISA started testing financial literacy in 2012 and most of Canada’s provinces including Nova Scotia participated for the first time in 2015 (OECD, 2017). Given this, questions about curricular or content uptake for testing purposes as well as teaching to the test may arise. Furthermore, concerns may be raised about such content and the tendency to blame individuals for poor financial management when in reality, there are compounded systemic factors and circumstances that act as barriers to ‘sound’ financial management and stability.

Finally, although *leadership* is not a top collocate here, it does have an MI score of 7.1 and occurs 19 times in the NS subcorpus. Out of the 140 mentions across the PTC, this is one of the rare instances that it applies to students rather than the ministry/government, education system, principals and school management, or teachers/educators (i.e., those with authority). While the term has become a buzzword of organizational management and development discourse, leadership may be considered part of social justice-oriented citizenship (Westheimer, 2015). However, as discussed below, leadership is described as a crucial skill/characteristic of ‘entrepreneurial culture’. Thus, aspects of Westheimer’s (2015) personally responsible citizenship and participatory citizenship can be seen in the emphases on financial management as well as volunteerism and service learning, respectively.

Learner(s) and Student(s)

As shown in Table 32 below, *learner(s)* and *student* occur less frequently in the Nova Scotia policy texts than the PTC average, while *student* occurs more frequently.

Table 32

NSDEECD PLETs Frequency, Range, and Percent of Subcorpus Information for Learner(s) and Student(s)

	Learner	Learners	Student	Students
Freq	1	3	90	254
NS Nrm Freq	0.06	0.17	4.96	13.99
PTC Nrm Freq	0.30	1.49	7.42	11.58
Difference	-0.24	-1.32	-2.46	2.41
Range	50.00%	50%	100%	100%
PSoC	0.006%	0.017%	0.50%	1.40%
PoSLSC	0.008%	0.023%	0.69%	1.95%

Learner. Since there is only one instance of *learner* (a relative absence), there are no frequent collocates and all of the content collocates are considered significant: *chats, fits* (13.7), *own* (11.4), *available* (9.6), *are* (6.8) and *their* (6.7).

1. The Nova Scotia Community College has just tested the virtual delivery of the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning’s Adult Learning Program—again, free to learners. Counselling and faculty support, as well as group | **chats, are available**, but the **learner fits** it into **their own** | schedule. (NSDEECD, 2016, p. 17)

Here, *learner* applies to adults and the surrounding text indicates built-in flexibility and support for such learners as part of online versions of the Adult Learning Program. A few linguistic strategies of note here are that: 1) *learner* is given agency (in the subject position); 2) the use of *their own* when *their* would suffice adds a sense of overlexicalization which emphasizes both the agency and flexibility; and 3) the use of *but* (rather than *and*) ultimately works to place the onus on the learner to access and manage these supports.

Learners. All three instances of *learners* fall under a section in the 2016 PLET entitled, “Supporting Transitions for Youth with Low Marks or No High School Diploma” (p. 15). The most frequent are *African* and *Nova Scotian* (2). Most of the content collocates are considered

significant with an MI score above 5; the highest scores include: *Black* (12.1), *rural* (10.5), *again*, *educators* (10.1), *Scotian* (9.8), *African* (9.5), *free* (9.2), *Mi [Mi'kmaw]*³² (9.1).

1. The Nova Scotia Community College has just tested the virtual delivery of the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning's Adult | Learning Program—**again, free to learners**. | (NSDEECD, 2016, p. 17)
2. | Programs for all **learners**, including **African Nova Scotian, Mi'kmaw**, | youth with disabilities, and other under-represented communities, must be part of a cohesive, accessible system. (2016, p. 17)
3. The Distance Learning | for **African Nova Scotian Rural Learners** (led by the **Black Educators** | Association) draws on different existing programs and services to successfully transition African Canadian adult high school graduates to the Nova Scotia Community College, other institutions of higher learning, or the workforce. This is a collaborative effort that recognizes the multiple barriers faced by African Canadian adults. (p. 18, italics in original)

Through these excerpts *learners* are further distinguished as *other* to the general term of *student(s)*. Excerpt one has been discussed above, but names adults as the modifier of *learners*. Excerpt two names various marginalized groups that require (additional?) unnamed/undiscussed programming while excerpt three details specific programming for a rather niche group (African Nova Scotian Rural Learners). Those aware Nova Scotia's history may see this as an attempt at reparations for the destruction of Africville³³ in the 1960s and the continued marginalization of Black peoples and communities.

Student. The most frequent collocates of *student* are *achievement* and *assessment* (15). The bigram *student achievement* appears eleven times throughout the 2015 policy text, with additional variations such as *student academic achievement*. Likewise, *student assessment* appears eleven times in the 2015 policy.

³² An unforeseen fault in my data cleaning was not addressing apostrophes in First Nations' names and terminology.

³³ Africville was an African/Black village located close to Halifax and settled after the War of 1812. In the 1960s, the city of Halifax demolished the village without the consent of those living there, contributing to the African diaspora (for good overview see Africville Genealogy Society, 2010; McRae, 2021; Nelson, 2008; see also Grant, 2018)

1. In Nova Scotia, as in many parts of the world, there are ongoing disparities in **student achievement** between groups of students. Nova Scotia research has confirmed that this is the case among our own students. We are committed to improving student achievement in math and literacy for all students. We will [...] Create a team of representatives from the department, school boards, and post-secondary institutions to support research into **student achievement** in math and literacy (NSDEECD, 2015, p. 30)
2. Just as we are revising our curriculum in grades primary to 12, we are updating **student assessments**, including our Program of Learning Assessment for Nova Scotia (PLANS). Ongoing improvements to **student assessment** and evaluation will be a priority, including the use of results from teacher-prepared assessments. Both classroom “assessment for learning” activities and large-scale assessments will contribute to the measurement and monitoring of student progress. (2015, p. 19)

Here, connections between student achievement and student assessment can be seen—that is, outcomes of standardized assessment (PLANS and PISA) are considered student achievement. In the 2012 round of testing, Nova Scotia scored below the Canadian average in math and literacy, ranking seventh and fifth respectively amongst the ten provinces (see [Appendix E](#)). While the first excerpt acknowledges “disparities in student achievement between groups of students”, these scores inform the impetus for improved math and literacy (see Stack, 2016). The second excerpt hints at alignment (progressive education) and is located within a subsection on “Common Assessments in Math”, within which the various provincial, national, and international assessments (including PISA) NS students will continue to participate in are listed. Updating of PLANS assessments seems to be a trickledown effect from PISA outcomes, which also trickles down to curriculum “renewal” (reform) that narrows the content to what gets tested—all to improve *achievement*.

The collocates with the highest MI scores include *commerce*, *philosophy* (8.2) and *IPP* (7.5). There are 33 collocates at the next score down (7.1), from which one collocate has randomly been chosen: *reduced*.

1. As well, creating an entrepreneurial culture within the Nova Scotia Community College and universities [...] will give students in all courses an opportunity to develop skills helpful in the workplace. Co-op can be just | as meaningful for | a **philosophy student** as a **commerce student**. (NSDEECD, 2016, p. 27)
2. In order to implement the new [needs-based] model [of service delivery], we will [...] Develop | provincial criteria for placing a **student** on an **IPP** [Individual Program Plan]; | Monitor **student** progress on **IPPs** at the | school, school board, and provincial levels through the Technology for Improving Education Network (TIENET), the electronic information system for student services; (2015, p. 27)
3. We are committed to [...] Increased **student achievement** in math and literacy [...] **Reduced** disruptive **student** behaviour (2015, p. 9)

Although the first excerpt regards the post-secondary level, there appears to be a connection drawn between *co-op* and *entrepreneurial culture* which is left unexplained—that is, co-op placements seem to be regarded as an aspect of entrepreneurial culture. The term, entrepreneurial culture only occurs in Nova Scotia’s 2016 text and nowhere else in the PTC. As discussed above, the term entrepreneur refers to business start-ups that generally require more individual risk. Entrepreneurial culture is a business-related buzzword that tends to evade definition. However, McGuire (2003) defined entrepreneurial organizational culture as “believing that innovating and seizing market opportunities are appropriate behaviors to deal with problems of survival and prosperity, environmental uncertainty, and competitors’ threats, and expecting organizational members to behave accordingly” (p. 16). Some of these ideas and behaviours may inform *entrepreneurial culture*. Co-operative education generally entails academic credit for work placement(s) related to one’s area of study. While the two are both within the realm of employment and in some cases co-op placements may be within the entrepreneurial field, the connection drawn here may approximate work experience gained through co-ops as a catalyst for individual business start-up ideas. On the one hand, co-op can be considered an invaluable experiential learning opportunity and on the other, co-op may be seen as an extension of

exploitation (similar to internships) because co-op students are generally paid less than the industry standard and not at all in some cases (generally including at the high school level).

In drawing attention to the bolded collocates, *commerce* and *philosophy* as modifiers of *student* only occur once within the PTC. Furthermore, this juxtaposition of philosophy and commerce, though attempting to imbue value, leans into discourses that position subjects of study (e.g., philosophy) within the arts, social sciences, and humanities as impractical for later job acquisition. Adding co-ops to such programs may be seen as an attempt to assuage the powers that be to continue funding programs that do not necessarily align neatly with a particular set of job outcomes as do subjects such as commerce or STEM fields.

The second excerpt is focused on the Individual Program Plan [IPP] which many provinces have in place and corresponding monitoring. As noted in the excerpt, an IPP is needs based, and “are developed when a student may not be able to meet the outcomes in the provincial school curriculum” ([NSDEECD, 2021, para. 4](#)). IPPs are often put in place for students who are neurodivergent (e.g., autism spectrum, ADHD/ADD) or who require additional supports. While they may be helpful for individualized support, it is important to note that they tend to fall within a deficit approach (Gorski, 2011) as they aim to provide “strategies to help a child fit into a classroom” and/or attain grade level rather than systemic strategies for making the classroom more inclusive ([Harman, n.d., p. 1](#)). In fact, it was announced by the province in July 2021 that an equity assessment would be initiated due to the disproportionate number of “African Nova Scotians, other students of African descent and Mi’kmaq and other Indigenous students [...] placed on IPPs” ([NSDEECD, 2021, para. 4](#)). They further acknowledged that “disparities in the process can create barriers to a student’s success and affect their well-being and sense of

belonging” (para. 4), which lends credence to the concerns about deficit approaches as well as the *silence* (Huckin, 2002) regarding context and systemic factors (e.g., racism).

The third excerpt is found within a section called “Our **Commitment** to Nova Scotians – A Real Action Plan” (p. 9, emphasis in original) wherein eight bullet point “commitments” are listed. The two bullet points shown in the excerpt are first and fourth in the list respectively. Lists are generally meant to portray “equal and mutually exclusive components” (Ledin & Machin, 2015, p. 469), and we can gather explicit understandings from lists based on whether they are numbered or bulleted. Generally, a numbered list affords the audience information about priorities and hierarchies, but a single list of bullets is meant to give each item equal weight or importance (Ledin & Machin, 2015). So while use of bullets may afford plausible deniability about priorities—that is, strategic obfuscation—the order in which these items appear should be scrutinized as it may tell us a little bit about such priorities. Here, student achievement in testing categories again appears first, followed by *career readiness*, preschool programming, reducing disruptive behaviour, inclusive education, immigration and multi-cultural curricula, and teacher support. Given the frequency of mentions regarding *achievement*, its placement as the first bullet is unsurprising. However, *disruptive behaviour* is not defined nor discussed in the corresponding text and does not occur anywhere else in the PTC (though *disruptions* occurs twice in Alberta’s PLETs). Such a term is important to define given its subjective and spectrum-based nature (e.g., fidgeting, asking questions, apathy, interruptions, outbursts).

Students. The most frequent collocates of *students* are *schools* (26), *our* (25), *their* (24), and *all* (20). The collocates with the highest MI score are *dependent*, *familiarizes* (6.7). Since there are several collocates at the next score down (6.3)—all of which occur in the 2016 text—three have been randomly chosen: *off*, *opinions*, and *problems*.

1. *About 17,000 students receive \$194 million a year in loans and grants* (emphasis in original). Despite this sizable investment, some students still struggle to pay for their education. Student assistance is calculated based on the difference | between what parents (of **dependent students**) and students themselves can | contribute (through work or scholarships), and the cost of their education (tuition, books, supplies, living costs, etc.). (NSDEECD, 2016, p. 26)
2. A range of programs exists to help youth explore careers and link learning to the world of work. These programs are not just hands-on, they are also heads-in, and benefit students who have a wide range of interests and abilities. Discovering | Opportunities, offered to grade 9 **students**, **familiarizes students** with careers and education programs | linked to trades, technology, and apprenticeship. [...] (2016, p. 9)
3. The task team discussed what happens after young people leave high school. | Some **students** take a year **off**—a | gap year—after they graduate. This can be valuable for many young people, giving them more time to mature, decide what they really want to do, or gain new skills and experience. For others, the gap year goes well beyond 12 months, delaying further education and training, or sometimes turning into a low-paying job with few prospects. (2016, p. 18)
4. | **Students** begin forming **opinions** about **their** | future careers as early as grade 4, and they must have the information and advice to guide them, beginning early and continuing in college, university, and apprenticeship. (2016, p. vii)
5. Recommendation 2: Create an entrepreneurial culture within our schools, colleges, and universities, based on advice from the Business Education Council. The culture should grow from a foundation that includes [:] supporting inquiry- | based teaching and learning whereby **students** identify **problems** and find solutions; | the students become initiators, directors, and managers in order to create a product, service, or event that meets a school or community need, discovering entrepreneurial qualities and skills essential to their life–career development[.] (2016, p. 7)

These excerpts are mainly focused on post-graduation options including post-secondary education and careers/employment with emphasis on early and ongoing intervention in steering students toward post-secondary education.

The first excerpt is found within a section on highlighting the “return on a student’s investment” (p. 25), which refers both to the government’s investment in public education and a student and their parent(s)’ investment in post-secondary education (see Brooks, 2021). This section argues that post-secondary education is the “clearest path to a good paying job” (p. 25)

and places the onus on parents to invest in “registered education savings plans, and develop a financial plan to contribute to their [child’s] education” (p. 25). As the excerpt mentions, the government provides loans and grants, but admits that many students still struggle. In both the information leading up to the excerpt and within it, there is no discussion about the factors that may prevent parents from *investing* in their child’s education (e.g., income vs. cost of living) and/or that may cause such students to struggle (e.g., cost of living, not enough financial support). Rather, this section presents a large dollar figure (194 million) with little to no context about how this figure compares to other government funded services, nor how this money is divvied up amongst post-secondary institutions and students, nor does it provide a concrete example of grant to loan ratio. Through this framing of the issue—especially apparent in the use of the preposition and attitudinal marker, *despite*—responsibility, and thus blame is downloaded to and individualized to parents and students. The combination of presenting particular information while leaving out important contextual factors and subsequent individualized blame amount to a clear case of manipulative textual silence (Huckin, 2002).

Excerpt two and four both emphasize the (NSDEECD’s attached) importance of career-oriented curricula and guidance throughout school—I discuss excerpt four first, as it helps to foreground excerpt two. As excerpt four states (without any references), students’ ideas/opinions about their future careers start to take shape “as early as grade 4”, or roughly the age of 8-9. However, given the all-encompassing nature of career discourse, it is arguable that such ideas start for form even earlier. For instance, one of the most commonly asked questions of 4-5 year olds is ‘what do you want to be when you grow up?’ Conversely, when observed as skilled in particular things, family and bystanders often exclaim that the child should be *insert related career here*—for example, my nibling is skilled at building with blocks and Lego™ and is often

told they should be an architect. Such routine discourse from birth to adulthood is bound to have conditioning effects. Thus, this excerpt's hyperbolized urgency through the use of *must* invokes a sense of fear of what happens if students do not have *information* and guidance—as Bacchi (2009) suggests, problems are constructed by policy. Excerpt two—part of the solution to this constructed problem—is found under a heading that reads “give youth more work experience in schools” (2016, p. 9) and announces career oriented curricular programming, which highlights the employment-driven goals of education. “Discovering Opportunities” is the first in a list of programs which include co-operative education courses (discussed above), skilled trades courses, and “Options and Opportunities” (also discussed above). Discovering Opportunities is a program within eight schools across Nova Scotia. It emphasizes options in the “trades, technology, and apprenticeship” and is “designed for students who may not be successful in high school without additional academic and motivational support at the junior high level” ([Halifax Regional Centre for Education, 2015, para. 1](#)). The English curriculum in Nova Scotia categorizes grade 9 as the last year of elementary school (or middle school/junior high) and thus, this program may steer students toward parallel high school courses and/or further career programming listed above ([NSDEECD, 2021](#)). It is generally well-known that students who do not excel in school (in the traditional sense) are often pushed towards the trades and this kind of programming may potentially act in a streaming capacity. However, the introduction to the list of programming describes the programs as “hands-on” and “heads-in,” which may be an attempt to dispel the notion that students recommended for these programs are ‘less intelligent’.

Excerpt three addresses the ‘issue’ of gap years, framing them as a source of demotivation and subsequent low wage earning. Here, low wages are implicitly framed as a consequence (punishment) of the ‘failure’ to return to school/training. There is, again, no

engagement with potential reasons why students who take a gap year do not return to start post-secondary education—something that a taskforce may be expected to explore. This excerpt is immediately followed by a quote from a task force member which states, “it’s okay to wander around, it’s not okay to get lost” (p. 18). Both the excerpt and this quote forward a metaphor of education and the future as a path that young people must stay on. Furthermore, rather than questioning why wages do not reflect the cost of living, or the hierarchy of pay scales with regard to low vs. high wage earning, they openly embrace the neoliberal, meritocratic idea that those deemed ‘not educated enough’ or ‘not productive enough’ deserve their poverty (Huckin, 2002; Springer et al., 2016). Again, the lack of exploration of and engagement with contextual factors is another glaring textual silence (Huckin, 2002).

Finally, similar to one of the excerpts in relation to *student* above, excerpt five promotes entrepreneurship as essential to education and encodes skills such as problem solving and leadership as endemic to entrepreneurship. Again, these skills are arguably important, yet they are constructed as valuable insofar as they bolster an *entrepreneurial culture*. Recalling the definition above, in applying this term outside of the organizational level, these ideologies of entrepreneurship are extended to all domains of life. In other words, from a young age, students are taught/conditioned to act as a business—embrace risk and change, continually build, upgrade, and promote themselves as a brand, and think and behave competitively. All of this amounts to hyper-individualism and is anathema to cooperation, community, collective thinking, and the like (often discussed as remedies for capitalism and neoliberalism).

Summary

Nova Scotia’s policy texts emphasize assessment, post-secondary education, and entrepreneurial culture, and stand out for their sense of urgency surrounding post-secondary and

career readiness. This urgency seems to edge toward a sense of fear that may be used strategically to legitimize the interventions and action items as well as the meritocratic ideology infused within these texts. Moreover, this meritocratic ideology downloads blame to the individual for deviating from the path laid out by the policies without acknowledging contextual factors that may be at play (textual silence) (Huckin, 2002).

In the selected excerpts, social actors are generally functionalized and part of nominal or identified groups and generally lack agency. These texts also stand out for their more robust construction of *citizenship*: while still aligned with personally responsible citizenship, they have aspects of both participatory citizenship (*volunteerism*) and potentially, social justice oriented citizenship (*leadership*) (Westheimer, 2015) However, *cultural* and *global* citizenship is also overtly connected to the workforce. Similar to Québec, *learner(s)* are distinguished from students through modifiers such as *adult* as well as more geographically and culturally specific modifiers such as *Mi'kmaw*. Much of the text surrounding *student(s)* is focused on assessment, achievement, entrepreneurial culture, and post-secondary trajectories and tend to construct students as a problem (Bacchi, 2009) that need to be fixed through emphases on raising test scores and making sure students attend post-secondary.

CHAPTER 9: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Schools are deeply contradictory places. They offer possibilities of emancipation and development, of learning to become more fully human – and they are places of coercion and belittlement, places where human spirits are crushed. This tension in what schools represent is nothing new. (Unwill & Yandell, 2016, p. 13)

This study sought to critically investigate the discursive construction of particular actors (students and citizens) within policy-level education discourse (PLED) in Canada, and more broadly, to highlight, reflect upon, and disrupt common sense assumptions and ideologies within PLED and to open and hold space for reimagining a more just society and education. To that end, the following questions were asked:

- 1) How are citizens and citizenship discursively constructed within and across policy-level education texts (PLETs) in Canada?
- 2) How are learners and students discursively constructed within and across PLETs in Canada?

The findings in the chapter above are summarized and discussed in more detail below, followed by discussion on emerging connections, themes, and silences within and across the PLETs, which are then interpreted within the broader context and synthesized. I then begin to conclude the dissertation through an overview of limitations, contribution, and further research followed by future orientations and closing thoughts.

The Discursive Construction of Citizens and Citizenship

Although there is some variation across provinces—for example, BC’s *educated citizen*, Alberta’s *ethical citizen*, and Québec’s *responsible citizen*—these PLETs discursively construct their ideal citizen as an outcome of public education. The ideal citizen, as the modifiers reveal, is *responsible, ethical, and educated* and meant to *actively engage* in society, mainly through economic productivity in order to *contribute* to a *prosperous economy*, province, nation, and

world. Here, the *knowledge, skills, competencies, and characteristics developed* through public education are meant to be locally, nationally, and *globally* transferrable and in service of a mercurial economy. Although rarely explicitly detailed, some of the knowledge, skills, competencies, and characteristics include math and literacy, adaptability or resilience, entrepreneurial spirit or thinking, and problem solving. To reiterate Mautner's (2014) statement, the market has "envelop[ed] society" (p. 462). In other words, as the dominant societal model, neoliberalism saturates our lives, converting "almost all moments of social life into occasions for surplus extraction" (de Lissovoy, 2015, p. 50)—that is, the optimization of potential socio-cultural and economic capital (as discussed in Chapter 2; see also Bourdieu, 1986). Thus, character development and intellectual pursuit are also subsumed under economic pursuit.

On the one hand, these findings not only mirror or converge with more recent conceptual categorizations such as Westheimer's (2015) *personally responsible citizenship*, Gough's (1990) and den Heyer's (2018) *token and taken for granted futures*, and Fourcade's (2016, 2019) *ordinalization of citizenship*, but also with Marshall's (1950/1992) conceptualization of modern citizenship as a capitalist and assimilatory project. All this to say, that such constructions and understandings of citizenship are not new but are a rather persisting and deepening endeavour in individualistic, capital and competition-driven ways of being in society which align with our current neoliberal era or "regime" (Sattler, 2012; see also Fourcade, 2016, 2019). This be-and-do-all construction also lends to a sense of overdetermination (van Leeuwen, 2008) and adds credence to assertions that individuals are expected to perpetually market themselves as a 'new and improved' product for consumption (Fairclough, 1993; Hindess, 2002; Kennelly & Llewellyn, 2011; Mulderrig, 2003, 2008; Wilkins, 2018).

On the other hand, there appears to be a type of provincial-regionalism or provincialism that arises out of some of the PLETs (especially for Nova Scotia, Québec, and Alberta) which aims to invoke a moral/ethical obligation or responsibility to the local or provincial economic context (see Lee, 2015; Lim, 2014) as it exists within the larger national and global context. This of course, aligns with the term glocalization—“the paradoxical manner in which processes of globalization, which seem to erode the very possibility of the local, in fact demand an intensified attention to it” (Buchanan, 2018, para. 1; see also Fairclough, 2013). Nova Scotia’s PLETs, for example, have the highest use of spatial suffixes (van Leeuwen, 2008) to demarcate provincial belonging—Nova Scotian(s). Québec’s (2017) PLET emphasizes provincial values: “[schools] offer a living environment that transmits the values of Québec society” (p. 12) and uses the term, Québécois. Concurrently, the local or provincial emphasis (more so in Alberta’s case) tends to enforce a ‘remember where you come from’ tone that also underscores a stereotype of Generation Z (those born after 1996) as self-absorbed and entitled. Here, shame or blame is cast on individualistic thinking and behaviour which (ironically) has been promoted, engrained, and enshrined by the very ideologies, discourses, and institutions (e.g., neoliberalism, the OECD) that inform these policy texts (Allais, 2012).

As Westheimer (2015) puts it, “if being a good democratic citizen requires thinking critically about important social assumptions, then that foundation of citizenship is at odds with recent trends in education policy” (p. 13). In line with this, the findings show a preoccupation with a rather narrow rendering of the roles and responsibilities of citizenship—capable, competent contribution to the economy and sometimes society—with little room for knowledge, skills, and characteristics to be useful outside of an economic context. For example, skills and characteristics such as creativity, critical thinking, organization, and problem solving, which are

useful in many domains including engaging with social issues, are rather generally promoted as subsets of entrepreneurial spirit or culture (refer back to Alberta's, Nova Scotia's, and Ontario's PLETs). As remarked in the previous chapter, citizens are now conditioned from childhood to embrace and apply features of entrepreneurship such as risk and competition into all aspects of their lives. In these and other ways, instead of democratic and socially-oriented participation (Westheimer, 2015), these policies discursively construct citizenship mainly as individualist, economy-oriented participation (labour, productivity, and consumption).

The Discursive Construction of Students

To map out the discursive construction of students, I investigated two related lemmas—learner(s) and student(s)—and found some variation both by lemma and by singular v. plural. Note that the terms *learner(s)* and *student(s)* are both considered functionalization of particular social actors (children and sometimes adults) (van Leeuwen, 2008). I begin with *learner(s)*, followed by *student(s)*.

With regard to singular v. plural similarities and differences, *learner* is the least frequent of the four queries and is entirely absent from Saskatchewan and Québec (absolute absence; Duguid & Partington, 2018). *Learner* (singular) is most often modified by *each* and *every*, which is both an individualization and aggregation (van Leeuwen, 2008) and lends to a sense of overlexicalization. In the remaining selected provincial PLETs, *learner* is often surrounded by progressive education language and ideas (e.g., *student-centred*, scaffolding and feedback), and pertains to *English Language Learner* (mainly for Ontario) and *adult learning*, while also invoking modifying terms *lifelong* and *independent*. *Learners* (plural) are often preceded by *all* (collectivized aggregation) or alternatively distinguished by *English Language*, *adult*, or race (identification) and place (spatialization)—for example, *Mi'kmaw* and *Black Nova Scotian Rural*

(in the Nova Scotia PLETs). Similar to *learner*, *learners* are also often surrounded by progressive education ideals. Thus, it seems that both *learner* and *learners* are more so invoked in contexts in which pedagogy (educational theory and approaches) is prominent. Before moving on, I focus a little more on English language learners and lifelong learners.

As pointed out throughout the findings chapter (mainly for Ontario), *learner(s)* often refers to *English Language Learners*, which is a term used for those who are learning English as a second or additional language—generally newcomers, but in some cases (as Ontario’s 2013 policy explains), may also pertain to Francophones, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI), or those who speak different language varieties. On the one hand, this broader definition is more inclusive of linguistic and cultural diversity. But on the other, it pathologizes variety across the English language, opting for a colonizing *proper* English as the standard—one considered suitable for academic and/or professional environments (Pennycook, 1998). While perhaps unsurprising, such an endeavour is reflective of the assimilatory agenda of public schooling (Baldwin, 2008) and has systemically targeted and harmed cultural, racial, and class-based language variations and those who speak them (Pennycook, 1998; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000; see also Gorski, 2011). As Pennycook (1998) points out, “the long history of colonialism has established important connections to English. Such connections do not lie so much in ‘the marrow’ of English but in the intimate relations between the language and the discourses of colonialism” (p. 4). This connection is so well established that standard English is often referred to as ‘white voice’ in media and informal settings (see [Riley, 2019](#); [Waring, 2018](#)). Further, these discourses about ‘proper language use’ are embedded in our everyday lives ([Colapinto, 2021](#))—especially the discourses and practices of education—and act as gatekeepers in many contexts

such as access to and success within employment (Waring, 2018) as well as legal proceedings (Ehrlich, 2017).

Although students are by default learners, *learner(s)* are not always *student(s)* per se. In fact, in some instances, the term *learner(s)*, especially when modified by *lifelong*, aligns more closely with an ideal conceptualization of *citizen*. Here, even after graduating from formal/institutionalized schooling, students-now-citizens are meant to remain self-initiating learners (in both informal and formal capacities) in order to adapt to and remain economically productive in an inevitably (by virtue of globalization; see Fairclough, 2013) *rapidly changing society* or *world*. For instance, BC's (2018) policy states, "our education system will enhance our efforts to prepare all students for *lifelong learning*, encourage the use of technology, and be prepared for graduation with practical expectations informed by employers and post-secondary institutions" (p. iii, emphasis added). The term *lifelong learning* is a prominent neoliberal buzzword that in most modern education discourses—Jakobi and Martens (2010) trace the term back to its previous iteration, 'recurrent education,' and affiliation with the OECD. Further, Mulderrig (2003) points out that

[...] the textual representations of educational roles and relations in policy, linking success (and by implication, failure) with individual commitment and aspirations, potentially acts as a powerful form of social control. Not only does it establish a practice of lifelong learning and individual adaptability with which to occupy and appease the unemployed, but it constitutes a form of self-regulation in which the individual is responsible for and invests, through learning, in her own success. The coercive force comes not from the government, which is constructed as a facilitator, but from the implicit laws of the market. (p. 104)

She argues that this constitutive regulation of the market ultimately works to legitimize "the globalised economic system" and "our roles in it" (p. 104). Here too, "knowledge is seen as a

‘perishable product’, therefore constant upgrading and adaptability are imperative” (Mulderigg, 2003, p. 111), which is shrouded in a sense of urgency found in many of the PLETs (see also Rogers, 2018). Since globalization (i.e., proponents of the global economy) imposes changes on the market and by extension employability in a competing and everchanging market, adapting and preparing the public for such change is beyond the sole power of the government and public institutions and therefore the individual has to learn how to adapt to these changes by constantly learning new skills. However, through embracing their position as ‘middle-people’ at the mercy of a globalized world, governments may shirk their ‘duty’ to citizens (Fairclough, 2013; Mulderigg, 2012).

Similar to *learner*, *student* is also sometimes aggregated (roughly 4% of all instances) through the modifiers *each* and *every*, and identified through modifiers such as *individual*, and *First Nations, Métis, and Inuit*, or given possession—*the/a student’s achievement, the/a student’s development, the/a student’s learning* (van Leeuwen, 2008). In this corpus, *student* mainly falls into two broad but overlapping categories: 1) *genericization*, which van Leeuwen (2008) suggests distances the social actor from the audience’s social reality, and 2) *impersonalization*, in which a social actor is represented within or as an abstract concept and/or nominalized process. These are enacted respectively through 1) simply *the student* and *a student*, and 2) noun phrases including *student learning, student achievement, student success, student engagement, student assessment, student performance, and student wellbeing*. Although the first has some opportunity for agency, there are few instances as *student* is often the goal or beneficiary of the sentence (passivated) and when the student is in the subject position, subsequent verbs typically fall into the existential and relational categories (is, has), or modals (may, will, should). With existential and relational verb processes, no actions are carried out; with modal verbs, obligation is placed

on the actor, thus muting individual agency. The second, as abstract/nominalized processes or noun phrases, does not afford agency. Herein, these noun phrases seem to blend the boundaries between an abstract concept and a tangible process or outcome. Furthermore, these concepts/processes are often quasi-synonymous with one another (e.g., success, achievement, performance) and are thus examples of overlexicalization that highlight the emphasis on testing/assessment, graduation rates, and economic contribution/potential which ultimately confirms concerns and research regarding the narrowing/hollowing of educational goals and outcomes (Apple, 2017; Giroux, 2007; Westheimer, 2015).

Although there is a consistent pattern of the three above mentioned emphases (testing/assessment, graduation rates, and economic contribution/potential) regarding *learner(s)* and *student(s)*, another theme arises across the *student* findings: a focus on digitizing and enhancing student files/profiles/records with a view to including more information (e.g., readiness to learn, test scores, behaviour, needs) and for monitoring individual students over/across their school careers. Individual student records have long been in place in schools and have also been mythologized as a fear tactic to keep students in line via popular entertainment (e.g., tv, movies, books, comics). While there are obvious practical needs to keep student information together and easily accessible, concerns about what and how much information is collected, access, privacy, and appropriate use are not unwarranted—especially when there is potential for such information to be shared anonymously as ‘big data’ and/or for databases to be breached (Brayne, 2020; Means, 2019). As is the case with ourSCHOOL, the information shared by participants (mainly students and teachers) is used to inform a much larger scale endeavour which informs and projects a ‘lifecourse matrix’ that outlines a factory model of life from conception to adulthood (see Figure 15). This aligns with Fourcade’s (2016, 2019)

conceptualization and discussion of the ordinalization of citizenship which extrapolates easily to notions of the aggregation of digital and social databases and networks as a Panopticon linked to bio-governmentality (Foucault, 1975; see also Selwyn, 2010, p. 95)—that is, akin to Bentham’s prison architecture, all inmates could be viewed from one central position but could not see their surveillor, creating the illusion of always being watched, and in turn governing themselves as such. Thus, given the scope of the digital world and ongoing concerns about privacy and surveillance (McDermott, 2013; Shaker, 2018a; see also Brayne, 2020), and the looming shadow of the school-to-prison pipeline (Hirschfield, 2008), we should absolutely be critical about the potential for exploitation of student data.

By virtue of its frequency, *students* (plural) is the most varied in use. However, *students* are generally referenced 1) as both grammatical and social beneficiaries of education and policy initiatives, and 2) in relation to what is expected of them within the school system and outside of it (roles, responsibilities, outcomes). Furthermore, *students* is often modified through collectivized aggregation (*all*), or identifiers (*First Nations, Métis, and Inuit, Indigenous, mature*) and spatialized identifiers (*high school*). When positioned as beneficiaries, the surrounding immediate context often refers to support as well as vulnerabilities and distinct or special needs of particular groups of students (often FNMI, youth in care, and students with special needs). When in the actor/subject position *students* are often obligated (through modal verbs including will, must, and should) to meet certain expectations (often related to assessment), and their prescribed actions (verb processes) are mainly behavioural—students *learn, develop, achieve, become, acquire*—which solidifies their role as mainly passive and/or non-disruptive receivers of *instruction, knowledge, skills, and competencies*.

Arising themes across the selected provinces, as noted above, are raising test scores (assessment) and graduation rates, as well as improving and instilling particular (but generally unnamed) characteristics for success. Furthermore, the standardization of early childhood development is also deeply embedded across the excerpts through emphasis on *monitoring* and *readiness to learn*. This is particularly highlighted in Alberta's mention of *diagnostic methods* as well as Saskatchewan's use of the EYE-TA and ourSCHOOL engagement surveys, the latter of which informs The Learning Bar's/OECD's subsequent lifecourse matrix. While these four themes are distinctly referred to and discussed across the provinces, they often overlap and may ultimately be distilled into a broader category of student monitoring and surveillance under the agenda of standardization and maximized potential and outcomes.

Another way students were discursively constructed was through metaphor. Provinces including Alberta, Ontario, and Québec incorporate metaphors of the education system and students: *students as the heart of education*, *school subjects as connected neural networks* (Alberta); *students as architects of their lives* (Ontario); and *students as clay meant to be moulded* (Québec). These metaphors were critically unpacked and questioned with regard to considering how other social actors fit within the bodily heart metaphor, architectural planning, procedures, and materials with respect to access, and similarly, materials, uniformity, and passivity were discussed with regard to clay.

In sum, learner(s) have a dual discursive construction – one for ELLs (as needing support) and one that is often surrounded by pedagogical text which is progressive and utopian in comparison to prosodies of *student* and *students*. Overall, *learner(s)* and *student(s)* are constructed as consumers of education with little actual agency, yet are ultimately responsible for their own achievement/success, well-being/wellness, and adaptability/resilience.

Emerging Connections, Implications, and Silences

Before moving into synthesis of the two research questions, I present three emerging themes from the findings which require some further discussion: a shifting metaphor; moral panic, deviance, and obligation; and inter and con-textual silence.

A Shifting Metaphor

As noted throughout the findings chapter and in some of the discussion above, there are several metaphors embedded in these PLETS, some of which are common or entrenched (Hart, 2008) educational metaphors—*students as clay* (Scheffler, 1960/1991; see also Cook-Sather, 2009). Scheffler (1960/1991) argued that,

educational metaphors in general use are of help in reflecting and organizing social thought and practice with respect to schooling, but they are not tied in with processes of experimental confirmation and prediction. They thus do not develop cumulatively as do scientific theoretical frameworks. (p. 49)

Nevertheless, the above assertion does not mean that metaphors are immutable. For instance, while Scheffler's (1960/1991) deconstruction of the mould-clay metaphor takes up similar issues with agency and variance, he classifies this metaphor as an artistic one which is in effect, teacher-centred (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988). However, in Quebec's use of the mould-clay metaphor, the final product is the citizen and the teacher has been removed altogether (an instance of backgrounding; van Leeuwen, 2008)—but we understand that the student is undergoing the moulding process. Given the established surrounding contextual reality of hyper-capitalism and the standardization of education and childhood development, it is arguable that there has since (1960) been an ontological shift in this particular metaphor which requires an alternative classification: rather than small-scale artistry/artisanry (which is still considered problematic), the mould-clay metaphor has been scaled up to a factory model. Herein,

(implicitly) the teacher may push buttons and pull levers (or may be removed altogether), but the settings are predetermined by official curricula and testing regimes. Thus, instead of being teacher-centred, this metaphor has become curriculum-centred (or perhaps, assessment-centred), which appears to be a shift backward in terms of Connelly and Clandinin's (1988) conceptualization of the shift over time in Schwab's (1973) commonplaces of the curriculum from curriculum-centered, to teacher-centred, to student-centred (see also Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009). Although this shift is not generalizable (neither to all educational discourse nor this corpus), it is corroborated within Québec's policy through word frequency—that is, in four of the six selected provinces, *students* is the most frequent word, yet in Québec's policy, *students* is ranked third (Table 5 and Table 25).

Moral Panic, Deviance, and Obligation

Although I set out to study how students and citizens are discursively constructed within and across these policy-level education texts (PLET), something that emerged from critical reflection on my findings within a broader context was this underlying and otherwise “quiet” (Cohen, 2002) discursive construction of moral panic manifested through the urgency placed on the need to raise graduation rates and standardized test scores (achievement and success; see Alexander, 2012), the sense of a fraught and unpredictable future, and in some cases (e.g., Alberta) the forcefulness regarding the required characteristics/worldview of students and citizens. Although there are hints of moral panic throughout the selected provinces, it seems to be more pronounced in the Nova Scotia texts, which may be explained by lower performance on PISA testing as well as their action-oriented nature. These subtleties add up, whether consciously or not, for the reader and act strategically to convince the audience (e.g., parents, public) that certain initiatives and interventions—namely increased and reformed testing, curricular

alignment, monitoring, and hyper-individualism—are necessary for the survival, perseverance, and/or prosperity of the province within a national and global economy.

These particular instances of moral panic, rather than seemingly disparate educational issues, are refractions of a larger and long-evolving culture of fear in the institutions of education and their surrounding discourses, which are largely connected to the Global Education Reform Movement (GERM) (Sahlberg, 2015; see also Means, 2019). Although more evident and publicized in the US (Sahlberg, 2015; see also Mondale, 2016), GERM is characterized by “testing, accountability, and choice” (Ravitch, 2015, p. xi). Within this is a push for the managerialization of institutionalized education at the pre-school, k-12, and post-secondary levels and one of the processes and goals is the (re)privatization of education (Mondale, 2016). However, what stands out in this case, is that this panic has been going on for thirty-odd years—as Cohen (2002) points out “discrete and volatile moral panics might indeed once have existed but they have now been replaced by a generalized moral stance, a permanent moral panic resting on a seamless web of social anxieties” (p. xxxvi). This panic or fear is evident in the calls for alignment of schooling and the workforce (Tsaparis, 2014), in pop-up/stop-gap organizations such as Canadians for 21st Century Learning or Support Our Students (SOS) Alberta, the media reporting of standardized testing scores (Berliner & Biddle, 1995; Stack, 2016; Wubbena et al., 2016), and in battles over what belongs in the curriculum ([Bialystock, 2019](#); [Sharp, 2021](#)). It is also evident in the seeming solutions or prescriptions for these problems including increasingly pervasive monitoring and intervention, national and global standardization of both education and childhood development, and accountability-culture, which may ultimately be understood as forms of social control (Cohen, 2002; see also Marshall, 1950/1992) or biopolitics/bio-governmentality (Foucault, 2008; Springer et al., 2016).

Not only then are these refractions of panic and social control visible, but so too is the construction of deviance—for, “deviance in a sense emerges and is stabilized as an artefact of social control” (Cohen, 2002, p. 8). As the ‘solutions’ become entrenched, those who stray (or deviate) from the path are considered liable—that is, if the path has been laid out and the pre-determined instruction and support has been executed and/or offered, those who are deemed unsuccessful, “lost,” or “disruptive” (see [Nova Scotia](#)) are individually blamed for their ‘failure(s)’ (see Johansson, 2007). However, in this vast landscape of fear or *fearscape*, the “folk devils” as Cohen calls them, are not a particular sensationalized subculture of flappers, hippies, rockers, punks, or stoners but anyone who does not meet a particular set of expectations and/or anyone who might/does deviate for any number of reasons. Because the deviant is less explicitly defined (than say rockers) and less overtly demonized, what we have instead of ‘folk devils’ is something fuzzier or unknowable, and thus, arguably more anxiety-inducing. That is, a rocker or punk is generally easily and singularly identifiable by appearance, whereas poor test takers, class clowns, and authority questioners may not be identifiable by a particular ‘style’—although, such identities and previous moral panics inform these fuzzy boundaries. However, groups named as in a position of testing or graduation disparity and/or needing more support (deficit) including newcomers, FNMI, and those with special needs may be visibly identifiable. And because of these fuzzy boundaries and the textual silences (next section) surrounding their ‘deviance’, more *covert* forms of racism (Teo, 2000; van Dijk, 1993; see also Young et al., 2018) and discrimination permutated through neoliberalism may slip under the radar of the general public.

Yet, through these myriad and overlapping public and educational discourses, an ideal student-to-be-citizen is constructed—one who behaves, who inherits the chosen skills and characteristics, tests well and hands in assignments, graduates, attends some form of post-

secondary, and contributes to the economy—and anyone who does not meet or questions such requirements is considered at risk, disruptive, and/or in need of (further) monitoring. Within this construction of the ideal performance of studenthood and citizenship and connected to moral panic and deviance, is an assigned moral or ethical obligation to school, and ultimately the economy and province/nation/society. Moral obligation is taken up by Wilkins (2018):

I adopt the concept of neoliberal citizenship to capture the discursive terrain of “ethico-politics” (Kivelä 2018: 160) through which citizens are trained and enjoined by way of structured incentives and ethical injunctions to fulfill certain obligations and responsibilities vis-à-vis their relationship to the state and to the market more generally. (p. 1)

This training, of course, takes place through education in the form of public schooling, and is promoted and legitimized through policies from authoritative bodies such as national and provincial governments. As reviewed in Chapter 3, Lee (2015) also finds this strategy of moral obligation, stating that “the values [embedded in government speeches about national citizenship education in Singapore] take on moral overtones, and it becomes not only a pragmatic but also an ethical imperative to embrace the values publicly espoused” (p. 114), which ultimately serve the economy. Perhaps most explicit on this front are Mulderrig’s (2003) research findings which observe an alarming discursive connection between economic prosperity and social justice:

[...] this economic rationality is legitimised by drawing yet another equivalence between competitive success and social morality: [...] *the challenges that our country must address if we are to guarantee economic prosperity and social justice*. Not only our national economy, but social justice depends upon tailoring education to the needs of the economy. (pp. 107-108, emphasis in original)

In the three above quoted excerpts as well as in my findings, the responsibilities of citizenship encompass a moral obligation to participate—to *succeed* in school and *contribute* to the economy. Ultimately, in the same way that policy constructs social problems (Bacchi, 2009), so

too does moral panic. And in more linear terms, moral panic may inform how policy constructs and reacts to social problems, which inevitably also leave residual silences.

Inter and con -textual silence

As has been pointed out by numerous scholars, education systems and their policies tend to prioritize things that can be measured (Apple, 2017; den Heyer, 2018; Fenwick & Edwards, 2010; Giroux, 2007; Stack, 2016; Westheimer, 2015). As such (and as has been pointed out ad nauseum) there are strong foci on assessment including raising standardized testing scores (literacy, math, science) and graduation rates, as well as on closing gaps in achievement or success between an undescribed baseline ('regular students') and particular groups including First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI), newcomers/immigrants, and students with special needs and exceptionalities. In some cases, these policies make passing or ambiguous references to *barriers* or *realities* that connect to such gaps, but rarely expand on what they are (e.g., colonialism, racism, ableism, poverty) or how they contribute to achievement gaps—which may be understood as a textual or discursive silence (Huckin, 2002). Although most written policies speak volumes both explicitly and implicitly on their priorities and values, their silences may be equally (if not more) indicative of priorities and values. For example, the fact that FNMI students, on average, represent a 15-30% disparity or *gap* in graduation rates is an actual problem. Yet the solution—often presented as improvement targets and engagement measures—is one that reinforces colonial assimilation tactics and does not address the underlying and systemic issues. All of this is not to say that instances of genuine engagement with social issues do not exist at all in these policy texts, but that they are often overshadowed by the market-driven agenda of outcomes considered measurable.

In a similar vein, there are many instances of explicit intertextuality across these policies, as they reference other works (other policies, curricula, related studies or grey literature), collaborations and partnerships (often with employers and business-oriented organizations), and influences (other provinces, public feedback, student feedback, etc.). However, they rarely look outside the education system when it comes to calling for “closing gaps”—with the explicit exception of Saskatchewan’s *Following Their Voices*. This eschews systemic issues, especially with regard to FNMI, who have been and are harmed by education policies, curricula, and practices in this ‘country’. Although FNMI and their various referents (e.g., Indigenous, Aboriginal, Mi’kmaw) are mentioned quite heavily in this corpus, they are often constructed as in a position of deficit and in need of extra or targeted support to meet particular benchmarks and standards (achieve success). Put simply, deficit ideology approaches students based on “perceptions of their weaknesses rather than their strengths” and tends to equate difference with deficit (Gorski, 2011, p. 152). Viewing and/or constructing particular (groups of) students as deficient or in deficit both devalues their knowledges and experiences and downplays the “socio-political contexts” and “systemic conditions” that either privilege or undercut certain identities’ access to and propensity to ‘succeed’ (Gorski, 2011, p. 153). It is thus viewed as at odds with genuine inclusion (Hardy & Woodcock, 2015) and is considered harmful (Gorski, 2011).

In few cases, there are passing references to the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* and *residential schools*. However, there is not a single mention of the words: *colonize(d)*, *colonial*, *colonization*, *settler(s)*, *imperialism*, *assimilate*, *assimilation*, *genocide*, *trauma(tic)*, *decolonize*, *decolonizing*, *indigenize*, nor *indigenizing*. While individually, these are absolute but suspected absences (Duguid & Partington, 2018), they make up a discursive silence and one that I would argue is strategic or manipulative (Huckin, 2002)—that is, mentions of gaps in

achievement without explicit mention of their causes (some of the missing words above) contribute to an overall negative prosody of FNMI which denies the role and ultimately the responsibility the government and education systems have in such *achievement* or *success gaps*. Given, inter alia, the ongoing calls for meaningful engagement, the poverty, trauma, and discrimination experienced by FNMI, missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and 2-spirit ([MMIWG, n.d.](#)), the lack of potable/usable water across FNMI communities and reserves ([Stefanovich et al., 2021](#)), the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's ([TRC, 2015a](#)) recommendations and 94 calls to action, and our current moment of reckoning with the recent recovery of over 7000-and-counting children's bodies on residential 'school' sites ([Binning, 2021](#)), such omissions strike an already tender chord.

While I cannot speak for FNMI nor claim to truly know their struggles, I have pointed out and unpacked potential sites of and processes of harm and oppression (van Leeuwen, 2018). I have also pointed out instances where my interpretation is uncertain (see BC) as well as what appear to be genuine attempts to engage meaningfully with FNMI communities such as Saskatchewan's *Following their voices*. However, while such attempts may be genuine, I do not know if FNMI are truly unharmed or benefit from them in practice (which future/other research may explore). As part of my commitment to harm reduction and promotion of Indigenous-based recommendations, I have included the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's section on calls to action for education in [Appendix F](#). However, it must be stressed that in order for such gaps to meaningfully narrow or close, all 94 calls to action must be considered in earnest and acted upon in good faith—that is, a holistic and systemic approach must be taken ([TRC, 2015a](#); see also [TRC, 2015b](#)).

Another relative discursive silence in these PLETs are rights. As discussed in Chapter 2, citizenship confers both rights and responsibilities. Although discussions of civic rights may not be entirely genre-appropriate within education policy and are more likely to be found in provincial *School Acts* (which is included in Alberta's 2018 policy), *The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, and other legalese, mentions within the selected provinces in relation to students are fairly generic (and are virtually non-existent with regard to citizenship): “respect the rights of others” (AMET, 2018, p. 10), “recognizes and advocates appropriately for the rights of self and others” (OME, 2010, p. 11), and “educating students about rights and responsibilities” (QME, 2017, p. 48). Furthermore, access to education is a constitutional right, but the way it is constructed in these policies—especially in relation to the above discussion of moral panic, deviance, and obligation—is as a responsibility. While ostensibly both a right and a responsibility, schooling's current framing as mainly a responsibility backgrounds or suppresses (van Leeuwen, 2008) the surrounding discourse of rights. In other words, when framed as a responsibility, it is simply something one must do (an obligation) (see Lee, 2015), but if framed as a right, one may lay claim, assert, protect/uphold/defend/advocate, and expand. This again highlights the lack of agency afforded to students and citizens as social actors (Reisigl & Wodak, 2016; van Leeuwen, 2008) within these PLETs, which ultimately benefits the powerful (e.g., governments, the economy, capitalism/neoliberalism). If for example, most of the population used their knowledge, critical thinking, skills, and competencies to demand their rights to live without poverty, excess pollution, and/or systemic oppression (racism, sexism, ableism, etc.), those powerful entities may be deposed or transformed.

Synthesis

These PLETs are heavily student-focused and ostensibly promote a student-centred pedagogy, yet their status as stakeholders or agents (citizens) in their own education and in their everyday lives is generally denied. There are few instances of true agency afforded to learner(s), student(s), and citizen(s) across the selected provincial PLETs and this may be explained by the factory-model of education embedded within these texts through emphasis on standardization and testing, metaphors such as students as claylike (see Québec), as well as the “lifecourse matrix” that underlies the ourSCHOOL surveys promoted in Saskatchewan’s (2018) policy (see also Robinson, 2010). Furthermore, the focus on measurable variables and outcomes (e.g., graduation rates, test scores) combined with the pathologization of variation and difference (e.g., language variety, learning differences, disruption) make-up a medical metaphor while also contributing to the hyper-surveillance of individuals (students, teachers, citizens) and education more broadly. Mulderrig (2003) also found this medical metaphor in UK polices:

Quality is to be assured through regulatory mechanisms and goals for all participants: *The rigorous use of target-setting has led to high standards*, and potential threats to this quality are tackled through a scientific rationality in which disaffection becomes a disease - and thus particular to the individual: *particular provide early diagnosis and intervention for pupils who face challenges*. This medical metaphor reveals much about the instrumental rationality running through the texts. *Diagnosis* means identifying a problem, the cause of deviation from normal performance. (p. 114, emphasis in original)

Mulderrig uses italics to identify passages from the policies in which medical language including *diagnosis* and *intervention* is central and related to *high standards*. However, given the sheer scale at which this model permeates education policies and practices around the globe (Ball, 2018; Steiner-Khamsi, 2012) combined with technological advancement, this metaphor may also

be shifting to (mutating) or overlaid with a digital metaphor—one in which all of these aspects are transported to the digital/computer coding realm (more on this below).

Despite some of the more progressive or critical adages in these PLETs—the calls for a more inclusive education; Alberta’s protection of students from being outed; Québec’s emphasis on equity with regard to student’s potential, outcomes, and access to internet; Nova Scotia’s hints at participatory citizenship (Westheimer, 2015); Saskatchewan’s *Following Their Voices* project; Ontario’s architect metaphor (though still problematic)—it seems that in a general sense, these policies write students betwixt and between, in a liminal void (Savin-Baden, 2008) of not-yet-citizen, of *halfway human*. Furthermore, this liminality combined with the culmination or convergence of metaphors and discursive constructions write the product of factory-modelled schooling as citizen-automatons—pre-fabricated and programmed (knowledge, skills, characteristics), continually updating and adapting to avoid obsolescence (lifelong learning and resilience), increased and consistent monitoring for bugs in the code (readiness to learn, learning differences, disruptive behaviour, below average test scores, etc.), and following *the path* unquestioningly (from good student to good citizen). It is important here to point out that the factory-model of schooling is a 20th century *invention*:

Our schools are, in a sense, factories, in which the raw products (children) are to be shaped and fashioned into products to meet the various demands of life. The specifications for manufacturing come from the demands of twentieth-century civilization, and it is the business of the school to build its pupils according to the specifications laid down. This demands good tools, specialization machinery, continuous measurement of production (Cubberley, 1919, as cited in [Cuban, 2014](#)).

This metaphor has been highly criticized for nearly as long as it has existed (Dewey, 1907/2010; Robinson, 2010). However, in recontextualizing this metaphor in the 21st century—that is, factoring in the leaps in and pace of technological advancement, audit/managerial culture’s

documented “erasure of humanity” (Archer, 2002, p. 140), and Fourcade’s (2016, 2019) notion of ordinal citizenship—the emerging citizen-automaton metaphor, rather than a scifi-esque reach, is uncomfortably conceivable.

Ultimately, the lack of both grammatical and social agency of *learner(s)* and *student(s)* combined with the overall construction of students as *not-quite citizens* recalls Patel’s (2016) criticism of traditional educational policy analysis for “its lack of interrogation and connection to the material conditions that create and connect “flashpoints of violence and systematized oppression” (p. 115)—or from Huckin’s (2002) perspective, notable silences. Here, Patel (2016) asserts that “democracy is intertwined and formed from colonial structures that have separated humans from the nonhuman, including spaces they inhabit” (p. 116) or in other words, “the idea of democracy and dialogue within democracy erases the possibility to problematize the state itself and its creations [e.g., public education], leaving only negotiations within the state for recognition and adjusting of the available politics and platforms under the state” (p. 118). For instance, what happens when I say that public education manufactures ‘automatons’ is akin to cognitive dissonance—it stirs up discomfort and a drive to retreat to or retrieve a status quo. Yet the question remains: how can education foster truly active, engaged, and meaningful (human) citizenship when education policies discursively construct learners and students without agency, as problems to be solved, and in some cases as inanimate objects waiting to be moulded or empty vessels to be coded?

I wish to highlight not only the colonizing effect of neoliberalism on the goals of education (see Chapter 2) and education policy, but also similar to Allais (2012), the complicity of progressive education ideals and their proponents (p. 261). Afterall, backwards design and outcomes models conceptualized within progressive circles (Biggs & Tang, 2007; Wiggins &

McTighe, 2005) have proved to be of great service to neoliberal education and audit culture (Apple, 2005; Gallagher, 2011). Giroux (2007) points out that

As neoliberal ideology successfully normalizes and depoliticizes its basic assumptions and market-based view of the world, it becomes increasingly difficult for people to recognize that neoliberal rationality is a historical and political construction, and that there are alternatives to its conceptions of democracy as an extension of market principles and citizens as hyper-consumers or unthinking patriots. Challenging neoliberal hegemony means exposing its historical character and its flimsy claims to promoting freedom through choice while making visible how it operates in the service of class and corporate power. But the ideology and structures of neoliberal domination must be analyzed not merely within economic discourses but also as an oppressive form of public pedagogy, a practice of political persuasion, actively responsible for systematic forms of misrepresentation, distortion, and a mangling of public discourse by commercial interests. (p. 46)

It might be understood that theoretically, social justice oriented citizenship (Westheimer, 2015) is the antithesis of neoliberal citizenship. Yet given the inescapable reality of neoliberal society, individuals may occupy both types of citizenship simultaneously or compromise between aspects of each—that is, by virtue of needing to survive, we are all neoliberal subjects to varying degrees but may be critical and active in our surrounding communities, trying to get to the root of any number of social issues (wicked problems; West Churchman, 1967). Thus, the key here is to understand the depths of neoliberalism's reach in the minutiae of our everyday lives, to be critical of it, and to resist reproducing or reinforcing it in research, policy, and practice. The takeaway then for researchers may be one of encouragement to continue their critical work; for researchers, educators, policy writers, and readers alike to unlearn inherent (problematic) biases and/or (continue) to resist neoliberal indoctrination; and for those in positions of power to wield it carefully in service of a more genuinely inclusive, restorative, and *human(e)* future.

Limitations, Contributions, and Further Research

This study was carried out by weaving a tapestry (Hollingsworth et al., 1993) of theory and literature on education philosophy, pedagogy, history, trends, and policy (Chapters 1-4) which led into an overview of Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) as the research approach (Chapter 5). Through the methodological framework and methods chosen—Discourse-Historical Approach (with a focus on nomination and predication) and Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (Chapters 6-7)—I have traced and connected discursive constructions of student(s), learner(s), citizen(s), and citizenship within and across policy-level education texts from the ministries and departments of education in Canada, particularly from British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Québec, and Nova Scotia. My findings, contextually situated in the literature, largely suggest that these discursive constructions—although informed by progressive education ideals and sometimes critical pedagogy—mainly align with neoliberal, market-driven understandings of both society and education in which students are expected to become readily adaptable, economically productive citizens for the sake of their localities within a globalized nation, economy, and world. Thus, this study largely confirms and expands upon previous research in different countries and contexts (Lee, 2015; Lim, 2014; Mulderrig, 2003; Wilkins, 2018).

An unforeseen limitation of this study was an institutional lack of access to texts regarding provincial education history (especially during the COVID-19 pandemic) as well as the effort needed to gather enough understanding of the general and educational contexts of provinces outside Ontario (my home province). Furthermore, although the original research design entailed analysis of PLETs from every province and territory in Canada, time, resources, and space limited the scope of the study to just six provinces. It is regrettable that the Atlantic provinces and Northern Territories were largely and fully unrepresented (respectively) in this

study, as they are often overlooked in the broader research. Further and/or future research should investigate policy-level education discourse(s) (PLEDs) situated within these two regions in a similar way (i.e., critically, without a standardizing or ranking agenda).

This study does not account for the ways in which these PLETs are enacted, taken-up, modified and or resisted by various stakeholders across education systems. A popular criticism of CDS and policy analysis research is that it often does not engage with neither the producers of texts nor their intended audiences as a way of including the writing process, checking interpretations, inviting different perspectives, and/or engaging with the actual or felt impact of texts. Although time and resources did not permit, an earlier hope for this study included using the findings to develop a survey for public school teachers and discussion points for focus groups with lower year undergraduate students in which they would reflect on their public school experience. At the start of this research project, I also included a question about the discursive construction of teachers but removed it and the corresponding findings in order to narrow the focus and shorten the page length—I hope to eventually finish and publish this work separately. Further studies may continue this work by carrying out these and other sociological inquiries about how education policy is perceived, taken up, and/or resisted by various educational stakeholders, as well as how students experience and/or perceive these policies in the classroom.

Another limitation regarding text-based policy analysis lies in an earlier discussion on the policy-making process: since there are multiple and varied authors, influences, and power hierarchies there may be untraceable instances where these PLETs have been revised or overwritten by the corresponding Ministry/Department of Education with political intent (Smith, 2018; see also Sharp, 2021). In such cases, critical, progressive, or resistant ideas or approaches may be reworked, watered down, or erased altogether without the audience ever being privy to

them. Alternatively, some of the ideological tensions or contradictions (between critical, progressive, and neoliberal approaches to education) may be rooted in this inherent multiplicity. In recalling earlier chapters, it is recommended to explore and embrace ‘noise’ or divergences (Carney, 2012; Marchi & Taylor, 2018), as they provide nuance and a fuller understanding of the questions and data. Inviting policymakers to comment on researcher interpretations of policy texts, or to provide further context on the policy making process may be a fruitful area for discourse analysts to pursue.

Despite these limitations, the importance of the texts themselves should not be overlooked, as a general audience comes to them with little to no knowledge of the producers nor the process. To recall, it is not the purview of CDS to worry deeply about intent, but rather to investigate text(s) as they exist in and are informed by context and the broader world (Wodak & Meyer, 2016). This research ultimately contributes to the small body of CDS work on education discourses in Canada (see Burns, 2017; Fitzgerald, 2017; Stack, 2016), while also adding to the small bodies of work that focus on the discursive constructions of citizens and students. It also makes a methodological contribution, as it brings together multiple frameworks (DHA and CADS) and methods and is one of only a few (at the time of writing; see Horrod, 2020) pieces of research that uses the DHA to study education discourse. As the findings show, this methodological approach shows great potential for robust investigation of PLED.

In addition to the noted scaling back of this study to focus on only six provinces and to remove teachers, I had hoped to conduct several other phases of research which were not feasible for this study including analysis of PLETs from national organizations such as CMEC as well as supranational organizations such as the OECD. I further intended to trace and map connections between their respective discursive constructions of citizens, students, and teachers. These

envisioned analyses would certainly deepen the understanding of Canada's *educational polycscape* (Carney, 2012) and how education discourses and ideologies travel, and future research should attend to this. It would further build upon the small, but growing body of work that critically investigates policy-level education discourses within or in relation to Canada. Since I have many more ideas on future research, I have developed a *programme of suggested Canadian educational polycscape research* which can be found in [Appendix G](#). Before ending this dissertation, I highlight future orientations and share some closing thoughts which attempt to engage with CDS' self-reflexivity (Wodak & Meyer, 2016) and to address one final criticism of both academia in general and critical discourse studies: that they breed 'armchair critics'.

Closing Thoughts

Patel (2016) notes that "policies have always been the crystallization of values (Ball, 2003), a set of directives composed to achieve certain prioritized outcomes" (pp. 115-16) while Ball's (2015) discussion of policy grapples with the *just-out-of-reachness* (p. 308) of policy and policy-making. Policy does not always reflect reality, but rather takes reality (subjectively) into consideration and envisions some kind of progression toward a specific goal, which in theory, requires *some* future-oriented imagining. Yet the way in which the future is written in policy or curricula is often empty of meaning (token or taken-for-granted; see den Heyer, 2018; Gough, 1990), and in practice, policies end up "remov[ing] the future from the social imaginary" (Couture et al., 2019). Thus, questions about how to reconcile this disconnect arise, because the aim of my research is to make a meaningful contribution to understanding Canada's *educational polycscape* (Carney, 2012) as well as in how it might envision truly meaningful citizenship.

Marshall (1950/1992) asserts that citizenship may be viewed as "the architect of legitimate social inequality" (p. 7), which may in turn be manifested through education discourse

and practice. Webb and Gulson (2011) argue that “education policy can be understood as products of biopower, race wars, and proto-fascisms, in addition to other forms of disciplinary technologies” (p. 179) and that “proto-fascist education policy is a set of discourses that capitalizes on the neo-liberal discourses of performance, deregulation, marketization, standards, accountability, State withdrawal, commodification, and enterprising subjects” (p. 185).

Similarly, in a conference presentation den Heyer (2019) asked, “in what ways is curriculum change the denial or fear of change”—offering a possible answer in which curriculum reform (GERM) is designed to take space, so that alternative imaginaries (more critical or radical ones) are not taken up (Couture et al., 2019). The same may be asked and reflected upon with regard to PLETs and how they envision students, citizens, and their futures.

While these may be seen as extreme or radical perspectives, they must not be dismissed out of fear or desire for a(n easier) middle ground. Rather, if we are committed to bridging the academic silo to the public sphere, it is crucial to grapple with the ways in which these criticisms ring true, regardless of the discomfort or lack of imagined or ‘practical’ alternatives or solutions—though imagined alternatives exist (Giroux, 2016b; Janks, 2014; Lemke, 2008; Tuck & Yang, 2018; see also [Appendix H](#) for bibliography of imagined alternatives). One may wonder, ‘what of hope, then?’ (Freire, 2014), for which I offer: the knowledge that through intentional criticality, we as individuals can shed the shackles of common-sense and oppressive thinking, that we can (in small ways and big) unlearn our harmful biases, can learn practices of empathy, care, and restorative and transformative justice is hope; the knowledge that there are ongoing individual and collective struggles and resistances to such harm and oppression is hope; knowing and claiming our rights as humans is hope; participation is hope; disruption, good-trouble, and action are hope; that we are more powerful together than apart is hope.

Giroux (2016b) names criticality as crucial for moving beyond pedagogies of repression along neoliberal lines; so too must we use criticality to shed pedagogies of oppression and othering (including those discussed in relation to deficit and deviance). We must listen to the voices and experiences of those who have historically and systemically been and still are marginalized by education policy and practice. Those involved in policy making and strategic planning must understand their relative power within an intersecting hierarchy and start to reflect a more socially conscious and just approach to education. While much of this comes through the particular paradigms, pedagogies, and political affiliations that particular education systems subscribe to, meaningful change can also be made and sustained through thinking strategically about language, ideology, and power—that is, in how we think, talk, and write about (discursively construct) students and citizens (and teachers) as well as the overall goals of public education. We need to bring our whole and critical selves to the work of bringing together theory and practice through recursive and evolving reflection and action (*praxis*; Freire, 1996) in order to reduce harm and oppression and create positive change (Giroux, 2016b). We must commit to discomfort, to the overdue reckoning of privilege, and to being *accomplices* in the struggle for social justice in education and the world at large.

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APPENDIX A: SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

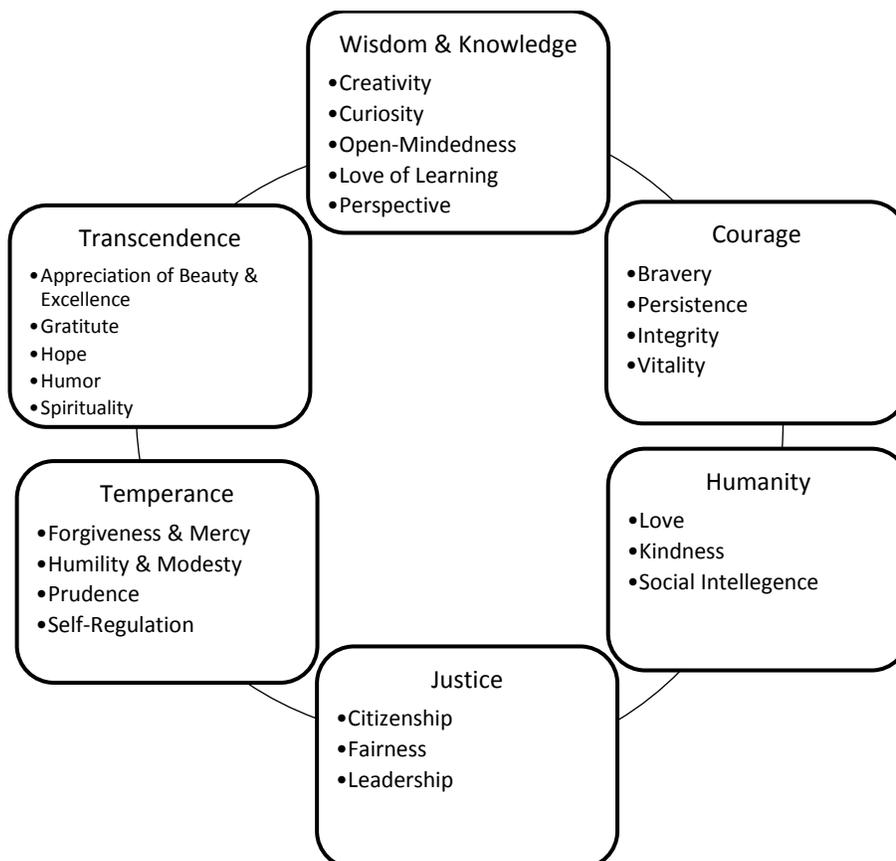
Figure 19*Peterson and Seligman's (2004) Classification of Character Strengths and Virtues*

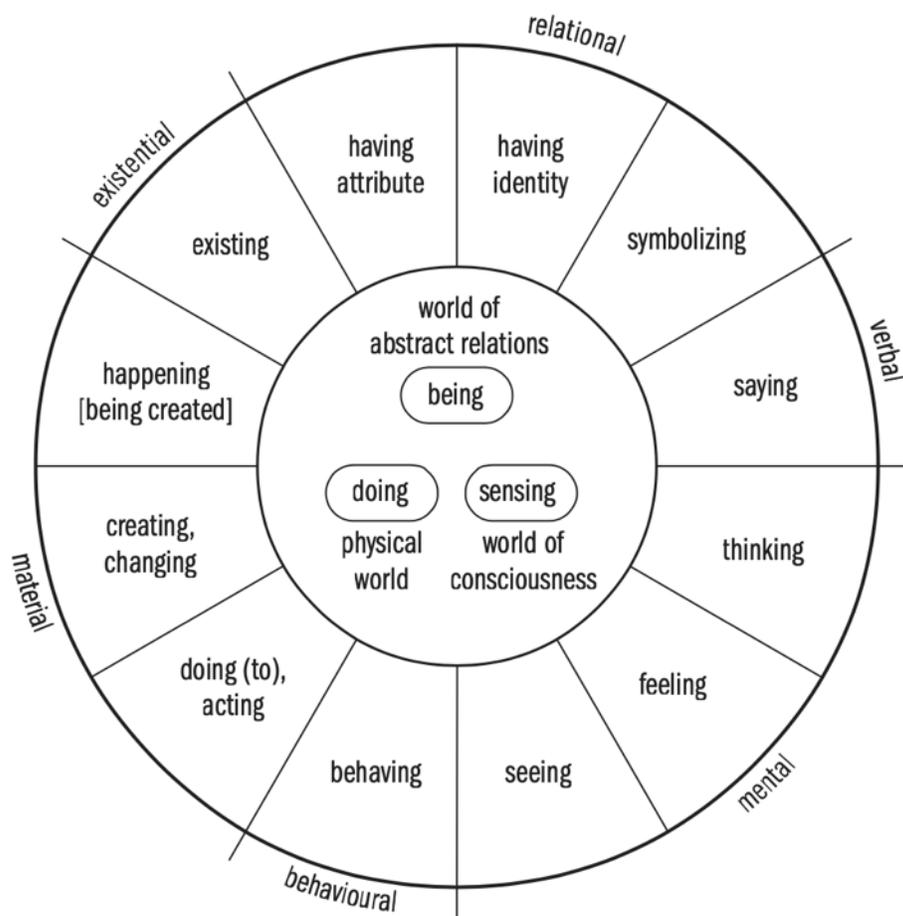
Table 33

Ferkany and Creed's (2014) "Perennial Criticisms of Character Education"

Categorization	Criticism	Authors of Criticism
Behaviourist Criticism	Character education "is didactic and crudely behaviorist" (p. 572)	Kohn, A. (1997). How not to teach values: A critical look at character education.
Situationist Criticism	"presupposes the existence of psychological features, or character traits, that either do not exist or that do not predict moral behavior anyway" (p. 572)	Lockwood, A. L. (2009). <i>The case for character education: A developmental approach</i> . Yu, T. (2004). <i>In the name of morality: Character education and political control</i> . Alfano, M. (2013). <i>Character as moral fiction</i> .
Developmental Criticism	"insensitive to developmental differences between younger and older children" (p. 572)	Lockwood, A. L. (2009). <i>Ibid.</i>
Decision-Making Criticism	"not action-guiding and fails to teach moral reasoning and decision making" (p. 572)	Lockwood, A. L. (2009). <i>Ibid.</i>
Victim-Blaming Criticism	"its deployment in urban schools is a victim-blaming solution to problems urban children face" (p. 572)	Yu, T. (2004). <i>Ibid.</i> DeVitis, J. L., & Yu, T. (2011). The 'moral poverty' of character education. In <i>Character and moral education: A reader</i> (pp. 53-63)
Cultural Imperialist Criticism	"culturally imperialist, racist, religious, or ideologically conservative because it valorizes a particular set of (mostly WASP-ish) values as objective human virtues, whereas what counts as a virtue, or as a vice, varies cross-culturally" (p. 573)	Yu, T. (2004). <i>Ibid.</i> Morton, J. (2013). Cultural code-switching: Straddling the achievement gap. Smagorinsky, P., & Taxel, J. (2005). <i>The discourse of character education: culture wars in the classroom</i> . Kohn, A. (1997). <i>Ibid.</i>

Figure 20

Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) *"The Grammar of Experience: Types of Process in English"* (p. 216)



APPENDIX B: PROVINCIAL INFORMATION

Table 34
Canadian Confederation Dates

Year Joined	Provinces/Territories
1867	New Brunswick (NB), Nova Scotia (NS), Ontario (ON), Québec (QC)
1870	Manitoba (MB), Northwest Territories (NT)
1871	British Columbia (BC)
1873	Prince Edward Island (PE)
1898	Yukon (YT)
1905	Alberta (AB), Saskatchewan (SK)
1949	Newfoundland and Labrador (NL)
1999	Nunavut (NU)

Table 35
Canadian Provinces and Territories by per Capital GDP

Rank	Province/Territory	GDP per capita (CAD\$, 2015)	GDP (million CAD\$, 2015)
1	Northwest Territories	109,122	4,828
2	Alberta	78,100	326,433
3	Yukon	72,473	2,710
4	Saskatchewan	70,138	79,415
5	Nunavut	66,982	2,447
6	Newfoundland & Labrador	56,935	30,100
7	Ontario	55,322	763,276
8	British Columbia	53,267	249,981
9	Manitoba	50,820	65,862
10	Quebec	46,126	380,972
11	New Brunswick	43,818	33,052
12	Nova Scotia	42,640	40,225
13	Prince Edward Island	42,157	6,186

Note. Adapted from Sawe (2017).

Table 36
Current and Recent Provincial and Territorial Elected Governments

Prov./Ter.	Current (2020)	Previous	Contextual Notes
BC	John Horgan, NDP (2017-pres)	Christy Clark, LPC* (2011-17)	*Liberal Party of Canada
AB	Jason Kenney, UCP* (2019-pres)	Rachel Notley, NDP** (2015-19); Alison Redford, PCAA*** (2011-14)	*United Conservative Party – formed in 2017 from PCAA and Wildrose Party **New Democratic Party ***Progressive Conservative Association of Alberta
SK	Scott Moe, Saskatchewan Party* (2018-pres)	Brad Wall, Saskatchewan Party (2007-18)	*Conservative centre-right – formed in 1997 from a coalition of PCP and LPC who sought to remove NDP from power
MB	Brian Pallister, PC (2016-pres)	Greg Selinger, NDP (2009-16)	
ON	Doug Ford, PC (2016-pres)	Kathleen Wynne, LPC (2013-18); Dalton McGuinty, LPC (2003-13)	
QC	Francois Legault, Coalition Avenir Quebec / Coalition for Quebec's Future* (2018-pres)	Phillippe Couillard, LPC (2014-18)	*Centre-right to right-wing, non-sovereigntist but wants more autonomy
NB	Blain Higgs, PC (2018-pres)	Brian Alexander Gallant, LPC (2014-18)	
NS	Stephen McNeil, LPC (2013-pres)	Darrel Dexter, NDP (2009-13)	
NL	Dwight Ball, LPC (2015-pres)	Paul Davis, PC (2014-15)	
PE	Dennis King, PC (2019-pres)	Wade MacLauchlan, LPC (2015-29)	
YT	Sandy Silver, LPC (2016-pres)	Darrell Pasloski, Yukon Party* (2011-16); Dennis Fentie, Yukon Party (2002-11)	*Right-wing conservative
NT*	Caroline Cochrane, 2019-pres)	Bob McLeod (2011-19)	*NWT has a consensus government ^a – Premier is elected by and from the non-partisan members of the Legislative Assembly
NU*	Joe Savikataaq (2018-pres)	Paul Quassa (2017-18)*; Peter Taptuna (2013-17)	*Since its formation, Nunavut has had a consensus government. *Removed by non-confidence vote

^aA consensus government is typically used by territories with large Indigenous populations to blend Indigenous systems of governing with the Westminster system. They are non-partisan and the cabinet are appointed by the legislature.

APPENDIX C: EDUCATION SPENDING

Figure 21
Federal Government Total Expenditure on Education (Adapted from [World Bank, 2020](#))

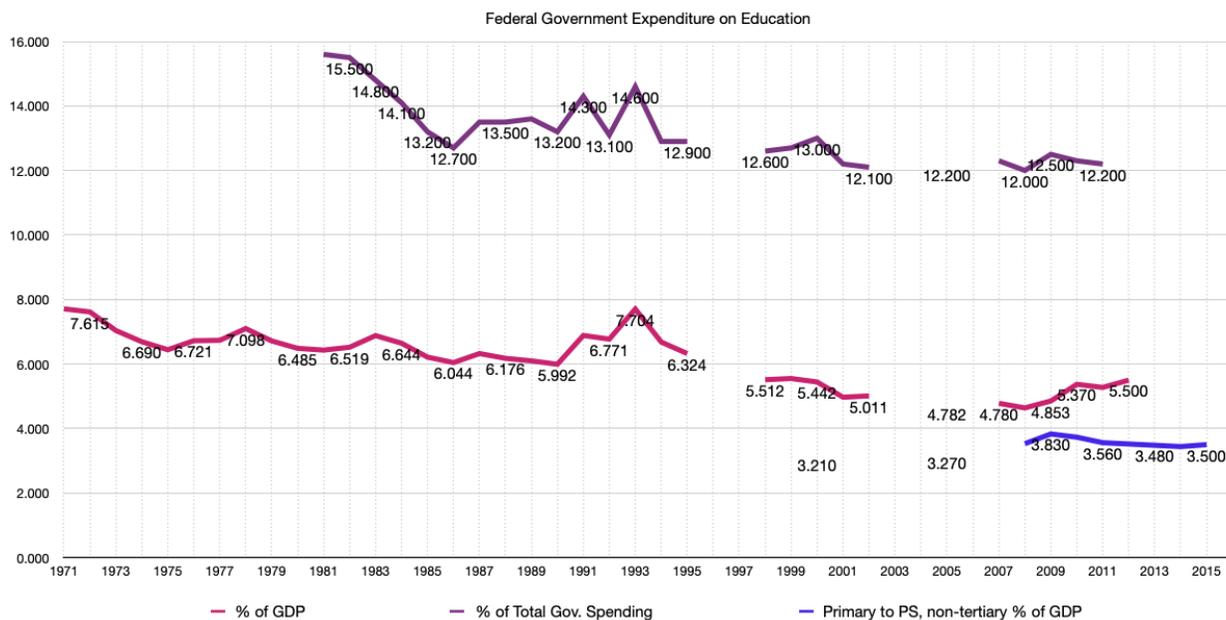
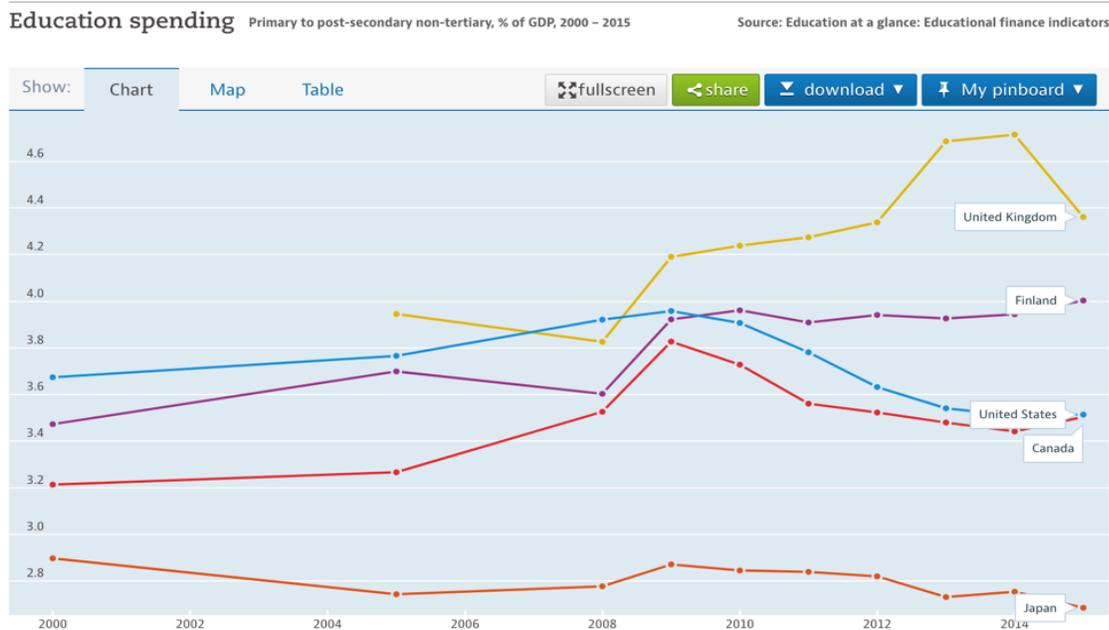
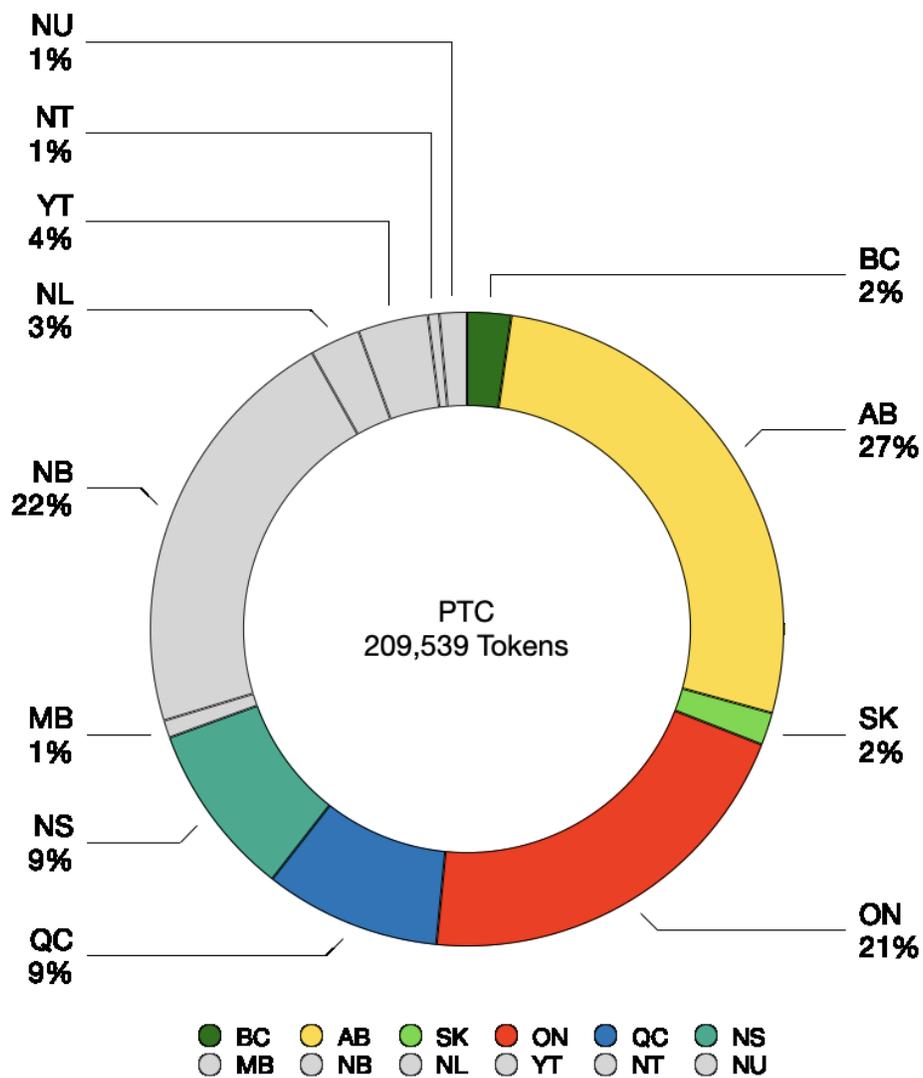


Figure 22
Primary to Post-Secondary Non-Tertiary, % of GDP Education Spending 2000-2015 (OECD, 2020a).



APPENDIX D: ADDITIONAL CORPUS AND CORPUS SOFTWARE INFORMATION

PTC Subcorpora Breakdown**Figure 23***PTC Subcorpora Breakdown*

Note. Selected Provincial Subcorpora (SPSC) appear in colour rather than grey

Stop Word List

A, an, and, as, at, be, by, for, from, if, in, is, it, of, on, or, s, that, the, this, to, with, xa, xd

Sketch Engine “Compare Corpora”

Sketch Engine can only generate comparisons of up to eight corpora at a time, and thus, the matrix in Figure 24 below was initially generated through Sketch Engine in several parts and the scores and colour-coding were imported into a spreadsheet and adapted into a larger matrix.

Figure 24

PTC Comparison to Other Corpora (Generated by Sketch Engine)

	PTC	English Web (2018)	English Web (2015)	English Web (2013)	English Wikipedia	Open American Corpus (Written)	Open American Corpus (Spoken)	BNC	DOAJ	British Law Report Corpus	Medical Web Corpus
PTC	1.00	4.25	3.87	4.59	4.85	4.74	8.95	5.05	5.00	5.77	5.09
English Web (2018)	4.25	1.00	1.27	1.28	2.17	1.81	4.16	1.60	2.78	2.96	2.15
English Web (2015)	3.87	1.27	1.00	1.40	2.09	1.92	4.43	1.70	2.83	3.06	2.31
English Web (2013)	4.59	1.28	1.40	1.00	2.44	1.98	3.58	1.60	3.21	3.13	2.31
English Wikipedia	4.85	2.17	2.09	2.44	1.00	2.31	6.25	2.42	3.06	3.36	2.78
Open American Corpus (Written)	4.74	1.81	1.92	1.98	2.31	1.00	4.58	2.05	2.19	3.07	2.13
Open American Corpus (Spoken)	8.95	4.16	4.43	3.58	6.25	4.58	1.00	3.79	7.39	6.18	5.28
British National Corpus (BNC)	5.05	1.60	1.70	1.60	2.42	2.05	3.79	1.00	3.27	2.83	2.33
Open Access Journals (DOAJ)	5.00	2.78	2.83	3.21	3.06	2.19	7.39	3.27	1.00	4.02	2.55
British Law Report Corpus	5.77	2.96	3.06	3.13	3.36	3.07	6.18	2.83	4.02	1.00	3.47
Medical Web Corpus	5.09	2.15	2.31	2.31	2.78	2.13	5.28	2.33	2.55	3.47	1.00

Within this matrix, 1.00 (and fully green) indicates that the corresponding corpora are the exact same, and the higher the number (moving from lime, to chartreuse, to yellow, to oranges, to reds), the more the corresponding corpora differ. As both the numbers and colour coding indicate, the spoken Open American National Corpus stands out as the most different from the other corpora, followed by the PTC, then the British Law Report Corpus, while the open/general web content corpora are quite similar to one another. In looking at the PTC in comparison to other corpora, the PTC differs the most from the spoken corpus and is most similar to the English Web 2013 (enTenTen13) corpus. The main takeaway from this matrix is that the PTC is a distinct, specialized corpus with key words such as *Alberta*, *post-secondary*, *kindergarten*, *Métis*, and *Inuit* (referenced to BNC, Written Open American National Corpus, and enTenTen15) and key phrases such as *high school*, *student achievement*, *life planning*, *educational success* (referenced to BNC).

Transitive Processes Belonging to Student(s)

Table 37

Transitive Processes Belonging to Students

Modals	Relational	Behavioural	Material	Mental	Verbal
will (44)	are (109)	develop (23)	enrolled (11)	understand (7)	reported (2)
can (39)	have (42)	learning (20)	make (10)	know (6)	
may (29)	were (3)	learn (18)	receive (6)	feel (5)	
must (25)		achieve (14)	registered (5)	reflect (5)	
should (22)		become (11)	take (5)	value (5)	
shall (2)		acquire (9)	graduate (4)	sense (5)	
		attain/ing (6)	use (4)	build (4)	
		succeed (5)	attend (3)	require (4)	
		change (4)	begin (3)	experience (3)	
		meet (4)	exiting (3)	plan (3)	
		participating (4)	leave (3)	see (3)	
		reading (4)	move (3)	benefit (2)	
		access (3)	taking (3)	imagine (2)	
		demonstrate (3)	transition (3)	transfer (2)	
		engage (3)	attending (2)	want (2)	
		face (3)	bring (2)	gain (1)	
		identify (3)	come (2)		
		share (3)	change (2)		
		work (3)	enrolling (2)		
		approach (2)	get (2)		
		attain (2)	obtained (2)		
		complete (2)	writing (2)		
		explore (2)	transfer (2)		
		change (2)	go (1)		
		grow (2)			
		monitor (2)			
		participate (2)			
		progress (2)			
		set (2)			
		show (2)			
		go (1)			
161	154	155	85	54	2
26.4%	25.2%	25.4%	13.9%	8.8%	0.3%

Corpus Software Interfaces

Figure 25
Screenshot of AntConc Software Interface

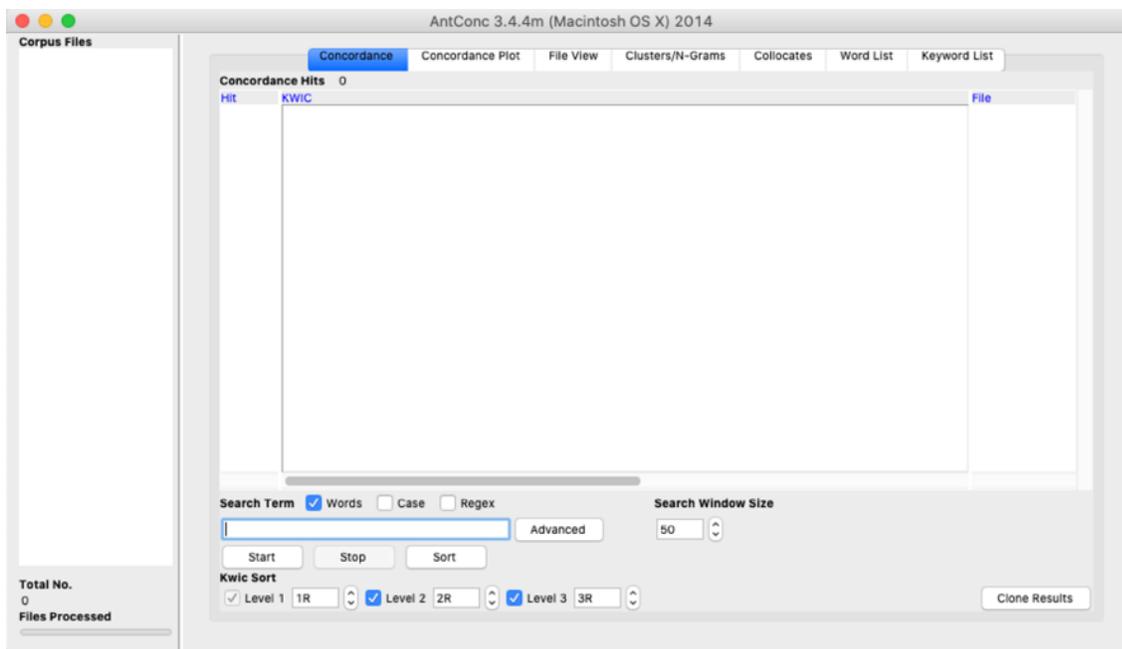
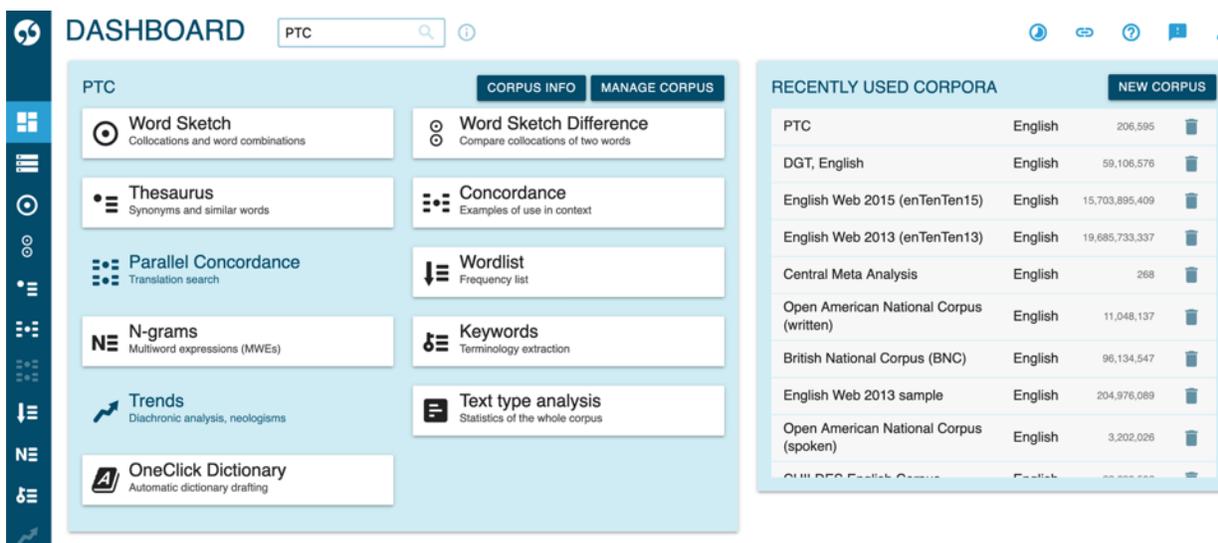


Figure 26
Screenshot of Sketch Engine Website Interface



APPENDIX E: PISA SCORES AND AVERAGES

Figure 27
 2018 PISA Score Averages of G7 Countries (Adapted from OECD, 2020bcd)

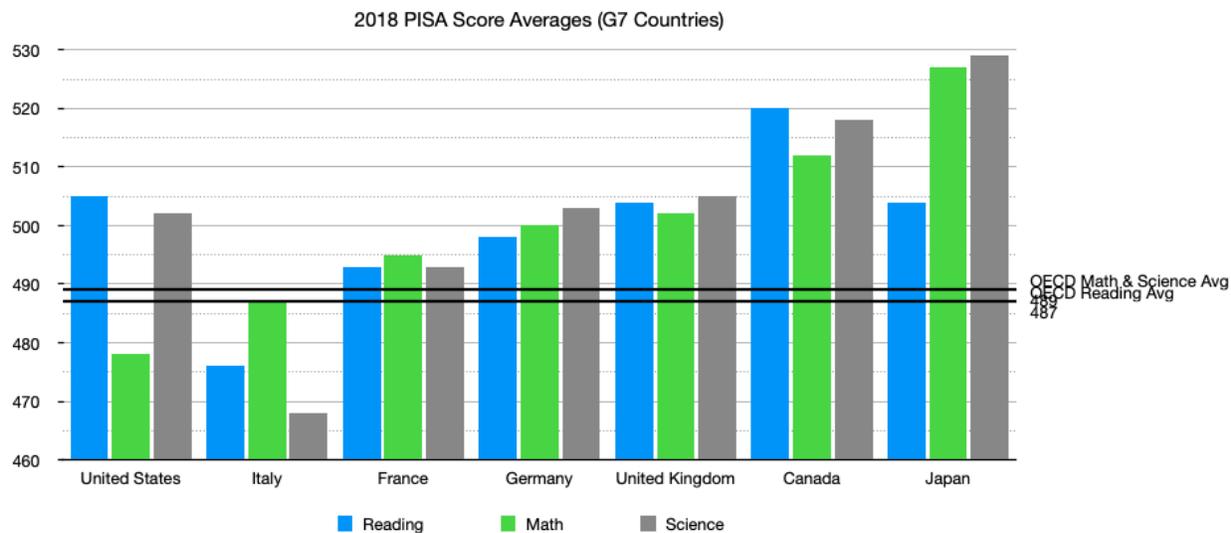


Figure 28
 2018 Canadian PISA Scores (Adapted from CMEC, 2018)

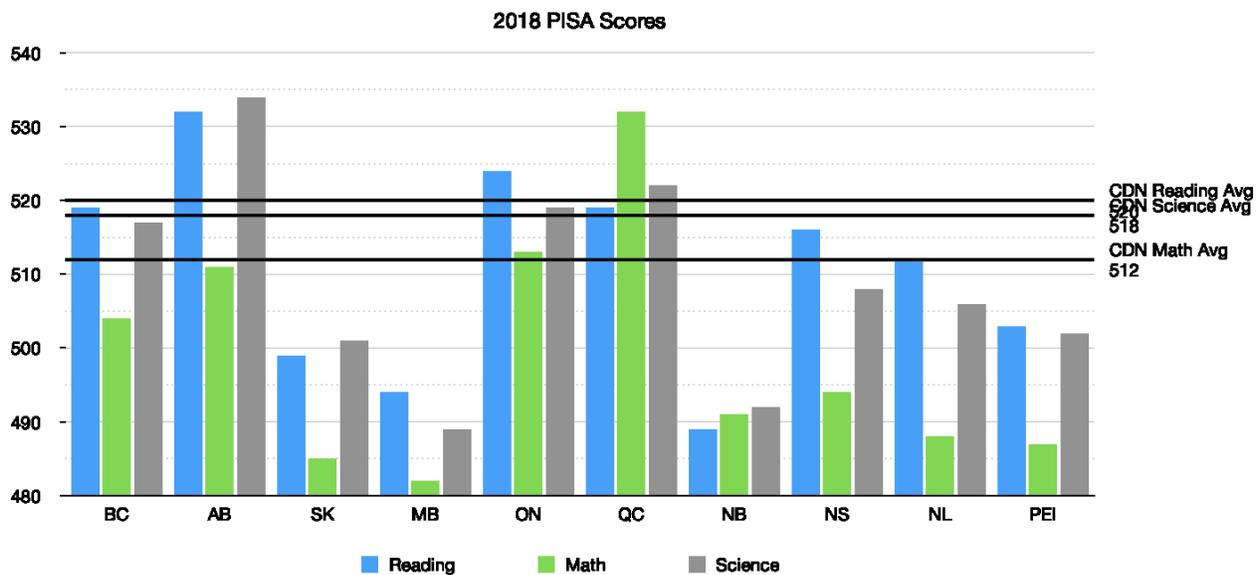


Figure 29
 2015 Provincial PISA Scores (Adapted from CMEC, 2015)

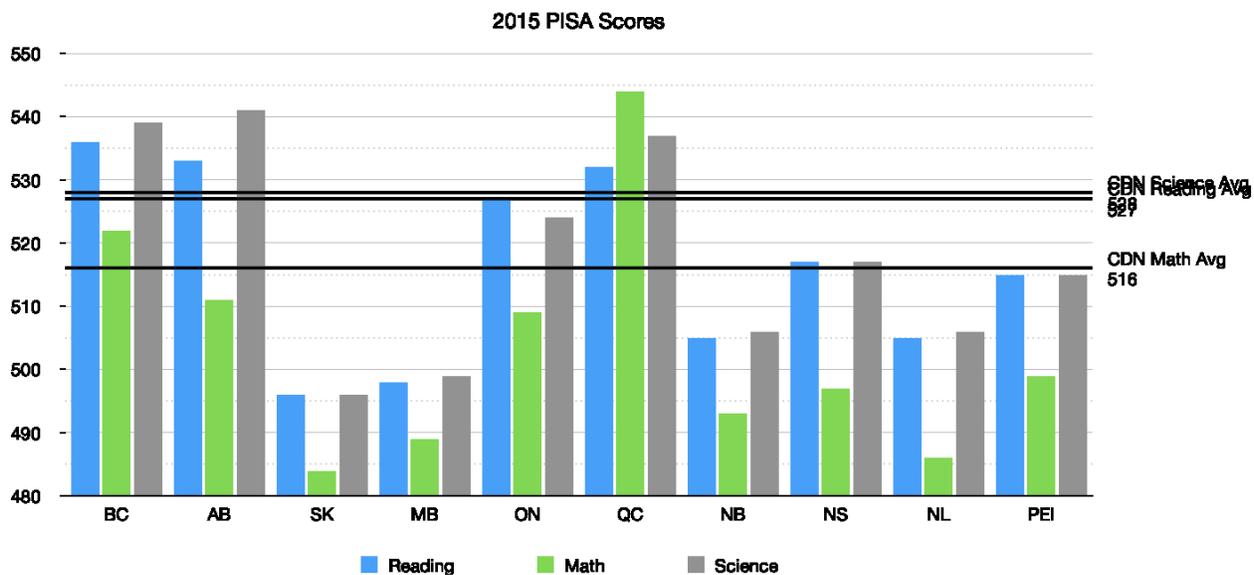
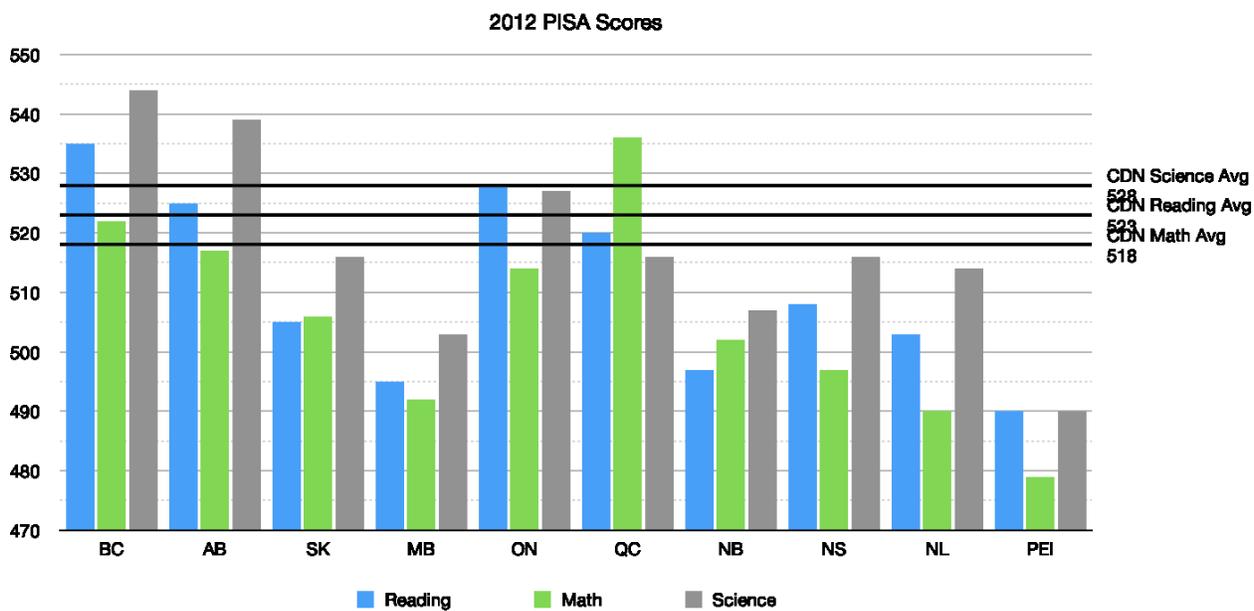


Figure 30
 2012 Provincial PISA Scores (Adapted from CMEC, 2012)



APPENDIX F: TRC'S CALLS TO ACTION FOR EDUCATION

1. We call upon the Government of Canada to repeal Section 43 of the Criminal Code of Canada.
2. We call upon the federal government to develop with Aboriginal groups a joint strategy to eliminate educational and employment gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.
3. We call upon the federal government to eliminate the discrepancy in federal education funding for First Nations children being educated on reserves and those First Nations children being educated off reserves.
4. We call upon the federal government to prepare and publish annual reports comparing funding for the education of First Nations children on and off reserves, as well as educational and income attainments of Aboriginal peoples in Canada compared with non-Aboriginal people.
5. We call on the federal government to draft new Aboriginal education legislation with the full participation and informed consent of Aboriginal peoples. The new legislation would include a commitment to sufficient funding and would incorporate the following principles:
 - i. Providing sufficient funding to close identified educational achievement gaps within one generation.
 - ii. Improving education attainment levels and success rates.
 - iii. Developing culturally appropriate curricula.
 - iv. Protecting the right to Aboriginal languages, including the teaching of Aboriginal languages as credit courses.
 - v. Enabling parental and community responsibility, control, and accountability, similar to what parents enjoy in public school systems.
 - vi. Enabling parents to fully participate in the education of their children.
 - vii. Respecting and honouring Treaty relationships.
6. We call upon the federal government to provide adequate funding to end the backlog of First Nations students seeking a post-secondary education.
7. We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to develop culturally appropriate early childhood education programs for Aboriginal families.

[\(TRC, 2015, pp. 1-2\)](#)

APPENDIX G: A PROGRAMME OF SUGGESTED CANADIAN *EDUCATIONAL POLICYSCAPE* RESEARCH

There are several sites of investigation distinguished in the bullets below:

- A chronological critical discourse study of particular provinces/territories' policy-level texts education (PLETs) in Canada (similar to that of Rogers, 2018);
- A chronological or targeted critical discourse study of supranational organizations such as the OECD's and/or UNESCO's PLETs;
- Chronological or targeted critical discourse studies of other provincial or national policy-influencers' texts:
 - Provincial/inter-provincial: [People for Education](#) (P4E); [Here for Students](#); [Support our Students](#) (SOS); [Parents for Choice in Education](#) (PCE);
 - National: [Council of Ministers of Education, Canada](#) (CMEC); the [EdCan Network](#) (formerly Canadian Education Association); [Canadians for 21st Century Learning](#) (C21);
- Chronological or targeted critical discourse studies of issue-based policies (e.g., dis/ability policies, inclusion policies, Indigenous policies, anti-bullying policies);
- A taking-stock of and/or critical investigation of imagined and/or piloted alternatives, surrounding discourses, and perhaps related sociological inquiry.

These investigations may ask similar research questions to my own (discursive constructions of particular social actors), or branch into other areas of interest in an effort to weave a broader and/or deeper understanding of the educational *policyscape* in Canada and its constituent regions, provinces, territories, and locales (Carney, 2012; Fenwick & Edwards, 2010).

APPENDIX H: BIBLIOGRAPHY OF RESOURCES ON IMAGINED ALTERNATIVES IN EDUCATION

The bibliography below includes resources from a variety of perspectives and identities and a wide spectrum of sources from academic and peer reviewed to public and informal. Imagined alternatives and futures must privilege voices that have traditionally been silenced, excluded, and gate-kept from academic and mainstream conversations. The collection below is not exhaustive but may be a starting point for those wishing to take up the work of reimagining a more inclusive and just education and world.

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