Producing “Good” Citizens: A critical discourse analysis of the
Ontario Ministry of Education’s publication, *Achieving
excellence*

by

Codie Fortin Lalonde

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral
Affairs in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Applied Linguistics and Discourse Studies

Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario

© 2016, Codie Fortin Lalonde

Abstract

Researchers are concerned that education is increasingly pressured and influenced by market-driven agendas which may compromise or usurp education as a vehicle for social justice and critical thinking. In this study, I employ Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a theoretical framework and research method to examine the discursive construction of education in the Ontario Ministry of Education's (OME) 2014 publication entitled, *Achieving excellence: A renewed vision for education in Ontario* (hereafter referred to as *Achieving excellence*). I use Fairclough's three dimensional framework to look at metaphors, lexical choices, and multimodal features within the text. My findings suggest that *Achieving excellence* discursively constructs education as a path to employment and connects employment to good citizenship. This appears to be a trend within neoliberal society, which requires further critical study.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisors Dr. Jaffer Sheyholislami and Dr. Janna Fox for their superb guidance. Their expertise, encouragement, and advice came together to create a balance in my work. Dr. Sheyholislami provided detailed feedback and wise academic advice. Without knowing it, Dr. Fox's words have picked me up and dusted me off many times. Thanks are also due to the superb faculty in this department in general, and more specifically to Joan Grant for always living up to the "Joan Knows" folklore, and to Natasha Artemeva for planting the seed all those years ago.

I would like to express my gratitude to both of my parents. My Mom for listening, reading drafts, and printing and mailing me endless articles and book chapters as well as for understanding and encouraging my passion. My Dad for his sense of humour, encouragement, and his contagious pride in me. Thank you to my extended and enormous family for always supporting me. My grandparents (Memere, Nana and Papa, and Grandad) for always sending me home with leftovers, to Aunt Janna and Uncle Kerry for providing coffee and discussion, to my sister, Kayla for daily pictures of my beautiful nephew, and to my cousin, Brett for devotedly cheering me on through it all. Last, I must acknowledge my friends (Lisa, Rebecca, Lindsay) and colleagues in the ALDS program for making the countless hours spent in the grad lounge enjoyable. The pastiche of deep and stimulating conversations, peer review, laughing, and music has been a wonderful balance to the excellent academia within this department. This collection of brilliant people has truly been a pinnacle of success in this program.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	i
Acknowledgements.....	ii
Table of Contents	iii
List of Tables	vi
List of Figures.....	viii
List of Appendices	ix
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Impetus and Purpose.....	1
Background	2
Research Approach – Critical Discourse Analysis	6
Thesis Overview.....	7
CHAPTER 2: SOCIOHISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND	
CONTEXTUALISATION.....	9
Education in Canada and Ontario	9
The Past.....	10
The Present.....	21
CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH -	
CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS	27
Overview of CDA.....	27
History of CDA	30
Fairclough’s Three Dimensional Approach	32

Marketization of Public Discourse	37
CDA and Education.....	40
The Text.....	46
Procedures and Analysis	49
Stage 1	50
Stage 2	51
Stage 3	51
Analytic Tools	52
Metaphor	53
Use of Pronoun “We”	55
Overlexicalisation.....	56
Buzzwords.....	56
Absence	58
Multimodality.....	59
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS, INTERPRETATION, AND DISCUSSION.....	61
Metaphor Analysis.....	61
Education as a Sector, System, and Building	61
Students as Human Capital	65
Future as Path.....	69
Micro Discussion.....	71
Lexical Analysis	72
Politics of Inclusion and Synthetic Personalisation.....	72
Overlexicalisation.....	75
Buzzwords.....	88
Visual and Interactive Elements Analysis	100

Images	100
Wordle	101
Micro Discussion.....	105
CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, LIMITATIONS, FUTURE DIRECTIONS, AND	
CONCLUSION.....	106
Summary and Discussion of the Findings	106
Limitations and Future Directions.....	111
Conclusion	112
References	115
Appendices	133

List of Tables

Table 1. <i>CDA Tools</i>	34
Table 2. <i>Education as Sector/System/Building</i>	62
Table 3. <i>Students as human capital</i>	65
Table 4. <i>Significant Clusters for “we”</i>	73
Table 5. <i>Significant Clusters for “our”</i>	73
Table 6. <i>Overlexicalisation within Achieving excellence</i>	76
Table 7. <i>Frequent Clusters for Group 1</i>	77
Table 8. <i>Frequent Clusters for Group 2</i>	78
Table 10. <i>Frequent Clusters for Group 3</i>	80
Table 11. <i>Frequent Clusters for Group 4</i>	82
Table 12. <i>Frequent Clusters for Group 5</i>	84
Table 12. <i>Frequency of Actors</i>	86
Table 13. <i>Coding Spreadsheet</i>	141
Table 14. <i>Word Frequency List</i>	142

List of Figures

<i>Figure 1. Citizenship Responsibilities in Canada</i>	23
<i>Figure 2. Drug testing</i>	24
<i>Figure 3. Fairclough's three dimensional model for discourse</i>	33
<i>Figure 4. Image from <i>Achieving excellence</i></i>	47
<i>Figure 5. Bookmark view of <i>Achieving excellence</i> in PDF version</i>	48
<i>Figure 6. Blended metaphor - education as sector and system</i>	63
<i>Figure 7. Blended metaphor - education as a system and building</i>	64
<i>Figure 8. Agents in the education system</i>	67
<i>Figure 9. OME's ideal path to the future</i>	70
<i>Figure 10. Equality vs. equity (Retrieved from http://kpr.me/106UF6)</i>	98
<i>Figure 11. Cover wordle of <i>Achieving excellence</i> (2014)</i>	102
<i>Figure 12. Full-text generated wordle of <i>Achieving excellence</i> (2014)</i>	103
<i>Figure 13. "Characteristics of the knowledge economy"</i>	133
<i>Figure 14. Canadian Dollar 2007-2015</i>	134
<i>Figure 15. Canadian Dollar April 2013-April 2014</i>	134
<i>Figure 16. Job Bank's Outlook for Secondary School Teachers 2013-2015</i>	135
<i>Figure 17. Job Bank's Outlook for Secondary School Teachers 2015-2017</i>	135
<i>Figure 18. Page 4 and 5 of <i>Achieving excellence</i></i>	137
<i>Figure 19. Page 5 and 7 of <i>Achieving excellence</i></i>	138
<i>Figure 20. Coding Example - Legend</i>	139
<i>Figure 21. Coding example</i>	140

List of Appendices

Appendix A133

Appendix B134

Appendix C137

Appendix D139

The true purpose of education is to make minds, not careers.
 -William Deresiewicz

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Impetus and Purpose

In most of Western society, people spend nearly a quarter or more of their life attaining education through formal schooling. What is taught in the classroom is dependent upon teaching practices, curriculum, and educational policies, which are further influenced by societal values, social structures, power relations, and so on (Lemke, 2008; Kress, 2011; Westheimer, 2015; Fairclough, 2011). All of these parts of the whole (of course), are not stagnant, but perpetually developing and/or changing to reflect the society in which they exist (socially constructed and mediated), and are realised through text(s) and discourse(s) (Lemke, 1995; Fairclough, 1989; Kress, 2011; Rogers, 2011). Westheimer (2015) states that “Pressures from parents, school boards, and a broad cultural shift in educational priorities have resulted in schools across North America being seen primarily as conduits for individual success”—e.g., “career preparation and individual economic gain”—with the result that “increasingly, lessons aimed at exploring democratic responsibilities have been crowded out” (para. 3). This presents a serious issue for those who subscribe to the perspective that education should facilitate and develop critical thinking and engagement in the service of a more socially just society. These concerns have provided motivation for exploring education in Ontario. Accordingly, this study employs critical discourse analysis (CDA) as a framework to examine an educational text titled, *Achieving excellence: A renewed vision for education in Ontario* (hereafter referred to as *Achieving excellence*) which was published by the

Ontario Ministry of Education (OME) in April 2014. The purpose of this examination is to explore the OME's discursive construction of education, as well as to determine which sociocultural aspects and ideologies of Western society filter into the text. *Achieving excellence* appears to be aimed at parents, and is available to the public through the OME's [website](#) in both official languages (English and French). In this text, the OME discusses its successes over the past decade and presents its renewed goals for the future of public education in Ontario, which include raising expectations for educational staff, students, and parents as well as enthusiastic facilitation of entrepreneurial innovation.

Background

Less than a few centuries ago, education was largely conceived of as a privilege for elite groups in society. With expanding populations and the progress toward industry, science, and technology, education for a wider population became necessary for the transition to modern society (Lawr & Gidney, 1973; Osborne, 1999). Through a utilitarian viewpoint, labourers that could read and understand instructions for various factory machinery would better suit capitalist needs (Lawr & Gidney, 1973; Osborne, 1999). Fast-forward to today, and education is often thought of as a basic human right, as well as a ladder to higher social status and a key to freedom from oppression ([Mitra, 2013](#); [Yousafzai, 2014](#)). Many argue that education should strive for the betterment of humanity through promotion of human rights, critical and imaginative thinking and inquiry, and compassion (Huxley, 1963; Lemke, 2007; Westheimer, 2010; Janks, 2014). However, while education has made impressive progress in a relatively short time period, it typically reflects the social contexts within which it exists (Kress, 2011; Lemke, 2008). Kress (2011) suggests that education is “embedded in the social”; thus, “it is the product

of social agents, structures, processes, values, purposes, and constraints. In its forms and processes it reflects the society in which it exists—in all ways and with all its contradictions” (p. 205). Thus, the potential influence that societal structures (such as globalisation, neoliberalism, and the knowledge economy) may have on education should be reflected upon.

With globalisation at the forefront of the developed (and developing) world, those who are in charge of and/or influence education have called for schooling to match the business and technology driven skillset that is “needed” for their respective nations to be successful (Mulderrig, 2008; Fairclough, 2003; See also [Tsaparis, 2014](#)). This line of thinking is in many respects a product of the *global knowledge economy*, which refers generally to the shift in economic praxis from industrial- and labour-based to knowledge-based, placing emphasis on institutionalised and standardized education (Olssen & Peters, 2005; see [Appendix A](#) for more information). Within the knowledge economy, humans are viewed as capital, which defines individuals by their economic potential—knowledge, skills, characteristics, and participation in consumer behaviour (Mulderrig, 2003a). In this paradigm, desired skills are connected to in-demand job and career paths (Mulderrig, 2008), and concepts of citizenship link individual responsibilities to burgeoning the economy through employment and consumer behaviour (Lee, 2015; Mulderrig, 2003b). Both the knowledge economy and human capital are facets of the neoliberal ideology¹ that underpins western society (Olssen & Peters, 2005).

¹ 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” (Harvey, 2005, p. 2).

Fairclough (2003) points out that governments at various levels “take it as a mere fact of life (though a ‘fact’ produced in part by inter-governmental agreements) that all must bow to the emerging logic of a globalizing knowledge-driven economy, and have embraced or at least made adjustments to ‘neo-liberalism’” (p. 4). Accordingly, many scholars are concerned that the more humanistic, democratic, and critical components of education have taken a back seat to economic goals and agendas (Mulderigg, 2012, 2008, 2003ab²; Giroux, 2012, 2001; Lemke, 2007; Westheimer, 2010; Olssen & Peters, 2005; Zhang & O’Halloran, 2013; Pini, 2011).

Businesses and corporations have become partners in education, and international organisations such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank have become influential in the development of educational policy and curricula (Lemke, 1995; Fairclough, 2003, 1993; Olssen & Peters, 2005). Giroux (2001) takes the position that given the current corporate and right wing assault on public and higher education, coupled with the emergence of a moral and political climate that has shifted to a new Social Darwinism, the issues which framed the democratic meaning, purpose, and use to which education might aspire have been displaced by more vocational and narrowly ideological considerations (p. ix).

In other words, it has become apparent that in the past few decades, education has embedded within it a neoliberal ideology³ which values education as pre-job training to

² These two publications are very similar.

³ For the purpose of this project, I will borrow Lemke’s (1995) summative definition of the concept of ideology which suggests that “there are some very common meanings we have learned to make, and take for granted as common sense, but which support the power of one social group to dominate another” (p. 12). According to Fairclough (2003), ideological work refers to “the work of making contentious, positioned and interested representations a matter of general ‘common sense’” (p. 82).

enter the workforce. Giroux (2012) has continued this work, arguing that “public schools are increasingly viewed as a business and are prized above all for ‘customer satisfaction’ and efficiency while largely judged through the narrow lens of empirical accountability measures” (p. ix) such as standardized testing. These concerns are mirrored in countless books, academic articles (Polster & Newson, 2015; Pini, 2011; Woodside-Jiron, 2011), and even sometimes in the media ([Monbiot, 2016](#)). Furthermore, Lemke (2008) argues that today’s school systems focus too much attention on what is studied, and too little on who individuals become (p. 35). To borrow from CDA scholar Hilary Janks (2014), it is not enough for students “to learn how to interrogate the world; they need to develop a social conscience served by a critical imagination for redesign” (p. 350)—in other words, education should instill the drive and capacity for action against institutionalized injustice. Notably, CDA of educational discourses has largely occurred in contexts outside of Canada, and this study aims to discover if and how these scholars’ concerns and findings may factor into the context of Ontario, Canada. This project has been guided by the following questions:

- 1) How is education discursively constructed in *Achieving excellence*?
- 2) How is good citizenship discursively constructed in *Achieving excellence*, and how does it connect to education?
- 3) What ideologies appear to underline these discursive constructs?

I briefly outline the analytical approach and social theories that will inform this work below.

Research Approach – Critical Discourse Analysis

CDA has been an effective framework for explicating the discourses of racism, sexism, and other prejudices in a wide variety of texts, from political speeches, to news discourse, to textbooks (Teo, 2007; Barton & Sakwa, 2012; Huckin, 2002). CDA has also been effective in examining educational discourses, from textbooks (Barton & Sakwa, 2012; Chu, 2015) to university job postings (Fairclough, 1993) and school websites (Tlili, 2012; Pini, 2011), to political speeches about education (Mulderigg, 2003ab, 2008, 2012). From the CDA perspective, any communicative event is a social action which is influenced by and influences other social actions; thus, the relationship between [discourse](#) and the social world is both constitutive and dialectical (Rogers, 2011; Lemke, 1995). As the wider discourse(s) about education (curriculum, policies, rules, etc.) influence the discourse(s) of the classroom (learning materials, activities, measurement, etc.), CDA can provide a rich entry into the underlying issues within education (Rogers, 2011). Rogers (2011) states that CDA “provides the tools for addressing the complexity of movement across educational sites, practices, and systems in a world where inequalities are global in scope” (p. 1), and is thus well suited for a detailed examination of *Achieving excellence*.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a framework (complete with a set of various tools, see [Chapter 3](#)) with which to examine the power relations and ideologies constructed through and perpetuated by texts and discourses. CDA is driven by the “link between language, power and ideology” and thus, is “committed to political intervention and social change” (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 4). In relation, an important principle of CDA is connecting the text(s) examined to the social context in which they have been

produced to gain a holistic understanding of the text(s)'s potential meanings and impacts. Scholars such as Norman Fairclough (1993) and Jane Mulderrig (2003ab, 2008) in the UK, and Jay Lemke (2007, 2008) and Rebecca Rogers (2011) in the US, have used CDA to critically examine and question the discourses and ideologies that underpin education. Collectively, they have shown that when economic agendas trump social and humanistic goals within education, education may fail to live up to its potential. These scholars have built a foundation from which I have based my work; however, little CDA work has focused on education in Canada or its provinces and territories. Thus, I employ CDA to examine how education has been discursively constructed in *Achieving excellence* as an example and microcosm of broader educational discourse within Canada and the world. Weaving in concepts such as intertextuality, hegemony, neoliberalism, and citizenship, I have chosen to examine three discursive elements of the text: metaphor, lexical features (such as the use of pronouns, overlexicalisation, and buzzwords), as well as visual and interactive elements (discussed further in [Chapter 3](#)). Furthermore, I have used AntConc (Anthony, 2015) as a corpus linguistic tool to aid in the lexical analysis (see [Chapter 3](#)). As a Canadian, born and still living in Ontario, I have chosen to examine *Achieving excellence* because it is locally relevant, and a geographical context that has been understudied. Before moving on, as a visibly white, cisgender female attending a western institution and participating in academia, I must acknowledge the privilege I write from.

Thesis Overview

In line with CDA's principles, upon ending the current chapter I move into the sociohistorical context which backgrounds my examination of *Achieving excellence*. The bulk of this [chapter](#) details the history of education in Canada and Ontario, but also calls

attention to important social events/phenomena that may have influenced *Achieving excellence* in some way.

To make my research and analysis process transparent, [Chapter 3](#) combines theoretical framework with methodological approach and methods. First, I introduce and provide a brief history of CDA. Next, I detail Fairclough's three-dimensional framework, and then move into a review of the salient literature regarding CDA in education, which I build into my own work. I then provide a description of my data—*Achieving excellence*—outlining the structure of the text, its features, and its content, describe the procedures of my analysis, and finally, end the chapter by detailing my chosen CDA tools.

[Chapter 4](#) presents the findings of and discussion about my critical discourse analysis of *Achieving excellence*. The presentation of these findings reflexively incorporates both the sociohistorical context in which the text was produced, and the literature regarding CDA in education. I have structured this chapter to present the metaphor analysis, lexical analyses, and then the multimodal analysis. I interpret and discuss the findings as I present them, but provide a short discussion (termed micro discussion) at the end of each section which ties all of the findings for each separate analysis together.

Last, [Chapter 5](#) includes a summary and brief discussion of my findings altogether in relation to my research questions and sociohistorical context, the limitations of this work, and a conclusion which reflects on this project as a whole and makes a call for continued work in this field.

CHAPTER 2: SOCIOHISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND CONTEXTUALISATION

The previous chapter introduced education and how it may be affected by globalisation, neoliberalism, and the knowledge economy. I outlined my research questions and research approach, and then provided an outline for the structure of the thesis as a whole. This chapter is a brief synthesis of the history of and movements within education in the Canadian context. In other words, this chapter summarizes education as it has been and is practiced in Canada—and more specifically, Ontario. Social historians have been responsible for a bulk of the work regarding the history of education in Canada and Ontario (Bruno-Jofré, 2014), and this section will draw from those sources. The end of the chapter then sketches some thoughts about the future of education, drawing from various scholars in the field. In addition, this chapter will also attend to relevant contextual information outside of education where necessary.

Education in Canada and Ontario

While arguments about how education should be implemented are commonplace in both academic and public arenas, there is typically an agreement that education should prepare the new generations with practical and conceptual knowledge (Lemke, 2007, p. 52). Generally, Canada enjoys a high ranking of its educational practices, with Ontario among the top provinces in Canada (Conference Board of Canada, 2015; Center on International Education Benchmarking, 2015; OECD, 2015). However, it may be naïve to accept the claims of these reports without critical attention to their underlying agendas and their methodologies. Education is a complex entity, influenced by thousands of years of history, culture, knowledge, and ideologies (to name only a few); I cannot pretend that I know all of it, or that it can be detailed in the infinitesimal amount of space allotted.

Thus, the following sections have been broken into the past and present to more easily attend to how education has developed in Canada since European contact, as well as to contextualize the findings of my examination of *Achieving excellence*.

The Past

I have broken this section into three sub-sections to show the major changes that have taken place in the way that education, and particularly schooling, was thought about and implemented in Ontario before the 20th century.

European Contact

As documented from the Western perspective, education in Canada was grown out of the desire to 1) assimilate Aboriginal peoples to the French Catholic culture which was initiated by Samuel de Champlain's settlement of New France in the 17th century (Baldwin, 2008; Pidgeon, 2013); and 2) reinforce the French Catholic culture for new settlers and provide them with basic skills and knowledge (Baldwin, 2008). However, to avoid the risk of accepting and perpetuating terra nullius⁴, it is imperative to acknowledge that Indigenous cultures practiced education in a general sense through various activities and oral traditions.

In his detailed accounts of his voyages from 1612 and 1615-18, Champlain (1880, 1922) describes the Aboriginal peoples as "savages" who have no god. French settlers believed that their religious and cultural practices were superior to the Indigenous practices they had encountered, and that they had a responsibility to "civilise" these

⁴ A Latin phrase meaning 'land belonging to no one', which was enshrined as a principle in European law from the 18th century onwards. It meant that European countries could, in their view, legitimately claim sovereignty over lands deemed unoccupied or without an existing sovereign authority. Such lands were, in fact, inhabited, but Europeans often deemed their inhabitants too primitive and incapable of forming political authority, signing treaties, or using land productively. (Castree, Kitchin, & Rogers, 2013, para. 1)

groups (Baldwin, 2008). Thus, the church took responsibility for education in New France. At first, the Roman Catholics attempted to re-educate Indigenous groups, but faced resistance (Baldwin, 2008). The Jesuits took a more extreme approach and began gender-segregated boarding schools which taught catechism, reading, writing, counting, and the French language. At the girls' boarding school—opened in 1639 and headed by Marie Guyart (more famously known as Marie de l'Incarnation)—female children were also taught about women's work and roles (see Baldwin, 2008). She explains, “the day after our arrival in Quebec, French and Savage girls alike were brought to us in great numbers so that we could educate them in good morals and piety” (as cited in Baldwin, 2008). In this sense, education was more focused on instilling religious values than on producing intellectuals, and took on what would come to be known as a behaviourist approach.⁵

In 1763, the French ceded their power to the British, and in 1791 Upper and Lower Canada were formed as what are now respectively the provinces of Ontario and Quebec (Lawr & Gidney, 1974). Thus, for the most part, education changed to reflect British culture rather than French (Lawr & Gidney, 1974), and the District Public School Act was established in 1807 (Guillet, 1960). Nevertheless, until the mid-19th century, schooling was strictly segregated by sex, and was established, financed, and operated by churches, as well as by private and voluntary groups and individuals (Gidney & Millar, 1990). Guillet (1960) notes that “for the first half-century of the province's history there was not only no system of democratic education but an intense official dislike for any form of democracy, which was assumed to be synonymous with communism, or at least

⁵ This theory positions learners as passive, empty vessels and favours positive and negative reinforcement. Developers of this theory were Watson, Pavlov, and Skinner.

republicanism” (xviii). Schooling was intended for higher classes, and was typically associated with a fee, which means that from today’s perspective, education was private (and elitist). Elementary schools taught the rudimentary basics of counting, reading, and writing, as well as gender-specific skills to students from about the age of 5 to the mid-teens (Gidney & Millar, 1990). After learning the rudiments of the proper subjects, boys from the upper classes were sent to grammar school to learn the classics and prepare for university (Gidney & Millar, 1990; Guillet, 1960). However, secondary school as it is understood today was not established until the mid-19th century (Gidney & Millar, 1990).

Industrial and Technical Revolutions

The industrial era (1760-mid-1800s) marked a shift in thinking with regard to education. Mass production of goods meant a need for mass labourers to work in factories. 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. This can be connected to the promotion of free (universal) schooling by Egerton Ryerson through public taxation (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). The hope was that this kind of indoctrination would transfer when students became employed in factories.

By the technical revolution (1860-1920s; also known as the second wave of the industrial revolution), education had become of central importance in society. The Ontario Educational Association was founded in 1861 (Archives of Ontario) and

schooling became compulsory in Ontario in 1871. Lawr and Gidney (1973) explain that “an enlightened, literate populace would be politically stable, socially cohesive, economically adaptable, and individually moral” (p. 12). Furthermore, schools functioned to inspire nationalism as well as democracy—education became a cardinal right of citizenship (Osborne, 1999).

It must also be acknowledged that residential schooling was solidified during this time, with the passing of the Indian Act in 1867. While I do not have space to fully address the horrific ways in which Indigenous children were treated in residential schools, I must note that the goal was a genocidal assimilation (Armstrong, 2005; Milloy, 1999). The last residential school was not closed until 1996.

The 20th Century

Education as a system grew rapidly in the 20th century through emphasis on classification, standardization, progressive rhetoric, and efficiency. This progression will be detailed in the sub-sections below.

Early-20th Century

The beginning of the 20th century saw what Milewski (2009) refers to as the “scientisation of education in Ontario” wherein several manuals were published for pre- and in-service teachers, each aiming “to define schooling and pedagogy as a science” (p. 341). This gave rise to “expert” knowledge in the field of education, which was provided by university professors who developed conventions (re)appropriated from developmental psychologists (such as Freud, Piaget, and Vygotsky) for the identification and classification of students by teachers who were required to learn these specialised

practices (Milewski, 2009). This can be seen as the roots of, or starting point for the standardization of education.

The Depression-era initiated a focus on efficiency within educational institutions in Ontario (Christou, 2013). In 1931, school attendance 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 classes modelled after factory shift work were implemented (Christou, 2013). Rotary classes remain in many of Ontario's publicly funded schools today. In his work, Christou (2013) expresses that

Both the *Annual Reports* [of the Minister of Education] and *The School* [a monthly journal distributed to all educators in Ontario] expounded utilitarian views of education that was permeated by a mechanistic language. These views informed 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 John Dewey (Christou, 2013). In a 1929 issue of *The School*, 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). As early as the 1910s, Dewey’s (1907), *The school and society* was a mandatory part of teacher education (Christou, 2013).

Furthermore, assimilationist themes continued in schools, with a strong emphasis on British Empire and Commonwealth values (Christou, 2013). The findings of Christou’s (2013) work suggest that “bringing schools and society into closer alignment could promote democracy as a way of life, emphasise the necessity of English language fluency, and fit students, as well as immigrant adults, efficiently into the industrial complex” (p. 571). He notes that the Depression provoked a growth of “industrial capitalism needs” within the educational context (p. 571). Moreover, the rhetoric of “social efficiency” stressed the dual partnership of parents and teachers for the specific education and upbringing Ontario intended upon its young citizens. Middle school rose out of this period as well, with an emphasis on vocational training to reduce what the Chief Director of Education (1934) termed “wastage”.⁶ These students would either choose to attend high school (and college/university) or choose a vocation they were suited for (Christou, 2013).

Mid-20th Century

School enrolment in all levels of education increased over 200% in the 1950s and 60s due to the post-war baby-boom, as well as public encouragement for students to

⁶ Wastage refers to individuals who were not easily placed in a vocation, or who did not live up to the standards set.

continue into secondary and post-secondary levels (Martell, 1974). While most see 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 Baldwin, 2008). While this view has merit, it became understood that the goals of schooling were more complicated, in that various theories, ideas, and perspectives (as opposed to one) were involved—some of which were quite positive, and others which were questionable (Baldwin, 2008). To briefly address this, one might note that education, even with its assimilationist and efficiency-based undercurrents has indeed fostered progression. However, the consequences of such exclusive indoctrination (schooling) can be seen in the loss of culture and languages and systematised marginalisation for groups outside the white Anglo-Saxon majority (Milloy, 1999), as well as the (mis)treatment of students with a range of behavioural and/or intellectual “deficiencies” (see Rossiter & Clarkson, 2013; Bhattacharjee, 2003).

Late-20th Century

The Economic Council of Canada reported in 1970 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). However, major cuts to education across several provinces resulted in retaliation from teachers in the forms of strikes and organized protests. In 1972, 70 000 teachers filled the streets of Quebec in a strike against the Bourassa government (Martell, 1974). Drastic budget cuts and bargaining legislation, as well as new Bills 274 and 275, provoked a massive demonstration by teachers in Ontario—with over 30 000 teachers present at Queen’s Park alone (Martell, 1974).

Fox (1991, 1989) notes that in the early 80s a progressive model for evaluation was developed under the Bob Rae government, wherein a bottom-up, student-centred approach was emphasized through portfolio-based assessment. In this perspective, there was a “hopefulness” for the future of education through collaborative research efforts which sought to pinpoint not only what needed improvement, but how to share approaches and learning environments that worked well (see Sackney, 2007 for a good overview). However, the majority of the public was not on board. In the mid-1980s, an emphasis on accountability and standardized assessment grew out of the public’s declining confidence in the 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. There was a fear that students were not properly prepared to enter the workforce or postsecondary education (Earl, 1995). Earl (1995) reports that, “in 1986, the Ministry of Education embarked on a series of program reviews, using sampling, to evaluate the effectiveness of various programs and to provide information for focusing program improvement efforts” (p. 47). The program reviews focused on the curriculum of several subjects as they were *intended* (the written curriculum), how they were *implemented* (taught), and how they were *attained* (student performance). These continued for the rest of the decade and into the 90s.

In 1993, a province-wide test took place for grade 9 students to assess their reading and writing skills. This acted as a precursor to the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) testing for grades 3, 6, and 9, which was established in 1996. While it was seemingly the public that called for this *accountability*, EQAO testing has spurred mixed feelings and opinions from parents, teachers, and scholars

(Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, 2015; Lam & Bordignon, 2001; Ricci, 2004). In the mid-1990s, concerned middle class parents collectively formed a group called People for Education (P4E) to “fight against neoliberal approaches to education and deep cuts in Ontario’s public expenditures,” which were a part of Mike Harris’ “common sense” conservative platform (Winton & Brewer, 2014, p. 1091). Since then, P4E has grown into a prominent research organization in Ontario. They work with policy makers and the media, conduct annual surveys of Ontario’s education system, hold an annual conference, and provide speakers and workshops. Their mission statement exclaims, “We’re passionate about publicly funded education, and we believe that well-equipped publicly funded schools, with a well-rounded curriculum, provide young people with the best chance for a bright future” (P4E, 2016). However, as Winton and Brewer (2014) suggest, P4E’s work is central to a middle/upper class perspective and quite possibly overlooks the critical need to include and advocate for lower classes.

The Ontario Education Act was established in 1990 and laid out the responsibilities, laws, and policies the Ontario government must adhere to in their administration of education (Government of Ontario, 2016). This act set out allocations of powers, teacher education and training, limits on class sizes, and so on (more on this [below](#)). Last, the Ontario Ministry of Education (OME) replaced the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training in 1999 which set the stage for education in the new millennium.

The New Millennium

Since its inauguration, the Ontario Education Act has been amended 57 times (Education Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. E.2). In 2009, section 0.1 was amended to state that “the purpose of education is to provide students with the opportunity to realize their potential

and develop into highly skilled, knowledgeable, caring citizens who contribute to their society” (para. 1, retrieved from <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90e02#BK1>). With this in mind, it seems that the general purpose of education and schooling—that is, to prepare students to placidly enter the workforce—has remained fairly stable since the Industrial Revolution.

As an addition to EQAO testing, the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) was established in 2001 and must be passed as a requirement for graduation from secondary school. The OSSLT sparked further controversy, as questions about teaching-to-the-test, as well as test-taking-knowledge arose (Fox & Cheng, 2007; Zheng, Klinger, Cheng, Fox, & Doe, 2011; Klinger, Rogers, Anderson, Poth, & Calman, 2006). Since the late 90s, there seems to be a growing general distaste for the accountability measures established through the OME. Furthermore, this can be seen on a more global scale, through extreme educational reform movements such as No Child Left Behind in the U.S. (see Fairbairn & Fox, 2009).

To provide a wider context, it is important to mention the “global financial crisis” that occurred in 2007-2008. It is publicly recognised that this economic collapse was the worst since the Great Depression of the 1930s. Due to the globalized economy, the collapse affected several countries. However, I wish to focus geographically on Canada to remain on track. This recession was devastating to a large part of population, as thousands were laid off with little notice, and in many cases never returned to their former jobs.⁷ Chan, Morissette, and Frenette (2011) report that in the 10 month period “between October 2008 and July 2009, total employment fell by more than 400,000 in

⁷ There are numerous examples, including Bell Canada, as well as ATC Panels in Pembroke, Ontario.

Canada” and that it took until 2011 for the rate to stabilize (p. 7). Furthermore, the crisis led to social unrest which contributed to movements such as Occupy Wall Street (hereafter referred to as the Occupy Movement).⁸

With regard to the neoliberal order, there is an argument (Rudd, 2009) stemming from the aftermath of the “global financial crisis”, which posits that as a result of the extreme recession, neoliberalism is no longer in practice, and that a new “social democracy” has begun to be implemented. However, after critical analysis, Cahill (2009) refutes Rudd’s assertion in favour of a well-reasoned understanding that although the legitimacy of neoliberalism has indeed been undermined by the global financial crisis, “governments continue to adhere to the logic of neoliberal policy” (p. 15). This is evinced in the fact that corporate interests still take precedent over public interests (Elliot & Harkins, 2013; Curtis, 2013). Furthermore, Elliott and Harkins (2013) aptly argue that in the face of the recessions and the various uprisings of unrest (such as the Occupy Movement), neoliberalism still “present[s] itself as the only alternative to cataclysms that it itself creates—to appear as the most reasonable cure for its own diseases” (p. 7), which is mirrored in Curtis’ (2013) acknowledgement that “economic experts” and governmental bodies decry alternative suggestions to neoliberalism as unrealistic in favour of maintaining status quo (pp. 80-81). In explanation, Curtis (2013) builds from Heidegger’s work which suggests that when individuals or groups become aware that something is wrong with the world (i.e., “the global financial” crisis via neoliberalism), they often defend that very thing, rather than try to change it (p. 77). Due to the anxiety

⁸ See Breau (2014) “The Occupy Movement and the top 1% in Canada” for an overview.

that the thought of change causes, “knowledge does not bring about the desire for change but the desire to recover things as they were” (Curtis, 2013) and thus, Curtis argues that

when the system of privatisation and deregulation collapses we deploy a range of prejudices pertaining to race, nation and class to blame the lack of money on a bloated public sector and unnecessary public spending, thereby rescuing the referential totality of privatisation, symbolic consumption, and upward mobility from being undermined. (p. 78)

Although scholars such as Curtis (2013) and Gilbert (2013a) view this as counterintuitive and even maleficent, governments and economic “experts” use attractive rhetoric to gain (passive and active) consent and support for the neoliberal culture, ideologies, and practices that still appear in Western society. Cahill (2009) explains that “a real repudiation of neoliberalism would require a subordination of corporate interests to collective priorities and a shielding of workers from the fluctuations of markets in care such as work, superannuation, health care, child care and housing”; instead, “market mechanisms are still preferred” (p. 15). This impact can be seen within education as well (Mulderigg, 2008; Woodside-Jiron, 2011; Pini, 2011). It seems to be the case that neoliberalism is still manifested as a functioning culture and ideology in Western society, just with adapted models of representation (Cahill, 2009). The next section reflects on education at the present time.

The Present

Sixteen years into the new millennium, technology is a central part of the formal education of young people. Scholars have placed an emphasis on new literacies (Warriner, 2011; Dunaway, 2011) which are computer and network focused, and new

ways of learning have become pervasive, with free accessible education continually being made available online through websites such as [Khan Academy](https://www.khanacademy.org/), [Coursera](https://www.coursera.org/), [Udemy](https://www.udemy.com/), etc.⁹ This necessarily begs a question about how these technologies will affect and/or change the landscape of public education.

Questions and issues with standardizing processes within education persist. Warriner (2011) discusses the findings of her ethnographic work (2007), which suggest that “the ‘ideological consequences of literacy’ are realized both locally and globally through the widespread use of standardized assessment policies and practices that devalue meaningful and effective approaches to language teaching and learning,” explaining that “the analysis of data collected from an adult ESL program demonstrates that testing, as a bureaucratic mechanism, receives, sorts, arranges, and classifies students in ways that foster identities desired by the new global economy” (p. 535). These findings are easily transferrable to schooling as a whole, as much literature describes the pressure and drawbacks of strict testing and curriculum imposed from the top (Slomp, 2008; Fox, 2004; Fox & Cheng, 2007; Zheng et al., 2011; Ricci, 2004; see also ETFO website). While Christou (2013) argues that education was and is “the lightning rod of social reform” (p. 569), Pidgeon (2013) notes that “the economic argument (e.g. neoliberal) has been a primary reason for our citizens to have access to public education, as a more educated citizenry is perceived to provide more economic productivity and benefits to the nation” (p. 5-6). This draws from Dewey’s (1916) notion that “as societies become more complex in structure and resources, the need of formal or intentional teaching and learning increases” (p. 9). In line with this is the need for more

⁹ <https://www.khanacademy.org/>, <https://www.coursera.org/>, <https://www.udemy.com/>, respectively.

schooling and constant upgrading as part of the performance of citizenship.¹⁰ This assemblage of economic interests and social/humanist aspects seems to have taken on an oil and water quality—they do not mix well, and when left alone they separate completely.

Notably, citizenship has come up several times in this discussion of education. It appears to be the case that one of the goals of education is to produce good citizens. The definition of citizenship simply refers to one's membership to a country. Nevertheless, as a concept, citizenship has attached to it a performative element through various responsibilities, expectations, and normalcies. These expectations can vary across regions, countries, and continents. Canada has a specific list of responsibilities of citizenship, which are posted publicly on the Government of Canada's website under the Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship page (see Figure 1 below).

Citizenship Responsibilities

In Canada, rights come with responsibilities. These include:

- **Obedying the law** — One of Canada's founding principles is the rule of law. Individuals and governments are regulated by laws and not by arbitrary actions. No person or group is above the law.
- **Taking responsibility for oneself and one's family** — Getting a job, taking care of one's family and working hard in keeping with one's abilities are important Canadian values. Work contributes to personal dignity and self-respect, and to Canada's prosperity.
- **Serving on a jury** — When called to do so, you are legally required to serve. Serving on a jury is a privilege that makes the justice system work as it depends on impartial juries made up of citizens.
- **Voting in elections** — The right to vote comes with a responsibility to vote in federal, provincial or territorial and local elections.
- **Helping others in the community** — Millions of volunteers freely donate their time to help others without pay—helping people in need, assisting at your child's school, volunteering at a food bank or other charity, or encouraging newcomers to integrate. Volunteering is an excellent way to gain useful skills and develop friends and contacts.
- **Protecting and enjoying our heritage and environment** — Every citizen has a role to play in avoiding waste and pollution while protecting Canada's natural, cultural and architectural heritage for future generations.

Figure 1. Citizenship Responsibilities in Canada¹¹

¹⁰ A recent job advertisement for a construction sign holder required a high school diploma. The Renfrew County District School Board also requires high school diplomas for janitorial work.

¹¹ Screenshot retrieved from <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/publications/discover/section-04.asp>

These responsibilities apply to all citizens who are born in or immigrate to Canada, and are often embedded in school curricula through various grades. Furthermore, in Ontario, citizenship is explicitly addressed in the requisite grade 10 course, “Civics and Careers”.

In the Canadian context, it can be perceived that the good citizen is actively engaged, employed, and successful, and thus, does not cause problems for the system. In contrast, individuals and groups such as the homeless, unemployed, disabled, and so on are often viewed as “bad” citizens and referred to as lazy, unintelligent, and unwilling to contribute (and an array of nastier opinions) (Jackson Lears, 1985; van Dijk, 1993). Furthermore, since neoliberalism and the [social cognition](#) (van Dijk, 1993) that accompanies this ideology favours and perpetuates a privatized and individualistic system, blame is often discursively shifted from the state and/or systems to the individual when issues such as unemployment and poverty arise and/or persist (Mulderigg, 2012; van Dijk, 1993; Jackson Lears, 1985; Huckin, 2002). An example of this is the general public’s distaste for those accessing social/financial assistance (welfare) and the homeless as shown in [Figure 2](#) below which has made rounds on social media websites such as Facebook and Twitter, as well as blog websites.

*Figure 2. Drug testing*¹²

¹² Sutton (2012). Retrieved from <http://leftcall.com/8313/drug-testing-welfare-recipients-when-stereotypes-infiltrate-social-policy/> I have provided an outside source to avoid finger-pointing and to protect the confidentiality of those who have posted or shared this image on Facebook and Twitter.

This image is an example of the stigmatized discourse regarding those who access financial aid. The working citizen is making a comment on the mandatory (often random) drug testing that some workplaces enforce, while also taking a dig at financial aid users who benefit from the (hard) working citizens' tax dollars. The underlying discourse here is that many believe that most financial aid users waste the public's money on drugs and alcohol, attributing to them the term "welfare-bums". Finally, this line of thinking is connected with the term "wastage" (which was discussed above)—if one is not a contributing citizen, one is considered wastage.

In the broader Western context, there is a general attitude that education is in crisis. Recent book titles such as: *Education and the crisis of public values: Challenging the assault on teachers, students & public education* (Giroux, 2012), and *Penny for your thoughts: How corporatization devalues teaching, research, and public service in Canada's Universities* (Polster & Newson, 2015) point to discussion on this topic. Educational conflict has been active in Ontario, with recent teacher strikes in the Peel District School Board and the Rainbow District School Board due to funding cuts, class sizes, and more, with news headlines such as [70,000 teens back to class as teacher strikes declared illegal](#) (Rushowy, Brown, & Ferguson, 2015); [Class size the lightning rod behind school labour turmoil](#) (Brown & Rushowy, 2015); [Rainbow District high school teachers on strike today](#) (Sudbury.com, 2015), etc. Funding is stagnant, and new full-time teaching jobs are nearly non-existent (See [Appendix B](#)). Education is increasingly being influenced by economic agendas (Fairclough, 1993; Ascough, 2011; Giroux, 2012) and organizations such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Naturally, concern for the future of education in Ontario and

Canada is a popular topic for academia, government, teachers, students, and parents, as well as the general public. Investigations into education in other contexts (Fairclough, 1993; Mulderrig, 2003ab, 2008, 2011, 2012; Woodside-Jiron, 2011) have expressed concern that economic agendas may be usurping the humanistic and social aspects that education should be performing. In Canada, neoliberal discourse can be seen in the orientation toward knowledge economy and human capital models through the call for schooling to be more vocationally oriented ([Tsaparis, 2014](#)), in standardized testing (Slomp, 2008), and in the deprofessionalisation of teachers (Westheimer, 2010; Mulderrig, 2008; see also Polster & Newson). It follows then that neoliberal ideology may be present in Ontario's educational discourse.

This chapter has provided a contextual and historical background from which I have examined *Achieving excellence*. To summarise, education in Ontario began as an effort to instil religious values and assimilate newcomers and Aboriginal groups into a cohesive Anglo-saxon culture. With the industrial revolution it gained a more utilitarian purpose, while still holding on to assimilationist roots. Today education is often seen as a human right and a vehicle for social progress. However, many oppose the underlying utilitarian and assimilationist elements that still remain in educational discourse, which now present themselves in neoliberal ideology/discourse. One of my objectives is to identify whether this ideology is present within the OME's (2014) publication, *Achieving excellence*. It would seem, then, that CDA is a practical theoretical framework and analytical method to employ, as it allows a deeper look at how texts are constructed. The next chapter discusses CDA at length, with emphasis on the specific approach and tools I have used to analyse the text.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH - CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Drawing from the history of public education in Canada and Ontario ([Chapter 2](#)), and from scholars such as Giroux (2012), Lemke (2007), and Mulderrig (2003ab), it appears to be the case that for several western contexts, economic agendas have permeated education and are taking precedence over more humanistic and social purposes of education which may contribute to social injustice. One of my objectives is to determine whether this might be the case for Ontario as well. Since it is a fundamental principle of CDA to deconstruct discourses, ideologies, and power dynamics, CDA is an effective theoretical and analytical framework to employ in locating prominent ideologies within *Achieving excellence*, as well as exploring how both education and good citizenship are discursively constructed and connected in *Achieving excellence*. This chapter begins with an overview and history of CDA as a theoretical framework and research approach, and narrows in on Fairclough's three dimensional framework for analysing discourse. I then provide a review of the CDA literature regarding education, an overview of the text, the steps I took to analyse the text, and end the chapter by detailing the specific CDA tools I chose to employ in my analysis of the text.

Overview of CDA

Language is a social practice (Fairclough, 1993), and as such, it is used to communicate for myriad purposes. Language is shaped by social contexts and constructs, but it also shapes them. Fairclough (1993) suggests that language use performs three roles simultaneously; that is, language is constitutive of “social identities”, “social relations”, and “systems of knowledge and belief”—in varying “degrees of salience” (p. 134).

Considering this, it is reasonable to assume and understand that language in use has power. Lemke (1995) discusses power as it is enacted—the power to do, say, and behave. He explains that power is both symbolic and material: “The power of actions and events is grounded both in their material effects on us and in their cultural meanings for us” (p. 1). An example to consider is the power of neoliberalism—symbolically, it is influential in promoting social norms such as individualism, which is materially affected through competitive schooling and workplace environments (Mulderigg, 2008). Power is carried out through [discourse\(s\)](#). 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). Popular media is a prime example, as power delegates which stories are published or whose stories are told. Another example to consider is the curricula or material that is taught and measured in educational contexts (Lemke, 2007; Janks, 2014). This connects to van Dijk’s (2008) definition of social power as control over, as well as “privileged access” to various resources.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is particularly interested in how language can be used to manipulate, legitimize, dominate, oppress, and garner consent of individuals and groups in society. More generally, it is a movement toward the common goal of social justice and equality that employs a range of social theories and methods to identify, examine, and comment on both explicit and implicit discursively constructed ideologies, power structures/hierarchies, and social issues. According to Fairclough (1989), CDA functions to question “common-sense assumptions which treat authority

and hierarchy as natural” (p. 2). Thus, CDA engages in a type of social activism.

Furthermore, CDA can be thought of as a hybrid—it is a multi- or trans-disciplinary approach as it draws from many social and academic theories and methodologies across disciplines to examine social issues and ask provocative questions.

Before moving on, it is necessary to introduce some of CDA’s key concepts, beginning with the term “discourse”. Abstractly, discourse refers to what CDA scholars term *semiosis*—e.g., the combination of words, signs, gestures, images, design, and speech—to refer to the “meaning-making resources available to us” (Fairclough, Mulderrig, & Wodak, 2011, p. 357). However, discourse is also commonly thought of as a “category for identifying particular ways of representing some aspect of social life” (p. 357)—e.g., conservative discourse(s), feminist discourse(s), socialist discourse(s). In the view of CDA, discourse is a social practice that is dialectic or reciprocal. In this sense, a “discursive event is shaped by situations, institutions and social structures, but it also shapes them” (Fairclough, Mulderrig, & Wodak, 2011, p. 357). In other words, not only is discourse socially shaped, it is also constitutive (Fairclough, 1993). On one hand, discourse can work to “sustain and reproduce the social status quo” and on the other it can “[contribute] to transforming it” (Fairclough, Mulderrig, & Wodak, p. 358). Furthermore, Fairclough, Graham, Lemke, and Wodak (2004) propose that, “in all cases understanding the role of discourse is essential, even while recognizing that it forms but one moment in more complex social processes” (p. 3). This further connects to the meaning of the word “critical” adopted by CDA scholars which draws lineage from Marxist discourse (and subsequently the critical theory of the Frankfurt School) in which critique is the method “for both explaining social phenomena and for changing them” (p.

358). This is why it is important for CDA scholars to investigate and discuss the socio-cultural/historical/political/economic context(s) in which the text in question has occurred (Gee, 2011; Fairclough 1993; Lemke, 1995) and to connect these contexts to the analysis.

Since CDA takes the stance that language plays a crucial role in society, and that discourse facilitates socio-political/cultural/historical contexts (positions, attitudes, and structures, etc.), it is important to understand Fairclough's (1989) extension that "ideology is pervasively present in language" (p. 3), which makes it the "prime means of manufacturing consent" (p. 4); for example, consent about which skills and characteristics education should foster. Again, the relationship between language, discourse, and ideology is dialectical, as they are influenced by one another in an ebb and flow fashion. CDA endeavours to look closely at ideologies—embedded or hidden within society—so common or naturalised that they are largely unthought-of and unquestioned, but ought to be. These common-sense assumptions or concepts are often a part of the "natural order" or what scholars (Jackson Lears, 1985; Lemke, 1995) term hegemony ([discussed below](#)). Furthermore, CDA not only intends to problematize these embedded ideologies (i.e., racism, sexism, and even globalisation and neoliberalism), but aims to make the public aware of such ideologies and inspire a "critical consciousness" (Fairclough, Mulderrig, Wodak, p. 359).

History of CDA

As mentioned above, CDA can be traced to Western Marxism, which emphasizes the processes of semiosis (meaning-making potential) and ideology through cultural aspects which influence the reproduction of capitalist social relations (Fairclough, Mulderrig, &

Wodak, 2011, p. 360). Western Marxism influenced and produced significant work from thinkers such as Gramsci, Althusser, Foucault, Bourdieu, and more (Fairclough, Mulderrig, & Wodak, 2011), as well as the Frankfurt School. The groundwork for CDA was partially laid in the 1960s through Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (Halliday, 1978) and the 1970s through Critical Linguistics (CL) (Fowler, Kress, Hodge, & Trew, 1979). SFL intends to explicate and analyse the functionality of language choices within texts to locate patterns and contrasts in order to understand how meaning(s) are made, and does so at the lexical and grammatical level (Eggins, 2004; Halliday & Mattheissen, 2004). CL explores linguistic strategies such as nominalization, presupposition, metaphor, and rhetorical devices to draw attention to ideological influence (Fowler et al., 1979; Fairclough, Mulderrig, & Wodak, 2011). Over the years, CDA has grown to incorporate a multitude of social theories and theoretical methods—often referred to as CDA tools—which are listed in Table 1 [below](#) (see Machin & Mayr, 2012 for a good introduction).

Furthermore, linguistic scholars Theo van Leeuwen and Gunther Kress developed social semiotics. Through this, CDA has expanded to recognise the multimodality of various texts, an approach which has been given the name multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA) (Machin & Mayr, 2012),¹³ drawing additionally from visual studies, media and film studies, journalism, and so on, to analyse elements such as design, gesture, visuals, sound, layout, and more (Machin, 2013). Machin notes that “discourses and the ideas, values, and identities that comprise them will always have a multi-semiotic nature and it is this that makes discourses and ideologies compelling and appear

¹³ Although I have incorporated multimodal analysis, I use the term CDA throughout this thesis.

as naturalised as part of the hegemonic order” (p. 351). Put simply, Machin’s statement means that texts often include more than one form (written language, images, symbols, etc.), especially in public discourses such as advertisements, brochures, magazines, newspapers, etc. More specifically, *Achieving excellence* is indeed a multimodal text.

While there are several differing perspectives on and approaches to the practice of CDA (which are not necessarily at odds), including Wodak’s (2001) discourse-historical approach (DHA)¹⁴ and van Dijk’s (1993) sociocognitive approach,¹⁵ I have chosen to follow Fairclough’s three dimensional framework for analysing discourse because it has benefited similar studies which have focused on various educational discourses (Mulderigg, 2011, 2012; Tlili, 2007; Woodside-Jiron, 2011; [see below](#)).

Fairclough’s Three Dimensional Approach

Fairclough (1992a) has developed and uses a three dimensional model for critically analysing discourse. This model takes the position that “any discursive 'event' (i.e., any instance of discourse) is seen as being simultaneously a piece of text, an instance of discursive practice, and an instance of social practice” (Fairclough, 1992a, p. 4). Since language is socially mediated, it is beneficial to understand this model as socially embedded. In other words, any given text is embedded in discourse practices, which are further embedded within sociocultural and sociohistorical practices (Janks, 1997; Lemke, 1995). To illustrate Fairclough’s model, one might think of nesting dolls in which the

¹⁴ Originally developed to look at antisemitic discourse, but has been used to look at prejudiced discourses regarding race, religion, and right-wing politics. This approach emphasises providing a systematic and layered historical background through “four layers of context” (see Wodak, 2001) as part of the CDA analysis (Fairclough, Mulderigg, & Wodak, 2011).

¹⁵ van Dijk (1993) takes the view that modern power structures are mostly effected cognitively, “and enacted by persuasion, dissimulation or manipulation, among other strategic ways to *change the mind of others in one’s own interests*” (p. 254; emphasis in original).

smallest doll contains the text, and the largest contains the socio-historical/cultural/political context. Janks (1997) reproduces Fairclough's (1992a) useful chart to understand this model.

Figure 3. Fairclough's three dimensional model for discourse

Fairclough (1993) suggests that “the connection between text and social practice is seen as being mediated by discourse practice,” explaining that “on the one hand, processes of text production and interpretation are shaped by (and help shape) the nature of the social practice, and on the other hand the production process shapes (and leaves ‘traces’ in) the text, and the interpretative process operates upon ‘cues’ in the text” (p. 136). These cues are understood as intertextual. In this case, *Achieving excellence* is not only socially and culturally a product of its time, but a product of history as well. The following few paragraphs describe each box, beginning with “the text”.

I must stress that a text is not just something one reads (words on a page). Rather, a text is any act of communication which makes meaning through various sign systems,

and can be made up of a multitude of multimodal and multifunctional utterances. Thus, a text can take the form of speech, literature, a song, an advertisement on paper or T.V., an image, bathroom graffiti, and so on. Furthermore, there are several CDA tools with which to analyse a text. I have provided a table below to organize a list of analysis tools.

Table 1. *CDA Tools*

Origin	Tools
Systemic Functional Linguistics	Lexico-grammar, MOOD, transitivity, register, genre, cohesion, theme/rheme, etc.
Critical Linguistics	Metaphor, rhetorical devices, nominalisation, presupposition, etc.
Visual/Multimodal	Layout, gaze, colour, texture, lighting, font, white/blank space, directionality, etc.

While this list is not exhaustive, it does give a sense of the sheer number of tools to choose from and/or combine. For CDA scholars, the goal is to choose and combine tools that yield fruitful results which can be understood through and connected to the socio-cultural/historical/political context in which the text has been produced.

From this understanding, a CDA scholar must historicize, politicize, and contextualize their findings. Weaving together a holistic context not only helps the scholar to realise their results, but presents the reader with the necessary information to understand and connect (positively and/or negatively) with the scholar's work. This mirrors Gee's (2011) notion that for disciplines such as discourse studies, (methodologically-speaking) saturation can be achieved through a widening of contextual background (as opposed to saturation through quantitative data collection). In essence, connecting a text to the context in which it was produced acknowledges that a text does not and cannot occur in a vacuum. It begins to allow an understanding of how

texts mean, how they are products of their environment, culture, and time in history, and what social actions they perform.

Texts as products of their contexts are often involved in maintaining hegemony, especially when produced by groups in power. Hegemony refers to the process by which dominant groups in society discursively persuade and even coerce subordinate groups to consent to dominant groups' political, cultural, and moral values (Machin & Mayr, 2012; van Dijk, 1993, Jackson Lears, 1985). Drawing on the work of Antonio Gramsci, Lemke (1995) suggests that:

The social 'hegemony' (cf. Gramsci 1935) of a particular class, its dominance over education and official public discourse of all kinds (cf. Althusser 1971), favors the acceptance of its values and ideology by all classes, even though they serve only its own interest in maintaining its dominance. These values and ideological uses of thematic formations become integral to many of the discourses of non-dominant groups as well; they become part of common sense.

(p. 65)

These overarching ideologies and discourses become entrenched, naturalised, and largely unquestioned. Notice that Lemke mentions education here; hegemony is often maintained through education—through the values and skills that are taught, through what is emphasised as important, and through the broader intended outcomes such as employment, which are often communicated to the general public through texts such as *Achieving excellence*. It is important to point out Jackson Lears' (1985) assertion that “by virtue of its leaders' effort to win popular consent, a hegemonic culture becomes internally persuasive rather than merely authoritative” (p. 591). This can be exemplified

by political campaigns, informative advertising, and more generally, the western governance of respective nations which is often referred to as “soft power” (Mulderrig, 2011). While persuasion is preferred, those in power often do in fact enforce violence when hegemony is threatened.¹⁶ In short, hegemony is effectually the maintenance of the status quo, and in the context of western society, this status quo is built upon globalised neoliberal ideology, discourse, and structures (Gilbert, 2013a; Mulderrig, 2012).

Last, the middle box—“discursive practice”—puts emphasis on the production, distribution, and consumption of texts (Fairclough, 1992a pp. 71-73). To explore the discursive practice(s) of a specific text, it is necessary to consider intertextuality,¹⁷ which Fairclough views as the mediator of text to context. This is to say that each text, whether consciously or not, draws from the texts that came before and connects to the current texts, as well as those that will come after. Allen (2000) discusses intertextuality with regard to reading, but for the purposes of this project I will extend reading to the interpretation of a text to account for multimodality. He notes that “meaning becomes something which exists between a text and all the other texts to which it refers and relates, moving out from the independent text into a network of textual relations. The text becomes the intertext” (p. 1). A simple example lies in the way a conversation builds off of what has already been said. One might locate explicit intertextuality in *Achieving excellence* in its collaboration with businesses and non-profits, as well as parents and teachers. However, intertextuality occurs implicitly or unconsciously as well, perhaps in

¹⁶ Such brutality is historically documented in Canada through events and movements such as the On-to-Ottawa trek of 1935, Bloody Sunday (1938), the October Crisis (1970), the OKA crisis (1990), and more recently the G20 Summit protests (2010) and the Occupy Wall Street movement.

¹⁷ The word intertextuality was coined by Julia Kristeva in the 1960s. She (2002) explains that much of her work stemmed from the theorists Bakhtin, Barthes, and Freud, and that she also borrowed from Hegelian philosophy. Kristeva (2002) states that her concept of intertextuality replaces “Bakhtin’s idea of several voices inside an utterance with the notion of several texts within a text” (p. 8).

the OME's position on globalisation—[as a challenge that must be met](#) (Fairclough, 2003; Mulderrig, 2003a). Most CDA scholars give attention to the intertextuality of a given text to discover intricacies within the socio-historical/cultural/political contexts in which the text takes place—foregrounding “notions of relationality, interconnectedness and interdependence” (Allen, 2000, p. 5). 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). That is, intertextuality acts as a dialogue between the text itself, the texts of others (previous, current, and forthcoming), as well as the reader's and/or audiences' own texts (experiences, culture, social status, and so forth) (Allen, 2000). Thus, for a text such as *Achieving excellence*, although it has been constructed or produced and distributed for public consumption, various backgrounds including culture, class, literacy levels and so on, may influence how the text is read and interpreted or if the text is read at all.

Marketization of Public Discourse

Another aspect of Fairclough's work that is important for my own work is his development of what he coins “the marketization of public discourse” (1993), which is synthesised by three inter-connected aspects of “contemporary discursive practices”: 1) a post-traditional society; 2) reflexivity; and 3) promotional and consumer culture. What Fairclough means by post-traditional is that identities and relationships “increasingly need to be negotiated through dialogue,” which “entails greater possibilities than the fixed relationship and identities of traditional society, but also greater risks” (p. 140). Much of this negotiation is done through communication. Groups in power are not excepted from this negotiation, which has led to adjustments in how they interact with

the public, mainly through the *conversationalization of public discourse* which contributes to *synthetic personalisation*. Fairclough (1993) explains that on one hand conversationalization can be seen both “as a colonization of the public domain by the practices of the private domain” which garners a more open access to discourse, and “as an *appropriation* of private domain practices” necessary to this negotiation (p. 140, emphasis in original). He then notes that the ambivalence between these two possibilities contributes to synthetic personalisation in association with “promotional objectives” (p. 140). This can be seen in texts produced by powerful groups for public consumption such as brochures, speeches, reports, etc., or more specifically, the OME’s construction of *Achieving excellence*. Fairclough (1989) describes synthetic personalisation as a “compensatory tendency to give the impression of treating each of the people ‘handled’ *en masse* as an individual” (p. 62, emphasis in original) which is further explained as a “case of the manipulation of interpersonal meaning for strategic, instrumental effect” (1993, p. 141). All this to say that both conversationalization and synthetic personalisation are strategic methods of appealing to the public and garnering or presupposing (at least passive) consent by implicating them. Since *Achieving excellence* is a public document, I have paid close attention to how the audience is addressed within the text, as well as how the OME refers to itself to determine whether there are traces of synthetic personalisation and conversationalization.

The second aspect—reflexivity—is a crucial element of the negotiation of identity, as it is often reliant upon *expert systems* (Giddens, 1991; as cited in Fairclough, 1993), which are constituted by therapists, doctors, lawyers, scientists, etc., which also connects back to my [earlier discussion](#) of the scientisation of education through “expert

knowledge” (Milewski, 2009). Fairclough (1993) introduces the concept of “technologization of discourse” which combines this reflexivity with expert systems within discursive practices effected from the top-down in institutional settings (such as education). This takes shape as professional development and skills training such as service industries’ “attempts to dictate how [employees] should interact with members of the public” (p. 141), as well as the professional skills development requirements for teachers. Finally, contemporary culture has been reconstructed on a market basis which values consumption over production, meaning that it must be promotional. This gives rise to the hybrid model of public discourse through the “promotional function of informative language”. One might think of a car advertisement, wherein information is provided (how many cylinders, safety features, front or all-wheel drive, etc.) to appeal to an ideal audience to incite interest and potential buyers. Furthermore, this discourse has shifted from merely selling goods, to also selling the “lifestyle” that comes with these goods (i.e., minivans for mothers, [large trucks for ‘real men’](#), hybrids for the green consumer, etc.).¹⁸ More implicit, however, are texts such as political speeches, education policy, and university websites which expertly navigate this marketization of public discourse to gather consent and support. Fairclough (1993) notes that taken together, these shifts raise questions about authenticity and ethics, since these ends are often achieved through agenda-driven linguistic manipulation. Furthermore, this culture has infiltrated from the bottom-up as well, as self-promotion is increasingly associated with negotiating self-identity, especially with the advent of social media (such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter) and the blo/vlo-gosphere.

¹⁸ One could write an entire thesis on this alone.

Since *Achieving excellence* is a publicly available text, it is important to consider Fairclough's discussion of the marketization of public discourse. Although Fairclough's work has been concerned with the UK context, it has been particularly influential for scholars who have conducted critical discourse studies of educational texts and discourses in other countries. Following this, the next section discusses CDA as it has been used to examine education texts and discourses.

CDA and Education

The use of CDA to analyse educational texts and discourse(s) began about 25 years ago. Luke (1995) takes the view that a "critical sociological approach" is necessary for the study of education (p. 41). Luke (1995) raises an issue with early discourse studies in education which failed to connect the text to the context by looking at one aspect over the other rather than holistically. Luke's work provides a sound introductory understanding of CDA terminology and how to apply it to educational contexts, and the discussions based on the examples of texts from various educational contexts (classroom dialogue, a teacher's guide, an assembly, etc.) touch on aspects of culture, race, and gender.

Rogers, Malancharuvil-Berkes, Mosley, Hui, and O'Garro Joseph's (2005) study is another entry point for understanding CDA as it pertains to educational discourse. Their (2005) review of CDA in education literature systematically categorizes 46 CDA in education articles available through databases such as "Web of Science, MLA, PsycINFO, ERIC, and ArticalFirst" (p. 372). This categorisation is based on research focus, definition of CDA, context, data sources and analysis (p. 375). Rogers et al. (2005) suggest that bringing CDA frameworks to educational discourse has been and is reshaping the boundaries of CDA. It is my hope that these studies as well as my own

reshape the boundaries of education as well. Additionally, much of Rogers work (2014; Rogers & Mosley, 2014) advocates for critical literacy to be taught in the classroom which aligns with [Janks' \(2014\) work](#), as well as Westheimers' (2010, 2004).

Many CDA in education studies focus on university contexts. Fairclough (1993; discussed [above](#)) examines promotional materials (job advertisements) distributed by UK universities over a period of time to show the marketization of public discourse. Fairclough's (1993) findings suggest that these job advertisements shift to foreground personal qualities of wanted applicants, while also shifting institutional authority from explicit to implicit (conversationalization and synthetic personalisation) which works ideologically to disguise power imbalances. Furthermore, the advertisements construct both the institutional identity, as well as potential academic hires as more entrepreneurial (promoting). Tlili's (2007) study uses Fairclough's framework to look at the generic features of "equal opportunities policies" of six universities in the UK from 2004. Tlili confirms the trend of marketizing public discourse by noting the promotional function of informative language as well as synthetic personalisation that appears to become part of the policy genre across these universities.

Mulderrig's body of work on education policy discourse in the UK from 1972-2005 builds from Fairclough's work on the marketization of education, and her findings illustrate the processes of change in the discourse about education over a period of time. Her (2003ab) studies focus on the roles of social actors (government, teachers, students) in New Labour's education policy, with emphasis on "consuming education" and "learning to labour". The findings suggest that New Labour's speech discourse about modernising education actually solidified Thatcherite (conservative) "policies of

privatization and marketization,” which entail “opening up education to business values, interests, principles, methods of management, and funding” (2003a p. 100). She (2003a) further notes that the reforms in education during this period signal three goals for education: “aligning the organization and content of education more closely with the practices and requirements of the commercial sector; building the learning society; and making education play a significant role in the post-welfare State” (p. 118). In essence, these findings confirm a neoliberal agenda for education (Mulderrig, 2003ab). This work has motivated me to explore whether or not this is paralleled in *Achieving excellence*.

Mulderrig (2008) analyses key words (such as skills, work, we, learning, qualifications, etc.) found in the same corpus noted above. In this study, she identifies the key policy initiatives prevalent under each successive government: “a technocratic focus on educational outputs under Thatcher’s neo-liberal government; a visionary discourse of competitiveness under Major’s caretaker government; and a strategic policy aimed at building an internationally competitive, skills-based, economy under Blair’s New Labour Government” (p. 149). She finds that Blair’s government re-adopts the keyword, “standards” used by Thatcher, which emphasises a managerial approach to education (p. 153). Furthermore, she argues that a distinct use of personal pronouns such as “we” and “our” by the New Labour government confirms “the marked personalisation of representational style” (p. 153). She continues this work in her 2011 and 2012 publications. Mulderrig’s (2011) further examination of the same corpus shows how the changes 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 policy movements. Last, Mulderrig (2012) expands this

work with her CDA of the New Labour party's speeches about education, which uncovers an ambivalent use of the pronoun "we" to construct a "politics of inclusion" to garner consent for neoliberal ideology. This work connects to Fairclough's (1993) notion of "synthetic personalisation" because the frequent use of the pronoun "we" implicates the audience (personalisation), and ostensibly levels the power between the government and the people (synthetic).

Reflecting on their previous work, Fairclough, Mulderrig, and Wodak (2011) note that "the marketization of public services, requiring them to operate on a competitive market basis, has entailed a large-scale extension" of semiotically mediated "design concerns" such as presentation (both visual and aural), communication techniques, as well as classic rhetoric (p. 359). This can be seen in the way universities and now secondary and elementary schools market themselves and compete for funding and student (and parent) interest through specialised programming (IT and IB programs, performing arts schools, athletic schools, etc.), advertisements, reputation, and statistical information (high literacy rates, high post-secondary acceptance rates, etc.) (Mulderrig, 2008; Pini, 2011; Woodside-Jiron, 2011).

In the past few years, there has been a veritable onslaught of CDA research which explicates neoliberal ideologies within the educational context. Much of this work focuses on Singapore. Zhang and O'Halloran (2013) reinforce both Fairclough's (1993) and Tlili's (2007) work through a multimodal (social semiotic) discourse analysis of the progressing "discourses of marketization" over a 14-year period on the National University of Singapore website. They found that the discourse changed to reflect a marketization of the university lifestyle and experience (p. 468), which reflects Giroux's

work (mentioned in [Chapter 1](#)), as well as Fairclough's notion of institutional identity negotiation. In this case, not only is education seen as a market, but it is packaged and promoted as a lifestyle. Lee (2015) conducts a critical metaphor analysis of 58 speeches given by government leaders about the "necessity of national [citizenship] education for national survival" in Singapore (p. 99). Lee finds that the salient metaphors about the country and its citizenship contribute to an agenda of preserving governmental hegemony that is neoliberal. For example, Lee finds a metaphor of morality which connects neoliberal traits such as consumer behaviour to the survival of the country. Lee's study is a good starting point for those interested in deconstructing metaphors within public and education discourse, and it will be interesting to see further development in this area. Lim's (2014) study examines popular curricula concerning the "teaching of thinking" in Singapore, and argues that this type of curricula engages in shaping "common-sense understandings of what thinking and rationality is and should be" which "connect to neoliberal prerogatives and that facilitate the social reproduction of a particular fraction of the middle class" (p. 61). Lim's concern is that these curricula function to promote individualism, private enterprise, and consumer behaviour as rational, over traits or concerns such as empathy, justice, imagination, etc. (p. 63). In consideration of these studies, Singapore appears to be a prime example of conscious participation in the global knowledge economy.

Moving out of the Singaporean context, Cachelin, Rose, and Paisley (2014) explore how prominent metaphors which reflect neoliberal ideology undermine sustainability education in the US. These metaphors position nature and ecology as commodities and humans as consumers by situating humans not as a part of nature but as

controllers of it. While this work takes a critical discourse approach mixed with an interview process, it shies away from an in depth CDA methodology, which could have been used to more fully explore the metaphors and ecological discourse. Work such as Pini's (2011) CDA of the discourse of education management organizations (EMOs) in the U.S. and Woodside-Jiron's (2011) CDA of California's public policy on reading and literacy suggest that neoliberal ideologies are having directorial influences on education. Essentially, EMOs provide private management of public schooling, which focuses on advertising, raising test scores, and so on to attract consumers (parents and students), which gives rise to corporate culture. Pini examines the rhetorical functions, synthetic personalisation, naturalisation, and false neutrality of four EMO websites with attention to multimodal features and ultimately argues that these EMOs facilitate further class and social segregation (partially done through whitewashing), while valuing students as consumers over citizens. Woodside-Jiron (2011) examines the theme/rheme (given and new information) of literacy policies between 1995 and 1997, and combines Bernstein's (2000) pedagogic device framework¹⁹ and Fairclough's (1992a) [CDA framework](#) to deconstruct discourse and power relations. She finds that the changes in policy enacted "expert knowledge" through the phrase "current and confirmed research" and intended to reduce or eliminate resistance through mandatory and surveillance-based professional development for teachers. While both of these studies are impeccable, it would be

¹⁹ Bernstein's (2000) pedagogic device is made up of *regulative* and *instructional* discourses. Regulative discourse refers to "the moral discourse that creates order, relations, and identity and ultimately controls instructional discourse", while instructional discourse "is that which creates specialized skills and their relationship to each other" (p. 156). Woodside-Jiron notes that "by placing these discourses in detailed relations to one another and examining how the regulative discourse actually shapes the instructional discourse, we begin to understand the pedagogic device or specific power relations between the two" (p. 156).

interesting to see further development. The combination of these works has not only reaffirmed my curiosity, but given me literature to draw from and aspire to. However, little work of this nature has been done in the Canadian context. Thus, my work stems from both deep personal interest and this surprising research gap. Below, I will describe some of the features and content of *Achieving excellence*.

The Text

Having a deep interest in education, I came across *Achieving excellence* in a search for a project to work on in a Master's level CDA course. As mentioned above, the text is publicly accessible on the OME's [website](#). The OME website features a similar version of the text via html (directly on the webpage), a downloadable PDF, as well as a video, but for the scope of this project I have narrowed my analysis to the PDF document only.

It is important to consider not only the features of the text, but the context in which this text was researched and produced. The text was commissioned, researched, and published within six months and the OME notes its partnership with parents, businesses, non-profits, and other stakeholders to gather data about which directions Ontario's education system should be heading. However, the OME does not disclose the demographics of the "thousands of Ontarians" who provided "advice" within this text (p. 1). The text was published during a recession (see [Appendix B](#)) under a conservative federal government and a liberal Ontario government, and emphasises education as a means to employment.

The text contains images (digitally made, hand drawn, and photographed) with descriptive captions for the visually impaired, as well as hyperlinks, which open webpages such as an infographic on the Ontario Government's [Flickr page](#) and a PDF of

a [text](#) published by McKinsey&Company, titled, *How the world's most improved school systems keep getting better* (Mourshed, Chijioki, & Barber, 2010). The text also features quotes from outside sources as well as colour blocks, bullet points, and coloured headings and sub-headings to enhance visual layout. One of these outside sources is the OECD's (2011) PISA report which discusses educational performance and reform, noting Canada as a top performer.

The cover of the text is a word cloud in the shape of Ontario. Word clouds are typically used to visually illustrate the frequency of words within a text—the larger the word is, the more frequently it appears in the text (more on this later). There are seven small photographs, which appear in a beige colour block at the top of some of the pages with a quote from an outside source on the right of each image (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Image from *Achieving excellence* exemplifying picture on left and quoted text on right

The text makes use of headings to organize information, which can be seen in the bookmarks pane on Adobe Acrobat Reader DC in Figure 5 below and in the text in the figures in [Appendix C](#).

Figure 5. Bookmark view of Achieving excellence in PDF version

The Mission Statement introduces the purpose and goals of the text, and provides some basic information which emphasises the development of “knowledge, skills, and characteristics” that will lead Ontario’s youth to “become personally successful, economically productive and actively engaged citizens” (p. 1). In the second section, the OME reports and discusses the improvements to and successes of Ontario’s school system in the decade preceding 2014—such as more high school graduates and better literacy scores—and stresses that more must be done to maintain Ontario’s education system as “one of the best in the world” (p. 2). The OME outlines four goals it plans to accomplish (see Figure 5 above), which are *Achieving Excellence*, *Ensuring Equity*, *Promoting Well-Being*, and *Enhancing Public Confidence*. Each goal has sub-headings which read *Why We Need to Do This*, followed by *Plan of Action*. Under *Plan of Action* are two more sub-headings which read “To achieve Success, Ontario will:” and “To assess progress towards this goal, Ontario will:”, both of which are followed by bullet point lists. Thus, *Achieving excellence* is what Fairclough (influenced by Habermas

[1984]) might call a hybrid text. It is both communicative and strategic, as it seeks to communicate information to its audience and to convince them of (sell) something.

Although the text is available to any interested party or stakeholder, the intended audience appears to be parents and guardians living in Ontario. The text proposes an aligned school system that will promote and facilitate excellence from pre-kindergarten through to secondary and even postsecondary education and then into the workforce. It stresses that an aligned education system will produce successful individuals who will have the right skills for their desired, in-demand career paths. Throughout the text, the OME repeatedly emphasizes that “raising expectations” for students, teachers/ educational staff, and school boards will be the key to achieving excellence. As a publicly available source of information published by the highest educational authority of the province, this text has the potential to be quite influential to the public’s understanding and opinion of publicly funded education. Thus, it is crucial to examine the underlying ideologies and messages the text may be perpetuating. The next section is an outline of my analytical procedures.

Procedures and Analysis

To refresh, my examination of *Achieving excellence* has been guided by the following research questions:

- 1) How is education discursively constructed in *Achieving excellence*?
- 2) How is good citizenship discursively constructed in *Achieving excellence*, and how does it connect to education?
- 3) What ideologies appear to underline these discursive constructs?

The structure of this investigation follows Fairclough's (1992a) three dimensional model for discourse described above. I have provided the "first box"—sociohistorical/cultural/political/economic context—in [Chapter 2](#) and partly in the section above which detailed information about the text. Woodside-Jiron (2011) aptly suggests that

Situating fine-grained discourse analysis in political and cultural context allows researchers to both explore cultural models and how they interact with moments of change, and to examine how educational processes and practices are constructed across time and how discourse processes and practices shape what counts as knowing, doing and being within and across events. (p. 158)

Since *Achieving excellence* is educational discourse, I call attention to the intertextualities and contexts of educational theory and the history of education in Ontario throughout my analysis as they crop up. In addition, I have used Corpus Linguistics (CL) (or Corpus Assisted Discourse Studies) to aid in my lexical analysis as it can show frequency of word-usage as well as language patterns through technologies such as AntConc (Laurence, 2015). Although my use of CL is not in depth for this study, Mulderrig (2008) notes that "this approach can reveal patterns of textual prominence in the data ... [such as key words, word or phrase clusters, and concordances] that are amenable to qualitative analysis" (p. 151). The next three sub-sections will detail the steps I took to examine *Achieving excellence* with my research questions as guidance.

Stage 1

In the first stage, I found it necessary to locate the most salient aspects of the text to narrow down the analysis to a manageable size. I coded the text manually, page by

page, using coloured markers to indicate different textual elements such as metaphors, suppression, nominalisation, functionalization, etc. (see [Appendix D](#) for example). I also input the results into a spreadsheet page by page (See [Appendix D](#)). Since I do not present these results in connection with my research questions, it was not strictly necessary to have a second researcher code the data. It just provided a preliminary step into my research.

Stage 2

From there I moved to the second stage, wherein I chose specific aspects of the text to focus my analysis on based on their richness within the data. I chose to analyse three interconnected elements of the text (rhetoric, lexical choices, and visual aspects) to engage in a more holistic understanding of the discursive construction of the text. These included the metaphors constructed in the text (rhetoric), the use of the pronouns “we”, “us” and “our”, overlexicalisation, and buzzwords (lexical aspects), with attention to suppression throughout the text, as well as the visual and interactive elements of the text.

Stage 3

To begin the third stage, I analysed the metaphors constructed in the text, which helped to locate the discourses and ideologies within the text. Although I illuminate and discuss the metaphors that are reflected about education, an important aspect of how education is represented as a whole can be drawn from how the participants in the system (the OME, teachers, students, parents, and so on) are constructed as well. A focus on the participants can help to answer the second and third research question, since they regard the performance of citizenship in a neoliberal society. I then examined the text lexically with the help of the Corpus Linguistics software, AntConc (Laurence, 2015). I

created a word frequency list, removing grammatical words (the, and, to, etc.) to shed light on the significant words in the text (see [Appendix D](#)). I used the Ngram/cluster function dually to determine whether significant words appeared in specific clusters²⁰, and to determine the frequency of the respective clusters. Additionally, I used the concordance function to look at significant tokens (words) in their “immediate [textual] context” (Ludeling & Kytö, 2009). However, I did not compare the text to outside corpora. This basic analysis helped to inform my choices of overlexicalised terms and bundles, as well as the buzzwords that are presented and discussed in Chapter 5. Finally, I explored the visual and interactive aspects of the text through consideration of its layout, use of colours, hyperlinks, images, and so on, paying specific attention to the lighting, gaze, and directionality of the photographs in the text. However, the core of my multimodal analysis is based on an investigation of the wordle (word cloud) on the cover of the text. The next chapter presents and discusses my findings. To analyse the wordle, I compared the words in the wordle to the word list I generated with AntConc, and then input the full-text of *Achieving excellence* into [Wordle](#)²¹ (Feinburg, 2014) to create a visual to compare.

Analytic Tools

van Dijk (1991) states that “words manifest the underlying semantic concepts used in the definition of the situation” (p. 53). He argues that lexical choices are never neutral, which parallels Eggin’s (2004) assertion that all language choices are ideological. van

²⁰ A collection of two or more words that appear together frequently in the text.

²¹ Wordle is an online software developed by Jonathan Feinburg to generate word clouds. Since it is one of the most popular softwares for this purpose, wordle has become the common term, in the same way that one would say “Google it” to mean use a search engine to find specific information.

Dijk (1991) further explains that “the choice of one word rather than another to express more or less the same meaning, or to denote the same referent, may signal the opinions, emotions, or social position of a speaker” (p. 53). Looking closely at word choices, overuse, and potential meanings can help to unearth ideologies within a text. To provide an in-depth explication of *Achieving excellence* I have examined several elements of the text including discursively constructed metaphors, overlexicalisation, buzzwords, absence, synthetic personalisation, and multimodality. The following sub-sections outline the specific discursive elements I have examined within the text in order to answer my research questions.

Metaphor

Metaphors appear both implicitly and explicitly within the text. According to Machin and Mayr (2012), metaphors are rhetorical tropes or devices with several subtypes such as synonym and metonymy²² (Punter, 2007). Punter notes that “the processes of metaphor are everywhere at work in language” (p. 3). Metaphors are commonly used in written texts, speech, visual and media arts, and discourse to connect abstract concepts to more physical/tangible objects or to embellish features (Hart, 2008; Machin & Mayr, 2012), e.g., open your mind; her/his eyes were oceans. Similar to discourse, metaphors are dialogical, both influenced by discourses and ideologies, and influencing them. Metaphors conceptualise our thoughts, discourses, and social contexts (Lackoff & Johnson, 2003). Lackoff and Johnson argue that “our conceptual system thus plays a central role in defining our everyday realities” (p. 3). They suggest that looking

²² Synonyms are words with similar or exactly the same meanings. Metonyms are words which can be used to substitute for another with which it is closely associated (a part of the whole), such as using the term “suits” to refer to business executives (www.oxforddictionaries.com).

at language can be helpful for unearthing and deconstructing metaphors. Metaphors are often intertextual and can be used deliberately or sub/unconsciously to describe and/or understand concepts. While this may raise questions, I take Fairclough's position that language use is ideological (noted above).

Charteris-Black (2014) notes that 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” (p. 174). He identifies four stages of critical metaphor analysis, which are contextual analysis, metaphor identification, metaphor interpretation, and metaphor explanation, which my analysis loosely follows. Additionally, Hart's (2008) paper highlights the way in which metaphors in discourse can signal and/or produce cognitive processes such as reasoning, drawing and understanding inferences, and procuring emotions—“blended spaces are ‘sites for central cognitive work’”(p. 97)—which simply means that metaphors can influence the way individuals and groups think about or perceive specific concepts. This connects to van Dijk's [socio-cognitive](#) model (mentioned above) and Fairclough's notion of [ideological work](#). Furthermore, repeated use of specific metaphors can lead to entrenchment. Hart (2008) suggests that “given their socially shared nature” entrenched metaphors can “comprise part of semantic memory” (p. 98). When metaphors become entrenched into our everyday thinking and structures, they can be considered “common sense assumptions” (Fairclough, 1989; 1992a), which are directly linked to hegemony (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999, p. 24). As such, Fairclough advocates that these common sense assumptions be questioned and

analysed to locate instances of manipulation and/or abuse(s) of power. Next, I will discuss synthetic personalisation.

Use of Pronoun “We”

As discussed above, the use of the pronoun “we” by authority figures such as the government has been shown to fabricate a politics of inclusion in which consent can be gathered, but also presupposed (Mulderrig, 2011, 2012). The use of the pronoun “we” also functions to disguise power imbalances in order to maintain hegemony by implicating the general public. Mulderrig (2011, 2012) builds from Fairclough’s (1992a, 1993) work which discusses the marketization of and personalisation of public discourse, wherein production and consumption has grown (from just services and goods) to incorporate domains such as organizations, people, ideas, and even lifestyles as well as synthetic personalisation (both discussed [above](#)). In the business world, these kinds of strategies are often referred to as “branding”.

The use of the pronoun “we” is “semantically complex”, since it has three potential meanings (Mulderrig, 2011). It can be used inclusively, exclusively, or ambivalently—each affording a different purpose. In her work, Mulderrig (2011, 2012) finds that the use of *inclusive we* connects to “evaluative statements about the nation’s activities” (pp. 566-567) which are further linked to competitive notions of excellence as well as shared responsibility (and consequently blame) across the public (pp. 569). The use of *exclusive we* connects to promises or statements about the government’s actions (usually in a boastful manner) (pp. 567-568). Finally, the use of *ambivalent we* mostly connects to the expression of “obligation, possibility, or likelihood” (p. 567), which are manifested in *we must* and *we need* statements and link to policy legitimization strategies

(p. 567-569), and can take on a pleading or imploring tone. Mulderrig (2012) also found that these uses of *we* generally followed a problem-solution pattern—“we (inclusive) live in a changing world, we (ambivalent) must respond with X activity, and we (exclusive) will provide the following policy solution” (p. 569). Mulderrig’s work is more sophisticated, in that she used functional grammar to code each instance to determine whether it was inclusive, exclusive, or ambivalent. In any case, I have used these theories to expand my analysis to include the use of pronouns “we”, “us”, and “our” in *Achieving excellence* to show how both hegemony and citizenship responsibilities are discursively constructed in the text.

Overlexicalisation

Overlexicalisation falls within the broad category of lexical choice, and as noted [above](#), all language or lexical choices are ideological (Eggins, 2004). Although, locating overlexicalisation within texts is typically associated with examining news discourse (Fowler et al., 1979; van Dijk, 1991; Teo, 2007), overlexicalisation or what Fairclough (2001) terms “overwording” can be found within most public discourses. Teo (2007) notes that overlexicalisation “results when a surfeit of repetitious, quasi-synonymous terms” are woven into discourse(s) “giving rise to a sense of over-completeness” (p. 20). Examining *Achieving excellence* for overlexicalisation can help to unearth underlying ideologies as well as instances and patterns of persuasion. Locating overlexicalised words and bundles of words can also help to identify possible buzzwords within the text.

Buzzwords

Overlexicalisation can be connected to buzzwords, since both are often vaguely- or un-defined and overused in discourses to naturalise potentially problematic ideologies.

Buzzwords draw lineage from *bureaucratese* (bureaucratic discourse; Safire, 1993, as cited by Harrison & Young, 2004) and are usually connected to and reflect specific discourses and/or ideologies such as globalisation or neoliberalism. Iedema (1996) notes:

Bureaucratic discourses have been and are powerful enough to organize whole armies, government diplomacies, and, eventually, whole (pacified) nation-states ... To appreciate the *constructive* power of administration and its language, we need to 'unpack' the discourse, i.e. go to the grammar and show how the features of administrative language contribute to its power over social organisation. (emphasis in original; as cited in Harrison & Young, 2004, p. 231).

Heeding Iedema's suggestion, part of my work unpacks *Achieving excellence* through an examination of potential buzzwords to gain a better understanding of the discursive constructs that underpin education in Ontario.

Drawing from Leal's (2010) work in development discourse,²³ buzzwords can gain "currency and trade power" as they become popularized (p. 89). Cornwall (2010) suggests that buzzwords "gain their purchase power through their vague and euphemistic qualities, their capacity to embrace a multitude of possible meanings, and their normative resonance" (p. 2). In developmental discourse, these popular buzzwords include *sustainability, participation, poverty, community, citizenship* and *globalisation*; however, some of these words can have "buzz" across several discourses and/or disciplines (Cornwall, 2010). Cornwall notes that words such as these gain their *buzz* from "being in-words" or "in vogue" (p. 3). Following this, words can gain and lose their *buzz*, can be

²³ Development discourse is a branch the communications discipline. Chae (2008) notes that "Development discourse refers to the process of articulating knowledge and power through which particular concepts, theories, and practices for social change are created and reproduced" (para 1).

developed, changed, and can resurface. Cornwall argues that “Policies depend on a measure of ambiguity to secure the endorsement of diverse potential actors and audiences. Buzzwords aid this process, by providing concepts that can float free of concrete referents, to be filled with meaning by their users” (p. 5). She explains that “In the struggles for interpretive power that characterise the negotiation of the language of policy, buzzwords shelter multiple agendas, providing room for manoeuvre and space for contestation” (p. 5). In other words, the use of buzzwords in public texts can signal underlying agendas and/or encourage the status quo. Furthermore, they can act to naturalise ideologies and discourses, and thus, filtering *Achieving excellence* for potential buzzwords aids in pinpointing and examining underlying ideologies or agendas.

Absence

According to Fairclough (2003), what is absent in a text can be just as important as what is present. The absence of a specific lexical element in a text is termed suppression or what Huckin (2002) refers to as textual silence, since often, it ought to be there. Generally, suppression occurs when an agent is missing or when topics related to the main subject are missing from a text. For example, in war discourse(s), the brutality of war is often suppressed and replaced by heroism and us vs. them rhetoric (usually through racialization) to garner support for contentious and violent activities. Alternatively, this can be seen when significant information or agents are left out of public discourse to sway an audience. Suppression will not be given its own section, but will be addressed throughout the analysis when necessary.

Multimodality

Last, this analysis will use elements of Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) to attend to the multimodality of the text since it includes traditional text, images, interactive text (in the pdf version), colours, space, and so on to capture its audience. With regard to the photographic images in the text, I will briefly discuss the significance of lighting, gaze, directionality, and so on. For example, natural lighting in photographs can have a naturalising effect, while the angle of the audience's gaze can signal power or lack of power (Machin & Mayr, 2012). The directionality can also inflect past, present, and future (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Although all of these aspects are salient, I have chosen to focus the bulk of the multimodal analysis on the cover of *Achieving Excellence*.

As mentioned earlier, the cover of *Achieving excellence* is a word cloud. Word cloud generators such as [Wordle](#) typically remove grammatical and/or non-frequent words “so that the resultant representation cleanly shows the most frequently occurring words of importance” (McNaught & Lam, 2010, p. 630). Although relatively little work has been done to date on word clouds (as it is a newer technology), McNaught and Lam (2010) explain that “to a certain extent, 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” (p. 630), and thus grant word clouds the status of “supplementary research tool”. Their work outlines two specific methodological approaches. The first approach uses word clouds to gain an initial understanding of the data, while the second acts as “a validation tool to further confirm findings and interpretations of findings. The word clouds thus provide an

additional support for other analytic tools” (p. 631). In this case, I have employed the second approach, which allows my analysis and findings of the word cloud on the cover of the text to bolster the rest of my findings.

This chapter has provided an overview of CDA as a theoretical and methodological approach, reviewed the literature regarding CDA in education, and then moved into a description of *Achieving excellence*’s features and content, the procedures I went through to analyse the text, and finally an introduction and description of the CDA tools I employed to analyse the text. The following chapter describes the features and content of *Achieving excellence*, and then outlines the procedures of my analysis.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS, INTERPRETATION, AND DISCUSSION

In the previous chapter I provided an overview and history of CDA, detailed Fairclough's three dimensional framework, and reviewed the literature regarding CDA in education which frames my own work. I then outlined important features of *Achieving excellence* and described the steps I went through to analyse it, and finally discussed each CDA tool I chose to employ. This study aims to understand how education in connection with good citizenship is discursively constructed in *Achieving excellence*, as well as to locate ideology within the text. In order to carry out an examination of *Achieving excellence* I have employed CDA as a framework and research approach. This chapter will present the findings of each analysis as sub-sections that parallel the theoretical and methodological framework outlined in [Chapter 3](#). I have chosen to provide a discussion of each finding as I present it in order to address each aspect more fully—a holistic discussion will be provided in the next chapter.

Metaphor Analysis

Metaphors play a key role in how the OME portrays education in *Achieving excellence*. I have structured this section to list and discuss the significant metaphors, and then briefly discuss them as a whole. The metaphors I discuss are: education as a sector, system, and building; students as human capital (in relation to other participants in the education system); and finally, the future as a path.

Education as a Sector, System, and Building

The OME discusses education with the inference of three metaphors: sector, system, and building. Although each metaphor by itself is comprehensible, a look at the

sentence level context (concordance) of each instance of each metaphor shows how they work both separately (shown in Table 2) and together in the text (explained below).

Table 2. *Education as Sector/System/Building*

Sector	System	Building
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “the education sector” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “the education system” • “Ontario’s education system” • “across the system” • “component” • “network of schools” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “levels” • “blueprint” • “foundation” • “build on” • “infrastructure” • “support”
<p>“Sector leaders from education, government, health, mental health and special needs, along with police services and the multicultural community, provide direction and planning.”</p>	<p>“Our education system will be characterized by high expectations and success for all.”</p>	<p>“As Ontario embarks on a renewed vision of success for all learners, the province will build on a solid foundation.”</p>

The top row provides examples of sentence fragments for each metaphor to show how they are used in the text, while the bottom row provides a whole sentence for deeper context. Although “the education system” has more instances than “the education sector”, they at first seemed to be used interchangeably. Upon closer examination, it became evident that on the one hand, *sector* is used to refer to education from the outside (looking in), and especially in collaboration with other groups. This can be seen in the textual example:

Sector leaders from education, government, health, mental health and special needs, along with police services and the multicultural community, provide direction and planning.

as shown in Table 2 above. On the other hand, *system* is used to refer to the specific and overall goals and participants within it (students, teachers, staff, parents, etc.), as well as

when addressing public funding. This directly reflects the definitions of these terms, as a system is “a set of connected things or parts” that form a “complex whole”, whereas the term sector refers to “an area or portion distinct from others” (*Oxford Dictionary*).²⁴ Interestingly, the distinction between the two becomes clearer when the metaphors are used together, as in Figure 6 below.

Figure 6. Blended metaphor - education as sector and system

The text in Figure 6 shows the education system made up of its various participants (stakeholders such as “students, teachers, support staff and school and system leaders”), and the sectors (such as “businesses and non-profit organizations”) that the education system (as its own sector) collaborates with. Thus, Figure 6 provides a textual example of how metaphors can be blended to create specific meanings.

²⁴ All Oxford Dictionary definitions in this thesis are retrieved from <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/>

It is notable that *sector* is a marketised term (Fairclough, 1993), in that it is typically used to refer to various branches of the market or economy such as commercial, business, industrial, and manufacturing sectors, and so on. When viewed as a sector, education adopts the same types of expectations as other market sectors—high output, enforced accountability, efficiency, etc. Furthermore, this is an example of how marketised public discourse can subtly or implicitly influence or change the way the public understands specific concepts, in turn magnifying legitimacy and maintaining hegemony (Fairclough, 1993; Mulderrig, 2011; Jackson Lears, 1985).

The text also presents a connection between education as a system and education as a building, as shown in Figure 7 below.

Figure 7. Blended metaphor - education as a system and building

This blending shows the building metaphor to be a figurative component of education as a system. When considering Figures 6 and 7, it seems that these connections have been carefully crafted. Blended together, the three metaphors reflect the notions of the small world of the classroom (building) through to the big or real world of the globalised

market and economy (sector). This is can be seen in excerpts such as “build a better system”, “building the skills and developing the attributes they will need to compete for and create the jobs of tomorrow”, as well as the text’s (see [Figure 7](#)) emphasis that education is the foundation for a “prosperous society”. This further connects to the alignment between the levels of public schooling in a trajectory that aims directly to the job market (which will be discussed further below). In this sense, education is portrayed by the OME as knowledge and skills training for general and specialised employability. As noted above, the next sub-section will focus on the participants within the education system, with particular emphasis on students.

Students as Human Capital

Students and their various iterations are the main participants with which the text is concerned. In my analysis, I found three stark metaphors—stocks, consumers, workers—that categorise how students appear to be viewed by the OME (see Table 3).

Table 3. *Students as human capital*

Stocks	Consumers	Workers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Investments yield results” • “Students will gain...” • “Continue the trend” • “gain” • “builds on success” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “serve the needs” • “quality” • “interests” • “innovative learning experiences” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “performance” • “skills” • “knowledge” • “demands” • “entrepreneurial”
“Ontario has also made significant investments to support our youngest learners.”	“The quality of student learning is closely related to the quality of the teaching force and its leaders.”	“Our children, youth and adult learners will need this balance of skills to meet the opportunities and demands of tomorrow.”
“And full-day kindergarten – the single most significant investment in	“The current challenge facing educators is that they are competing on a	“Students will be fully engaged in their learning, building the skills and

education in a generation – will soon be a reality across the entire province, giving every four - and five-year-old the best possible start in life”	daily basis for the attention and interest of their students, which can be easily drawn outside the classroom.”	developing the attributes they will need to compete for and create the jobs of tomorrow.”
---	---	---

Again, the top row provides textual fragments and the second row provides full sentence quotes from the text to show textual context. Students are *invested in* through public funding of schooling and allocation through the OME, as well as through being taught in the classroom. This investment is meant to yield results as students continue through the system. Students are consumers of the pre-determined knowledge, skills, and characteristics that are administered by their teachers, which is illustrated in the first quote in the consumer section of the chart above, which reads:

The current challenge facing educators is that they are competing on a daily basis for the attention and interest of their students, which can be easily drawn outside the classroom.

Last, students are viewed as workers, both in the classroom and in the “real world” as they get older. Conceptually, it is understandable that these sub-metaphors (stocks, consumers, workers) do not negate or conflict with one another; rather, they work together to form a larger, blended or mixed metaphor (Hart, 2008; Lee, 2015) of human capital which reflects the knowledge economy as a subset of neoliberal culture. Human capital is a key component of the knowledge economy, wherein expertise wielded by humans are valued as a form of capital to be traded, purchased, and consumed.

Other participants in the system as.

One may wonder, if students are constructed metaphorically as human capital in the text, how are the other participants metaphorically rendered? To answer this, I have

created a chart to map the hierarchies and relationships within education as a system, see Figure 8 below.

Figure 8. Agents in the education system

The OME makes it quite clear that its role is both directive and facilitative, which mirrors Mulderrig’s (2003b) notion of the “stakeholder society” wherein “the economic metaphors of ‘stakeholding’ and ‘investment’ illustrate the instrumental, exchange-value logic that underpins the mechanisms to achieve New Labour’s goal of social justice” which has been extended globally through neoliberal ideology (p. 103). The OME acts through verbs such as “work”, “collaborate”, “monitor”, etc. which is exemplified in bullet points such as:

[To achieve success, Ontario will]²⁵ Work with provincial, regional and local education and health partners to support optimal delivery of, and access to, services and ongoing health supports for children, youth and families.

[To assess progress towards this goal, Ontario will] Monitor children’s success beyond full-day kindergarten through existing mechanisms (e.g., school report card information, ongoing implementation of the Early Development Instrument and EQAO annual assessments) to ensure that children continue to benefit throughout the later grades.

²⁵ The text in the brackets indicates the subheadings, since the text that comes after is one among many bullet points listed for each subheading (described in [textual overview](#) section in Chapter 3).

Thus, the OME presents itself as a CEO figure, directing and facilitating “the imperatives for reform that stem from the economic realities of the 21st century and a collective will to succeed in it” (Mulderrig, 2003b, p. 118).

Next, as viewed in Figure 8 above, education as a sector collaborates with the business sector among others to move in directions that sync with in-demand employment paths. School boards play the role of a chief operating officer, as they implement the imperatives set by the OME, while principals can be viewed through the text as a type of general manager, in that they manage individual schools, and are the hands-on enforcers of standards, yet are themselves policed by the agents above. The relationships mapped in the chart in Figure 8 above can be seen in textual form in the following excerpt:

Ontarians want to have confidence in the ability of our publicly funded education system – from the ministry to the school board to the classroom – to meet the needs of our children.

The power hierarchy can also be seen in this excerpt, which brings me to the next participant—teachers.

In this system, teachers’ agency has been stifled by accountability measures through standardized testing, “raising expectations”, and policing of curriculum material. While I do not have space to fully address this, much research already discusses the deprofessionalisation of teachers as part of the marketization and managerialisation of education (Mulderrig, 2011, 2008; Polster & Newson, 2015; Olssen & Peters, 2005; Lemke, 2007; Westheimer, 2010). I will, however, quote Mulderrig’s (2003a) potent assertion that “one consequence of the new managerial logic in educational organisation is the intensified codification and regulation of teachers’ working practices, alongside an

increased emphasis on standards, targets, quality and delivery” (p. 127). Furthermore, the subtle discourse mentioned earlier has changed the way teachers are viewed by the public, most notably by implicating parents as part of the long list of stakeholders in education. The OME constructs parents as partners in their children’s education:

Parents and guardians are a critical component of ensuring public confidence in the education system. Parents who are engaged and actively involved in their child’s learning make Ontario’s great schools even stronger. Most importantly, students are more likely to succeed when their parents are engaged in their learning, and with more students succeeding, public confidence in the education system can be enhanced.

Parents are emphasised as crucial to the success of their child or children’s education in the more obvious sense that they shape and rear their offspring, which was always the case for public education in Ontario (see [Chapter 2](#)). However, there is a deeper meaning here: parents are also partners in reinforcing the standards of performance that are set out by the OME and enforced through school boards and principals.

Future as Path

The text constructs the future (for students in Ontario) as a distinct path. The imagery of this path is quite strong in the text through phrases and excerpts such as:

“next steps”, “overcome challenges”, “all along the way”, “postsecondary destinations”, “easier to navigate”, “finding ways to”, “to move forward”, “navigating a transition”, “continue to explore creative avenues”, “future pathways”; “embarks”

Our work over the past decade has been focused on ensuring that no child or youth will have anything in the way to stop them from reaching their potential

On this path, education through publicly funded schooling is the first segment. The path starts with kindergarten, moving through elementary, (sometimes middle school), to high school where students are split into academic, applied, and general/work streams (largely

based on their grade point average) which lead to university, college/trades-training, and ultimately the workforce as shown in Figure 9 below.

Figure 9. OME's ideal path to the future

In figure 4, the dashed lines around “training” indicate that it is not strictly necessary, meaning that in some cases students can go straight from high school to the workforce.²⁶ In line with this is emphasis on the idea that if young people are good students, and gain the ideal collection of knowledge, skills, and characteristics, they will be successful in the “real world”—in other words, the acquisition of employment. Accordingly, staying on these narrowed paths leads to *success*, *excellence*, and ultimately, *good citizenship*.

This is demonstrated in the following excerpts:

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**. (emphasis added)

By raising expectations, the transformation in Ontario education will ensure that students achieve at high levels, acquire valuable skills and become engaged members of their communities.

Thus, it becomes clear that if one is a good student, one is likely to gain employment, making one a good citizen. Notably, I have chosen to call this metaphor a path rather than a journey or adventure because those words connote freedom and choice, which is

²⁶ However, it is increasingly hard to find jobs that do not require specialized schooling or training.

contrary to how I perceive this metaphor to be constructed. This path has been carefully pre-determined. Neoliberal ideology functions here as both a connector of school to employment, and employment to good citizenship, as well as a defense mechanism for Ontario, as blame becomes placed on individual students/citizens if they fail to follow the path. This links back to the term “wastage” that was discussed in Chapter 2.

Although it is not written explicitly, the consequences can be easily inferred from the text. The subtle changes in the discourse over time seem to have led to the suppression of the mention of consequences through a positive semantic prosody.²⁷

Micro Discussion

Examined together, these metaphors may shape how readers perceive education as well as the participants within its system. The combination of marketised language and managerial operation show education as a means to employment, and employment as a main indicator of good citizenship. This is reinforced by the Government of Canada’s (2012) list of responsibilities of citizenship (as shown in [Figure 1](#)). The second bullet point on this list is “Taking responsibility for oneself and one’s family — Getting a job, taking care of one’s family and working hard in keeping with one’s abilities are important Canadian values. Work contributes to personal dignity and self-respect, and to Canada’s prosperity” (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2012, para. 11), which suggests a consistency across Ontario and Canada’s policies. Furthermore, the metaphors composed in *Achieving excellence* parallel Mulderrig’s (2011) assertion that:

²⁷Semantic prosody refers to the pragmatic and attitudinal meaning of a word or phrase (See Cheng, 2012). Positive or negative semantic prosody occurs at the lexico-grammatical level of a text through associations with positive (good/pleasant) or negative (bad/unpleasant) words or outcomes or negative—i.e. the *sun* shone brightly on the glorious celebration v.s. the *sun* scorched the earth, leaving deserts in its wake.

A further aspect to the broadly market-oriented, instrumental approach to education ..., is the commodification of knowledge itself, and the concomitant roles and relations of consumption among social actors. As they progress along their individualised path through the assessed, hierarchized stages of education, pupils accrue a portfolio of qualifications that demonstrate their *skills* and *achievements*. (p. 139, emphasis in original)

This provides evidence that the knowledge economy approach to education has permeated across national borders as a potent tendril of globalized neoliberalism.

Lexical Analysis

Politics of Inclusion and Synthetic Personalisation

The conversational tone and use of the pronouns “we”, “us” and “our” within *Achieving excellence* are a prime example of what Fairclough (1993) terms ‘synthetic personalisation’ (explained in [Chapter 3](#)) which parallels Mulderrig’s (2012) politics of inclusion in which the public are implicated in text and speech acts by dominant group(s). In this case, the audience (parents) are addressed in a friendly manner and as sharing the same goals as the OME. This is exemplified through the subheadings “Why We Need To Do This” as they implicate the audience with an emphasis on conversational communication. As part of my analysis, I endeavoured to look at the clusters formed around the pronouns through the Ngram/Cluster function in AntConc. I have provided two tables below to show the significant clusters for *we* and *our*; there were no significant clusters for *us* (clusters were considered significant if they occurred more than twice in the text).

Table 4. *Significant Clusters for “we”*

Freq.	On left	Freq.	On right
10	“we need to”	5	“that we”
8	“we can”	4	“together, we”
8	“we know”	4	“why we”
6	“we will”		
5	“we have”		
4	“we know that”		
4	“we must”		
3	“we also”		
3	“we are”		

Table 5. *Significant Clusters for “our”*

Freq.	On left	Freq.	On right
9	“our children”	15	“of our”
8	“our education”	5	“in our”
7	“our education system”	4	“and our”
5	“our learners”	3	“all of our”
5	“our partners”	3	“give our”
4	“our schools”	3	“support our”
3	“our children and”	3	“that our”
3	“our partners to”		
3	“our success in”		
3	“our students”		

The use of these pronouns through examples such as, “We [ambivalent] must give our [inclusive] learners the tools they need to reach their full potential ...”; “... will help us reach our [exclusive] goal of making Ontario’s education system the most equitable in the world”; “Our [ambivalent] work over the past decade ...” and so on, may disguise

power imbalances and affect inclusivity (Mulderrig, 2012; Fairclough, 1993). While the reader might expect to be included in the text as an Ontarian, a tax payer, a parent, and so on, it is important to look at the function(s) and possible implications of this textual strategy. It is probable that many readers do not distinguish between the inclusive, exclusive, and ambivalent pronouns. Furthermore, while the use of *we*, *us*, and *our* does signal inclusivity, it can also disperse responsibility and even function to shirk responsibility (Mulderrig, 2012). This can be seen in Table 4 above through construction of *we* with the imperatives *need to* and *must*, which take on a pleading or imploring tone. Furthermore, the use of *our* denotes shared possession and thus shared responsibility:

Our children, youth and adults will develop the skills and the knowledge that will lead them to become personally successful, economically productive and actively engaged citizens.

Spreading this approach across the entire education system will only be possible with the leadership and commitment of educators and the involvement of our many community partners, especially our learners and their families.

While the first example more implicitly implicates the audience, the second is explicit through naming the parties that need to embrace their responsibility. This responsibility is connected to morality (imploring the audience) through the obligatory language of *will only be possible*. Put this way, blame for both individual and even system-wide failure can be placed on these individuals and groups rather than on the OME.

Although I do not have space to fully explore this area through mood and transitivity analysis, an interesting finding is that often, when past success is mentioned, it is exclusive:

Our Success in Education – Now and in the Future;

We know that change is never easy, and realizing the goals set out in *Achieving Excellence* will require the continued commitment of all of **our** partners

(emphasis added)

Furthermore, to parallel Mulderrig's (2012) discussion of the problem solution format, the text lays out the OME's goals ambivalently, and the subheading "Why We Need To Do This" addresses the audience inclusively, while the following sections about the steps to be taken and how success will be measured are exclusive. Thus each goal generally follows a pattern of *here is what we (ambivalent) need to do, this is why we (inclusive) need to do it, and here is what we (exclusive) will do to achieve and measure success toward said goal*. Again, this spreads responsibility across the citizens of Ontario, while placing the OME as the facilitator and assessor of success as was discussed in the metaphor analysis.

Overlexicalisation

As discussed above, overlexicalisation occurs when texts contain an abundance of quasi-synonymous and/or loosely or undefined terms that can contribute to the construction, maintenance, and naturalization of ideologies and/or discourses. Part of the issue that overlexicalisation raises is that words and even sentences and paragraphs can be rendered effectually meaningless or "hollowed out" (Mulderrig, 2008). Table 6 below outlines the major bundles of overlexicalised words found in the text; the numbers in brackets indicate the number of times each word occurs in *Achieving excellence*.

Table 6. *Overlexicalisation within Achieving excellence*

Group No.	List of Quasi-Synonymous Terms
Group 1	Student(s) (146); Child(ren) (88); Learners (18); Youth (18)
Group 2	Develop (15); Achieve (14); Become (12); Increase (12); Build (11); Gain (3); Acquire (2)
Group 3	Skills (27); Knowledge (9); Experience(s) (7); Characteristics (4)
Group 4	Success (32); Excellence (23); Achievement (14); Perform(ance)(ing) (11); Excel (3)
Group 5	World (17); International (5); Global(ly)(ized) (2)

First, I will discuss each group of clusters separately, and then discuss how they function as a whole with regard to my research questions.

Group 1

Although the overlexicalisation in Group 1 is unsurprising to find in a text about education, this finding both confirms a student centred approach (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988) to education and a functionalisation²⁸ of groups on the receiving end of education. The student centred approach to education is a dominant approach to education. It is part of the constructivist²⁹ model of education as it is concerned with individual learning needs and active learning. While this approach is generally favoured above [behaviourist approaches](#), they also connect to a neoliberal agenda which enshrines individualisation as a central facet of its functional ideology³⁰ (Mulderrig, 2008; Olssen & Peters, 2005;

²⁸ Defining individuals by what they do (van Leeuwen, 1996). He (1996) notes that functionalisation occurs when a verb is turned into a noun by adding a suffix—e.g. work-er, employ-er, run-ner (p. 54).

²⁹ The constructivist approach to education advocates that students are not empty vessels. They come with their own pastiche of knowledge, culture, and experience, and are active in constructing their own understandings of imparted knowledge. Thus, education is a building and shaping process, rather than a filling up process (Learning-Theories, 2016).

³⁰ Ideally, students would receive and actively participate in individualised education to cater to their needs and interests, but not facilitate individualism (every person for their self, competition, etc.).

Gilbert, 2013). This presents a serious issue to meditate upon³¹—how can education celebrate and address legitimate individual learning needs without consenting to and/or propagating neoliberal ideology? Furthermore, the words “student(s)” and “learners” are functionalized which means that the social actor is “represented in functional terms” through a nominalisation of the verbs *learn* and *study* (Mulderigg, 2008). Mulderigg (2008) notes that the “potential effect” of this process “is to legitimate learning activity by giving it the permanence of a category of social actor” which parallels the term *worker* and implies the notion of “you are what you do” (p. 154). The following table presents significant clusters of the words that make up Group 1, and will provide insight about how these terms are used in the text.

Table 7. *Frequent Clusters for Group 1*

Freq.	Cluster
13	“children and students”
11	“children and youth”
5	“youth in care”
4	“every student”
3	“child and student”
2	“students, children and youth”

Interestingly, the use of “youth” and “child” seem to function in the text as a dilution of functionalization which also contributes to *synthetic personalisation* as discussed above. Typically, children and youth are groups viewed as vulnerable and in need of care and bringing up. These terms can produce feelings of empathy, concern, and affection, especially with the intended audience made up of parents and guardians. The text further

³¹ This parallels Lemke’s (2007) work.

develops a synthetic personalisation in its claims to care deeply for the potential, well-being, and success of each and every child living in Ontario.

Group 2

The words in Group 2 are indicative of growth and betterment, signalling positive progress over a period of time. This group includes the following quasi-synonymous words: develop (15); achieve (14); become (12); increase (12); build (11); gain (3); and acquire (2). Notably, clauses/clause complexes including the words in Group 2 as well as the clusters in the table below are often collocated with Group 1 as the agent or subject of the sentence. For example, “students achieve at high levels”; and “help students build the knowledge and skills”. Table 8 below presents the relevant clusters for Group 2.

Table 8. *Frequent Clusters for Group 2*

Freq.	On left	Freq.	On right
5	“build on”	8	“to achieve”
4	“will develop”	6	“to become”
4	“achieve success”	4	“action to achieve”
3	“achieve excellence”	2	“develop the skills”
2	“increase student engagement”	2	“students achieve”
2	“become personally successful”	2	“will build”
2	“acquire valuable skills”	2	“to increase”

As can be drawn from the table, the cluster, “to achieve” appears eight times in the text. A look at the concordances of this cluster shows that five out of the eight instances construct Ontario as the agent, four of which state, “To achieve success, Ontario will:”, followed by bullet point lists. Recalling the structure of the text discussed in Chapter 3, this cluster falls into the “Plan of Action” for each of the four goals laid out in the text.

Ontario is the agent of the verb “increase”, as in “Ontario will increase public awareness”, and “Ontario will increase student engagement”. The concordances of “build on” also feature Ontario, with clauses such as, “With a track record of success we can build on”; “build on past achievements”; and “this new vision must ensure that we build on the momentum we’ve achieved”. It appears that the OME sees itself as providing positive intervention for the education of students in Ontario and wishes to show the public in order to “enhance confidence” in the public education system.

Skipping through, although “become personally successful” features only twice in the text, it is notable because the sentences in which they appear are nearly the exact same:

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.** (Emphasis added)

Our children, youth and adults will develop the skills and the knowledge **that will lead them to become personally successful, economically productive and actively engaged citizens.** (Emphasis added)

Both of these sentences appear on the first page of the text, which emphatically draws attention to itself. To exacerbate this, the following sentence also appears on the first page:

Today, Ontario’s publicly funded education system – acknowledged as one of the best in the world – partners with parents, guardians and communities to develop graduates who are **personally successful, economically productive and actively engaged citizens.** (Emphasis added).

A possible reason for this recurrence is that repetition facilitates memorization. The OME has chosen to emphasize this particular string of words as an outcome of what Ontario’s publicly funded education system should impress on its attendees/participating citizens. However, it is also an explicit case of overlexicalisation.

Group 3

Group 3 is a cluster of intended generic outcomes of education in Ontario. As seen above, Group 3 includes the words, skills (27); knowledge (9); experience(s) (7); and characteristic(s) (3). The words in this group are often paired or bundled together with words in Group 1 and Group 2. By now a clear pattern has formed, in which many of the words from each group can be interchanged to construct sentences with similar or identical meaning(s) throughout the text. Table 10 below illustrates the significant clusters.

Table 9. *Frequent Clusters for Group 3*

Freq.	On left	Freq.	On right
9	“skills and”	6	“the skills”
3	“skills majors”	5	“the knowledge”
3	“skills and knowledge”	4	“high skills”
2	“skills like”	3	“specialist high skills”
2	“knowledge and”	3	“thinking skills”
2	“experiences that”	2	“develop the skills”
		2	“higher-order skills”
		2	“knowledge and skills”

These clusters show how the terms from Group 3 are often listed together. Since they often feature as a cluster, there seems to be a clear distinction between *knowledge* and *skills*, in which knowledge is theoretical, and skills are performative. However, *skills* appears three times more than *knowledge* does across the whole text. This signals an emphasis on skills over knowledge, which parallels the performance-based priority of the neoliberal system (Mulderigg, 2008, p. 157, 2012; Olssen & Peters, 2005). To illustrate, the second sentence of the text’s mission statement reads:

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. (Emphasis added)

Furthermore, the OME lists some characteristics they believe are important for learners to inherit:

Beyond reading, writing and mathematics, we know that to achieve excellence in the future, our learners will also need to **develop characteristics such as perseverance, resilience and imaginative thinking** to overcome challenges. (Emphasis added)

In this sense, knowledge seems to be connected with subjects such as literacy and math, while the desired characteristics relate to the competitiveness inherent in economic and neoliberal discourses (Mulderrig, 2008). Mulderrig (2008) notes how challenges are viewed competitively in such discourses, and that we (as citizens) are expected to overcome these challenges individually. In other words, we must continually “reinvent ourselves as flexible and competitive beings” (p. 158), which Rose (1999, as cited in Mulderrig, 2008) terms “the enterprise of the self”. This connects to the “lifelong learning” (Mulderrig, 2008) that is expected of citizens and is exemplified in the text:

All children and students will be inspired to reach their full potential, with access to rich learning experiences that begin at birth and continue into adulthood.

While I do not refute the importance or benefits of continuous learning (which sometimes surpasses institutionalised education), the way lifelong learning is framed in the text is problematic because it puts inexhaustive pressure on citizens to spend time and money on perpetually improving their employability rather than for more social or humanistic reasons (Mulderrig, 2003ab).

The overlexicalisation of these terms signals what Mulderrig (2008) describes as “educational inputs and economic outputs” wherein students are to consume the proper

knowledge and gain the pre-determined skills and characteristics (input) that are connected and beneficial to employment in in-demand fields (output). Mulderrig (2008) summarises that “if education is to be subordinated to economic imperatives, *performance* is critical” (p. 157, emphasis in original). The discussion of competition will continue into the next group.

Group 4

The words in Group 4 signify positive processes and outcomes (determined by the OME). They are success (32); excellence (23); achievement (14); perform(ance)(ing) (11); and excel (3). Success refers to “the accomplishment of an aim or purpose”, while achievement refers to “a thing done successfully with effort, skill or courage” (*Oxford Dictionary*). Excellence and excel have the same root, which is to be of or do something with outstanding quality or proficiency (*Oxford dictionary*). Table 11 shows the clusters for Group 4.

Table 10. *Frequent Clusters for Group 4*

Freq.	On left	Freq.	On right
6	“success in”	4	“to achieve success”
4	“success, Ontario will”	4	“of success”
3	“excellence in”	3	“our success”
3	“excellence is”	3	“their success”
2	“success for all”	3	“achieve excellence”
2	“success in education”	3	“for excellence”
2	“excellence builds on”	2	“for future success”
2	“performance gaps between”	2	“goal: achieve excellence”
2	“perform almost as”	2	“to achieve excellence”

Much of the *success* and *excellence* in the text is attributed to the province of Ontario and the education system. For example: “Our success in education”; “they have recognized our success...”; “Parents and guardians have also been a critical part of our success in education”; “a track record of success”; “reputation for excellence”; etc. There are a few instances in which students are attributed *success* and *excellence*—such as, “reach new heights of success”; “evaluate their success”; “support their success”; “for students to achieve excellence”—but they are often future oriented. However, all the instances of *perform* and *performance* are obligated to students: “performance gaps between students have narrowed, and in some cases, closed”; “overall student performance on EQAO assessments has improved by 17 percentage points”; “Performance gaps between groups of students have also narrowed, and in some cases, closed”; “Ontario has also seen a decline in student performance in mathematics”; “elementary students participating in English as a Second Language programs now perform almost as well as the general student population”; “students in French language schools continue to perform at a high level”; etc. This shows a focus on standardized assessment of student performance, with a fixation on performance gaps, EQAO scores, as well as math and language acquisition. Furthermore, in comparing these groups, the OME participates in facilitating competition between them, as well as in a wider context (nationally and globally).

As noted in Group 3, nearly all of the sentences in the text are constructed using one or more words from each group. Sentences such as the two below are highlighted examples of the kind of constructs that exist in the text when Group 4 is considered with the first three:

Children and students of all ages will achieve high levels of academic performance, acquire valuable skills and demonstrate good citizenship.

‘Ontario, which ... has a relatively large school system of nearly 5,000 schools, 120,000 teachers, and 2.2 million students, is among the world’s highest-performing school systems. It consistently achieves top-quartile mathematics scores and top-decile reading scores in PISA.’ (McKinsey&Company, 2010, p. 47, as cited in *Achieving excellence*)

These excerpts reinforce the focus on strong performance, and show the levels of competition such as those between students, schools in Ontario, as well as Ontario’s ranking nationally and internationally. In other words, the pressure to do well at a global level is funneled into individual classrooms and onto individual students and teachers. This is immense pressure, and it is well-known that this kind of pressure can cause high levels of stress and anxiety—which does not bode well for the text’s goal to “promote well-being”. Furthermore, this competitive emphasis is a symptom of global neoliberal ideologies in connection with the prevalence of the knowledge economy (Mulderigg, 2008; Olssen & Peters 2005), which I will address further in the next group.

Group 5

Group 5 is a collection of words which refer to contexts outside of Canada. These words are: world (17); international (5); and global(ly)(ized) (2), and are illustrated in Table 12 below.

Table 11. *Frequent Clusters for Group 5*

Freq.	On left	Freq.	On right
2	“world that is”	15	“the world”
		6	“in the world”
		3	“a world”
		2	“as the world”
		2	“how the world”

Unfortunately, these clusters do not provide as much context as the previous groups do. The text appears to frame itself as a response to increasing globalisation. The OME has constructed phrases such as:

In a world that is constantly changing, Ontario students will be better prepared to adapt, achieve and excel, regardless of the challenges they face.

We can develop compassionate and actively engaged citizens who graduate high school equipped for the technology-driven, globalized world.

As the world continues to change and technology becomes more prevalent, that challenge will only increase.

These excerpts frame globalization as agentless, and as a challenge that must be met.

Furthermore, they reaffirm Mulderrig's (2003a) assertion that

to call education policy solely a *response* seems to endorse the government's own legitimacy rhetoric, which constructs globalization as an inexorable force of change to which nations and individuals must be prepared to adapt; it obfuscates the realities of the capitalist system whose intrinsic instability demands adaptability and flexibility from its workforce. (pp. 123-124; emphasis in original)

This approach denies ideas for change because it caters to neoliberal discourse which positions itself as a naturally occurring system with no alternatives (Gilbert, 2013; Cahill, 2009). In this sense, although education is presented as in equal partnership or collaboration with economic ambitions and strategies, it has in reality been entirely subordinated to the economic agendas embedded in the neoliberal system (Mulderrig, 2003ab).

Micro Discussion

In examining these clusters within their textual contexts, there is a stark suppression that becomes increasingly noticeable—teachers are incredibly absent from this text. In fact, out of all the participants (students, the province of Ontario, parents, etc) mentioned in the text, teachers/educators are the least mentioned (see Table 9).

Table 12. *Frequency of Actors*

Frequency	Participants
270	Student(s) (146); Child(ren) (88); Learners (18); Youth (18)
123	Ontario (72); Education System (38); Province (13)
57	Parent(s) (30); Family(ies) (16); Guardian(s) (11)
29	Educator(s) (15); Teacher(s) (10); Education Professionals (3); Teaching Force (2)

This is largely problematic because teachers are crucial agents within the education system. The education system could not function without the everyday dedication of tens of thousands of teachers who spend countless hours in- and out-side of the classroom teaching, preparing curricula and lessons, marking and giving feedback, caring for students, learning independently, and catering to the increasingly market- and outcomes-driven top-down administration of education (Mulderrig, 2012, 2008; Olssen & Peters, 2005; Pini, 2011). This suppression parallels Mulderrig’s (2003a) statement that “ironically, the removal of [teachers’] autonomy is legitimised and partly enacted through a Discourse of professionalism, which constructs them as committed to self-improvement and skills-upgrading, ambitious, collaborative, and strategically oriented to the effectiveness of their work”, which in turn legitimises “surveillance, marketization, and codification of their work practices” (p 142). Furthermore, this suppression is

counter-intuitive to the commonplaces of the curriculum, which is student centred, but positions teachers as an essential agent in developing, shaping, and delivering the curriculum to students in a reciprocal environment (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988).

To wrap this discussion up, these overlexicalised groups are profoundly connected, both literally at the sentence level, and abstractly through the discourses and ideologies of neoliberalism and the knowledge economy. This is evinced both in *Achieving excellence*, and the texts Mulderrig investigated in her work. She (2008) explains that the collocates of *skills* underscore the “reification of learning, frequently expressing it as the object of improvement (*develop, improve*) or expressing a relation of possession (*invest in, deliver, acquire, equip, and give*)” (p. 164). As a side, (and to shed light on the intertextualities of this text), the Government of Canada (GC) published a [report](#) in 2001, titled, *Achieving excellence: Investing in people, knowledge and opportunity*. This report laid out an innovation strategy for Canada in the 21st century, embracing the knowledge economy, and declaring that

It is time to take what Canada has done well and ask ourselves: *How do we do more of this, faster? How can we multiply our successes across the country and into the future?* It is time to galvanize a truly national effort to achieve excellence in all we do: to be the best and nothing less. (p. 3, emphasis in original)

Furthermore, this report calls colleges and universities to action, stating that “Canada depends on universities and colleges for research and our supply of highly qualified people” (p. 80), which connects education to the potential economic return. To be frank, the overlexicalised groups as a whole illuminate the process of developing (mass producing) present and future generations of citizens who will ideally, complacently

learn the pre-determined *knowledge, skills, and characteristics* to be gained through education in the form of public schooling, and then complacently enter the workforce in pre-approved institutions and sectors where they will perform said *knowledge, skills, and characteristics* (Lemke, 2007). And because of the uncertainty of the “economic climate” and the *globalized world that is constantly changing* they will be expected to persevere through economic and social challenges by continuously developing new *skills* and/or *creating* their own *jobs* if one does not exist for them. Furthermore, blame can be placed on the individual rather than the system if everything does not go according to plan. Within the text, good citizens are those who are employable and willing to work—which again, reflects a neoliberal agenda. Thus, in this sense, education through publicly funded schooling is positioned as the best way for young people to ultimately become good citizens.

Buzzwords

To refresh the reader’s memory, buzzwords/phrases are catchy and often vaguely situated words that are usually overused in order to make them appear a normal part of the discourse, which is why they so easily connect with overlexicalisation. The buzzwords and phrases within *Achieving excellence* that are the most fruitful for exploration are: *entrepreneur* (and added suffixes), *innovation* and *creativity*, *potential* and *excellence*, *future/of tomorrow*, and *equity* and *well-being*. Some of these words have overlap with one or both of the metaphor and previous lexical analyses—which shows cohesion within the text and acts as a triangulation of my findings. As above, I will present and discuss each buzzword/phrase separately, and then further discuss them as a collection.

Entrepreneur

The word entrepreneur (and its variations) have become popular in most areas of public discourse. *Achieving excellence* emphasizes that Ontario values an “entrepreneurial spirit” and loosely defines it, as shown below:

‘Student engagement and curiosity could be addressed through stronger development of 21st century learning skills and well-being. We could call this the ‘new entrepreneurial spirit’ – a spirit characterized by innovation, risk-taking, commitment, and skilled problem solving in the service of a better future.’
(Council of Ontario Directors of Education). (As cited in *Achieving excellence*)

There is quite a bit to unpack here, as it seems that the characteristics of engagement, curiosity, innovation, risk-taking, commitment, and skillful problem solving are all attributes of this entrepreneurial spirit, yet these terms are not defined or contextualized past the mention of the additional buzzwords “well-being” and a better “future”.

According to the *Oxford Dictionary*, the word entrepreneur refers to someone who starts a business and entails financial risk(s) in the anticipation of profit. The choice of the word “spirit” is interesting as well, since it is akin to words such as soul, or self and identity. Whether intentional or not, the use of this word has the effect of naturalising the construct of entrepreneurialism for the audience, which matches the underlying discourse as well as Fowler’s (2012) assertion that “the image of the heroic entrepreneur [is] celebrated by neoliberals” (p. 194). Thus, this is an example of *marketised language*, wherein economic discourses appear naturalised for public consumption. Furthermore, this naturalization discards the consequences of entrepreneurial start-ups that fail to launch or do well after launch, which could lead to serious debt among other social repercussions. To further illustrate this, one of the bullet points in the “Plan of Action”

under the goal, “Achieving Excellence” reads that in order to achieve success in this goal Ontario will:

Foster more young entrepreneurs in Ontario schools by increasing training in innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship for Specialist High Skills Majors students.

While the text does not explain what Specialist High Skills Majors (SHSM) are, a quick internet search shows that SHSM is a program for high school students, wherein students can take specific course and co-op bundles in job sectors such as agriculture, business, energy, health and wellness, hospitality and tourism, information and communications technology, and so on (retrieved from <https://www.edu.gov.on.ca/morestudentsuccess/SHSM.html>). While this may be beneficial for both students and businesses, it also naturalises unpaid labour through co-ops and internships, which exploits students’ need for experience to successfully enter the workforce (Siebert & Wilson, 2013; Lawton & Potter, 2010; see also [Sagan, 2013](#)).

Innovation and Creativity

I have chosen to examine these words together, because they often appear in concordance with one another, as exemplified in the quote just above. It is common knowledge that creativity and innovation are nearly synonymous. However, creativity is often used to describe more artistic pursuits, while innovation relates more to technical or scientific areas. When used alone, *innovation* seems to reflect its definition of new methods or procedures, as in,

Our task is to modernize classrooms and support educators’ efforts to bring innovation to learning.

In contrast, the only time *creativity* appears without *innovation* as a collocate is when it is being quoted:

‘Making real world connections is essential ... [we need to] observe what students are interested in and use this to foster creativity’ (An educator and consultations participant).

Furthermore, this use does not seem to have direct artistic undertones. For the most part, this text ignores creativity in the artistic sense, redefining it as a characteristic that is valuable for technological and entrepreneurial pursuits.

In the one instance that the text does pair the word *creative* with the arts, it is to reinforce that this trait facilitates success, but does not mention direct relation to careers or jobs in the arts:

Promote the value of the arts, including the visual and performing arts, in developing critical and creative thinking skills that support success in school and in life.

A report published in 2013 by Parents for Education (P4E) states that “when arts are treated simply as enrichment, they are particularly vulnerable to cuts in funding from the province or the school board” which is particularly salient for today’s context.

Consequently, students often have to pay a fee to participate in performative and visual arts classes because funding is insufficient or non-existent. This deters students who come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (P4E, 2013). Finally, to further illustrate the text’s emphasis on *innovation* over *creativity*, the words *innovation* and *innovative* appear a total of 21 times, while the words *creativity* and *creative* appear a total of 13 times. I do not wish to say that innovative characteristics are not valuable. Rather, what I do wish to impress upon the reader is that *creativity* appears not only to be less valued by the OME, but has in most instances been constructed to downplay its ties with traditionally artistic occupations. This seems to connect to the ongoing trend of

devaluing the liberal and performative arts both in education and in the workforce (P4E, 2013; [Samson, 2014](#)).

Potential and Excellence

I have chosen to combine these two in the same discussion because the text constructs the potential of learners as excellence—i.e., achieving their *potential* means achieving *excellence*. *Potential* occurs nine times in the text, and always refers to students and learners. The cluster, “reach their full potential” occurs four times which shows an emphasis on progression toward a future aim. Furthermore, the OME connects student potential with top-down expectations:

By raising expectations for what our education system can accomplish, *Achieving Excellence* can help uncover and develop the potential of all learners.

It encompasses these goals and reaches deeper and broader, raising expectations both for the system and for the potential of our children and students.

Somehow, raising expectations for students and teachers will help students “reach their full potential”. The text never discloses the connection between these two concepts. This type of pressure brings to mind the situational imagery of manufacturing or sales quotas, in which stress is placed on groups and/or individuals to meet or beat a near-impossible fixed or rising minimum.

Although I discussed *excellence* above, overlexicalisation and buzzwords are often one in the same or closely connected, since they can be seen as attempts to naturalise potentially contentious agendas or ideologies. *Excellence* appears 23 times in the text, and 15 of these instances occur in the phrase “achieving excellence”, which is both the title, and one of the goals of the text. However, I wish to emphasise that this fixation on excellence permeates larger educational contexts as part of the globalized

neoliberal ideology. Mulderrig (2008) exemplifies this in her analysis of the UK New Labour Party's first publication, *Excellence in Schools* wherein she finds a "high incidence of managerial terms like *targets*, *effective*, *rais(ing)* (collocating with *standards ...*)" which reflects "greater attention to economic policy concerns" (p. 151). This has also been observed by Fairclough (1993) in his analysis of university advertisements in the UK in which there is an emphasis on "teaching excellence" in newer advertisements (pp. 142-148), and is a central topic in the Government of Ontario's (2001) report in which it is stressed that all universities must deliver excellent education, regardless of their size or status/ranking (p. 80). This analysis ultimately illuminates the emergence of the marketization of public discourse, a facet of which is managerial or "technocratic" language within educational contexts (pp. 142-148).

Engagement/Engaged

In the text, engagement is connected to both students as well as parents. The text stresses that "student engagement is crucial" for success.

Thousands of educators and students are participating in innovative projects that are making an impact on **student engagement**, learning and achievement (emphasis added).

Increase **student engagement** in mathematics, science and technology by expanding opportunities for K–12 students to explore the relevance of these areas to their future pathways (emphasis added).

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** (emphasis added).

We can develop compassionate and actively **engaged citizens** who graduate high school equipped for the technology-driven, globalized world (emphasis added).

It is interesting to note that with regard to students, *engagement* is used to discuss schooling, while *engaged* refers more often than not to citizenship. It would seem that

the classroom is a metonym for the “real world”. Furthermore, engagement is a noun, which signals nominalisation. This connects to the input/output paradigm proposed by Mulderrig, as well as to a salient issue for education as a whole. That is, to stimulate and maintain student engagement in order to foster (active) learning. However, it seems that although the text emphasises student engagement, it implicitly portrays learners as passive receivers of the pre-determined skills, knowledge, and characteristics laid out for them, which is one of Lemke’s (2007) main criticisms of public education.

Parents are implicated as a crucial agent in their children’s success through excerpts such as:

Parents and guardians are a critical component of ensuring public confidence in the education system. Parents who are engaged and actively involved in their child’s learning make Ontario’s great schools even stronger.

Recognize and encourage a wide range of opportunities for parent, guardian and caregiver engagement and involvement in their children’s learning.

Foster increased parent engagement through ongoing communication about what their children are doing in school and how parents, guardians and caregivers can further contribute to their learning.

The OME constructs a dichotomous relationship by portraying parent involvement as obligatory, but again leaves negative consequences or effects implicit. One could extrapolate from these examples that parents who are not involved in their children’s education are possibly sabotaging their child’s potential success, or make “Ontario’s great schools” worse off. As previously mentioned, this text suppresses the underlying reasons (low SES, mental illness, disabilities, etc.) why some parents may not be able to be “involved” in their children’s education.

Furthermore, the text positions engagement as something that is measureable:

Set measures of student engagement and belonging for all students, especially those who may be at risk of lower achievement.

This connects to the emphasis on measurable outcomes and output. Olssen and Peters (2005) note that “in neoliberalism the patterning of power is established on contract, which in turn is premised upon a need for compliance, monitoring, and accountability organized in a management line and established through a purchase contract based upon measurable outputs” (p. 325). In this case, student engagement is an element of compliance, to be monitored and measured by teachers, who are monitored further by school boards as well as the OME. To further this connection, a simple thesaurus search lists the words employed, hired, and waged as some of the strongest synonyms of engaged, which alludes to the marketization of education through promised job acquisition.

Future/of tomorrow

As discussed in the metaphor analysis above, the future is structured as a place where success, excellence, and good citizenship exist, in which there is a specific path to get there. *Future* is also connected to technology, globalisation, and provincial prosperity which the text demonstrates through excerpts such as:

That is why in fall 2013, individuals and organizations across the province came together to consider and discuss the skills and knowledge Ontario learners will need in the future.

Beyond reading, writing and mathematics, we know that to achieve excellence in the future, our learners will also need to develop characteristics such as perseverance, resilience and imaginative thinking to overcome challenges.

We must also continue to support our educators in their professional learning, ensuring they remain proud members of a profession that is crucial to the future prosperity of our province.

Furthermore, the OME connects the knowledge, skills, and characteristics as a preparatory collection for specific possible needs of the future. *Of tomorrow* is a metonym for the future, since it is not literal in its meaning:

They will become the motivated innovators, community builders, creative talent, skilled workers, entrepreneurs and leaders **of tomorrow**.

Students will be fully engaged in their learning, building the skills and developing the attributes they will need to compete for and create the jobs **of tomorrow**.

In the first example, a list of ideal future roles is assigned to the younger generations, while in the second, the audience is told that students will gain everything they need to *compete* in the job market, and/or *create* their own job(s). There seems to be no concern for the way that the job market functions, and responsibility is placed on the individual to meet these challenges. This is exemplified further when *of tomorrow* is constructed with *Achieving Excellence* as a subject:

Achieving Excellence is based on the advice of thousands of Ontarians, and is the important next step in building the vibrant, prosperous province **of tomorrow**. (emphasis added)

The world is changing rapidly. That is why *Achieving Excellence* challenges the education sector in Ontario to transform to meet the expectations of today and build the vibrant, prosperous province **of tomorrow**. (emphasis added)

First, I must comment on the recycling of sentences and/or fragments of sentences. This seems to be a theme throughout the text. Last, while the future is not a concrete entity, the OME attempts to solidify it through the path metaphor as discussed above.

Equity and Well-being

As noted above, “Ensuring Equity” is the second goal of *Achieving excellence*, while the third goal is “Promoting Well-Being”, which is why I have chosen to analyse and discuss them together. In the second section (“Our Success in Education – Now and

in the Future”), the text lists the goals in bullet points with a blurb about what the goal is intended to accomplish:

- **Ensuring Equity:** All children and students will be inspired to reach their full potential, with access to rich learning experiences that begin at birth and continue into adulthood.
- **Promoting Well-Being:** All children and students will develop enhanced mental and physical health, a positive sense of self and belonging, and the skills to make positive choices. (Emphasis in original)

On the surface these goals are amenable to a progressive and caring educational environment. However, a closer examination provides more insight.

There are nine occurrences of *equity* in the text, two of which occur in the headers stating the goal. I have included a few examples below to provide context about how *equity* features and is constructed in the text.

Equity and excellence go hand in hand. So while Ontario has come far in closing gaps for many learners, more needs to be done for those students who struggle the most.

By ensuring equity in our education system, we can help all students achieve excellence.

An important component of ensuring equity is supporting students through transition periods that we know pose challenges.

While these sentences do not provide much information about what *equity* actually means, the goal’s introduction section discusses a need to move past the celebration of diversity toward “inclusivity and respect”, which is a laudable statement. The OME then notes that,

It is particularly important to provide the best possible learning opportunities and supports for students who may be at risk of not succeeding. This often includes, but is not limited to, some of our Aboriginal students, children and youth in care, children and students with special education needs, recent immigrants and children from families experiencing poverty.

Again, this seems to be positive and forward-thinking, and alludes intertextually to the discourse of *equity* rather than *equality* as is illustrated in Figure 10 below.

Figure 10. Equality vs. equity (Retrieved from <http://kpr.me/106UF6>).

The OME seems to be privy to this discourse which is demonstrated in their emphasis on extra support for groups who face more or difficult challenges. While equity can be defined as impartiality or fairness, it is also market language, as it connotes value, worth, and ownership of concepts such as mortgages and stocks and shares. While this may not have been intentional, it seems to follow the marketised language that has been consistent throughout the text. Furthermore, Mulderrig (2003a) notes that the use of the word *challenge* to describe possible inequalities and social issues rooted in society partially creates a “positive semantic prosody,” which “can potentially play a role in reshaping attitudes toward social justice, so that poverty, inequality and difference become the responsibility of the individual; challenges to which one can rise and which one can overcome” (p. 139). This reflects a human capital model within neoliberalism and appears to be reinforced within *Achieving excellence*.

Moving forward, the phrase well-being occurs 22 times in the text. This phrase appears to signal a progressive approach within education that supports a safe and

encouraging learning environment with attention to social, physical, mental, and emotional health.

Ontario is committed to the success and well-being of every student and child. Student well-being is a goal that requires attention and commitment beyond the hours of the school day.

While I will not refute the benefits of attendance to wellness in a holistic manner, through acceptance, physical activity, social awareness, etc., the text is careful to connect well-being to classroom and job performance, and to good citizenship:

Their sense of well-being supports their learning because it makes them more resilient and better able to overcome challenges. 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.

Again, blame can be shifted to the individual here—the logic being that if they are given the “tools” and fail to use them, the fault is of the individual. Considering this, I have become skeptical of the sincerity with which well-being is “promoted” in this text.

Further Discussion

The analysis of these buzzwords enables insight into what the OME emphasises and how these words are contextualised in the text. Drawing from a range of sources which assert that neoliberal discourse perpetuates inequalities to maintain itself (Gilbert, 2013a; Cahill, 2009), as well as Mulderrig's (2008) keywords analysis, I have shown how the OME operationalises specific lexical choices as buzzwords for the audience. Neoliberalism functions on a class-based system, in which inequalities, power struggles, and even oppression and domination will always exist (Gilbert, 2013a; Atasay, 2015; Littler, 2013). The use of these terms and phrases could possibly have a naturalising effect on an audience of parents who want their child to have a “bright future”, quelling

or erasing potential concerns or dissent. This is of course problematic because it minimizes chances for discussion, opinion, and change.

Visual and Interactive Elements Analysis

To refresh the reader's memory, the multimodality of the PDF version of *Achieving excellence* is fulsome as it includes basic elements such as written text and images of various media types (photographs, digitally-created, hand-drawn), bullet points, and deliberate use of colour and layout. The text is also interactive as it contains captions when one hovers over an image with the cursor, hyperlinks, and accessibility options for visually impaired persons. Overall this contributes to the visual appeal of the text, and also adds a layer of interactivity for the audience—which may link back to synthetic personalisation. The level of visual appeal is meant to catch and keep attention, and also demonstrates the OME's appropriate use of technology in the 21st century.

Images

The photographic images compliment the underlying ideologies and discourse of the text through the use of natural lighting, camera angle (gaze), and directionality. Six of the eight images use natural lighting, which not only naturalises the setting of each photo, but the overall text itself. Camera angle³² plays a role in connoting power. A low angle connotes that the subject of the image has power, whereas a high angle connotes that the subject of the image lacks power. Interestingly, for the very young children pictured in the text, the camera is always at a high angle, children at the mid-elementary school level are captured at a straight angle, and high school level adolescents are

³² Low angle – camera pointing up; high angle – camera pointing down.

captured from a low angle. This connotes a growing power as children age which also reflects a growing responsibility. Finally, for the most part the directionality of the images points to the right, connoting the future. This not only reflects the future orientation of the text, but also reinforces the path that has been pre-determined, and which leads to success, excellence, employment and ultimately good citizenship.

Wordle

Moving on, I will now focus on the text's cover photo. When one hovers over the cover image of *Achieving excellence*, the caption that appears reads:

Illustration: This image is a jumble or "wordle" of sixty-five words that are arranged to form the shape of a map of Ontario. The words are in four different sizes and four different colours. The words are all positive with emphasis on words like: equity, excellence, well-being, public confidence, leadership, innovation, community, inclusive, diverse, students, support, parents, partnerships, teaching, engagement, etc.

As noted above, the generally accepted definition of a word cloud, or "wordle"³³ is a collection of words from a specific text in which more frequently used words appear in larger text size. After using AntConc to generate a word list (by frequency) of the text, I later made the connection that the wordle on the cover of *Achieving excellence* has been manipulated. Words such as "excellence", "equity", and "well-being" are not nearly the most frequent in the text; thus, I decided to use Wordle to input the full-text from the PDF of *Achieving excellence* to illustrate and compare the differences. I have provided both versions below in Figure 11 and Figure 12.

³³ Note: I use wordle to mean a word cloud that has been generated, and Wordle to mean the technology which generates word clouds.

Figure 11. Cover wordle of *Achieving excellence* (2014)

As can be seen, the differences between the two wordle images are more prominent than the similarities. Since the caption notes that there are 65 words in the wordle, one would assume they are the 65 most frequent words in the text. In the full-text version I generated, *students* and *education* appear the largest, indicating their high-frequency (occurring 104 and 93 times, respectively), while *excellence* appears as the smallest text size (occurring a total of 25 times). In analysing the cover wordle, I found that the words “access”, “responsive”, “outcomes”, “improve” and “collaborative” each appear twice in the text, while the words, “diverse”, “curriculum”, “identity”, “lives”, “encourage”, “team”, “ideas” “individual” and “partnerships” appear only once in the text. Most significantly, the words “inclusive”, “sharing”, “analysis”, “intelligence”, “digital”, and “enriched” do not appear in the text at all. van Dijk (2006) views manipulation as an abuse of power, or domination. He explains that through “drawing attention to information A rather than B, the resulting understanding may be partial or biased”, which is of course, problematic (p. 366). van Dijk (2006) ultimately argues that, *“manipulation is illegitimate in a democratic society, because it (re)produces, or may reproduce inequality: it is in the best interest of the powerful groups and speakers, and hurts the interest of less power groups and speakers”* (pp. 363-364; emphasis in original). Essentially, this manipulation of the audience reinforces inequalities that exist between powerful groups (the OME) and non-powerful groups (the general public). To draw on McNaught and Lam’s (2010) methodology, I believe this adds salience to my concerns about this text as a whole. The wordle on the cover of the text is essentially fraudulent. The manipulation of the cover’s wordle to emphasise words such as “excellence”, “engagement”, “achievement”, and “potential” reflects the performance and results

driven neoliberal ideology embedded within the text and within the larger context of western society (Mulderrig, 2003ab; 2008; Olssen & Peters, 2005).

Micro Discussion

This focus on achievement is perhaps underlined by the Government of Canada's (2001) report mentioned earlier, which stresses the "need to strengthen the foundation for **lifelong learning** for children and youth, maintain **excellence** in Canada's post-secondary education system, build a world-class learning system for adults and help immigrants **achieve** their full **potential**" (pp. 55-56, emphasis added). In sum, it appears that the OME has built from this (2001) text, and is acting in accordance with Mulderrig's (2003a) notion of "public management inspired by commercial practice" to align "educational inputs" to bolster "economic outputs" (p. 157; see also Olssen & Peters, 2005), and is manipulating the audience in doing so.

As noted earlier, the visual aspects of the text work together to catch and maintain interest in the text. The images may have a naturalising effect on the text, while the wordle's visual appeal may minimize close scrutiny from the audience. Without a close examination, the manipulation of the wordle may have gone unnoticed. This chapter has presented and separately discussed my findings. It appears the OME has been influenced by the Western world's globalised neoliberal society in which the text has been produced. The next and final chapter briefly sums up and discusses my findings as a whole with attention to my research questions, outlines limitations and future directions of my work, and concludes with some implications and suggestions about how to address these issues.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, LIMITATIONS, FUTURE DIRECTIONS, AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis has been to examine how education in connection with good citizenship is constructed within the OME's (2014) publication, *Achieving excellence*, as well as to locate and deconstruct ideology within the text. Again, as a publicly accessible text, *Achieving excellence* has the potential to be influential to the public's understanding and opinion of publicly funded education. In order to carry out this work, I employed critical discourse analysis as a theoretical framework and research method. More specifically, I followed Fairclough's (1992a) three dimensional framework which endeavours to connect the text to its potential discursive practices and sociocultural practices—in this case, a brief history of education in Ontario ([Chapter 2](#)), as well as salient socio-cultural/economic events and trends, and intertextualities. I also drew from other CDA scholars such as Mulderrig (2012) and Lemke (2007). Furthermore, I used corpus linguistic tools to further my lexical analysis, and drew from MCDA to examine the visual and inter-active elements of the text. The findings of this study are highlighted and discussed as follows.

Summary and Discussion of the Findings

My examination of *Achieving excellence* has been guided by three research questions:

- 1) How is education discursively constructed in *Achieving excellence*?
- 2) How is good citizenship discursively constructed in *Achieving excellence*, and how does it connect to education?
- 3) What ideologies appear to underline these discursive constructs?

In order to answer my guiding questions, I examined the metaphors that were invoked in the text, lexical features such as the use of pronouns, overlexicalisation, and buzzwords, with attention to suppression throughout the text, and finally the multimodal aspects of the text such as its images, and the wordle on the cover of the text. The metaphors constructed in the *Achieving excellence* position education as a building, system, and sector with students as human capital. The future is portrayed as a path which positions education as the starting point to employment, success and ultimately to good citizenship (“reaching their full potential”). Furthermore, the text’s suppression of teacher agency reflects a contradiction, wherein “‘teacher professionalism’ rhetoric co-exists with top-down edicts that strip teachers of exactly the curricular and pedagogical decision-making authority that allow them to act as professionals” (Westheimer, 2010, pp. 6-7), rendering them merely administrators of education. These metaphors appear to be shaped by, and thus reflect the neoliberal context that prevails in western society. This results in a perpetuation of the cycle which rearticulates the neoliberal hegemony and does so through an imposed morality (Olssen & Peters, 2005; Lee, 2015). As Lee (2015) notes, “Citizens do right when they embrace the government’s policies, structures, values, edifices, memories, stories, vision and journey. And, by implication, they do wrong if they do not embrace the dominant values and meanings” (p. 114). The (re)affirmation of hegemony is also bolstered by the use of the pronouns “we”, “us”, and “our” to include and implicate the audience and spread responsibility, which Fairclough (1993) terms synthetic personalisation. The OME is negotiating its relationship with the public through this text, but we must remember that the OME is in a position of power. This connects back to garnering or manufacturing consent (Fairclough, 1989)—convincing

parents that this is the right direction for education is key to “enhancing public confidence”, for minimising backlash, and maintaining hegemony.

Overlexicalisation and buzzwords in the text point to the discursive construction of education as a means by which students are encultured to become human capital who reinforce the neoliberal knowledge economy. Explicitly, this means they will ideally achieve Ontario’s goal of excellence through performing good citizenship. Implicitly, this means that if they stray from the “path”, they may be considered “wastage”. This is implicit because the text shies away from negative language, constructing a positive semantic prosody which leaves out consequences. Mulderrig (2008) elaborates:

The ongoing accumulation, credentialising and upgrading of skills supports the progressive development of the knowledge economy and its managerial infrastructure. Moreover, the textual representation 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. 165)

Thus, it appears that these pathways of schooling mimic consumer choice and accordingly, “success or failure [also] rests on consumer choice” (Mulderrig, 2003b, p. 128). Last, the OME’s manipulation of the wordle on the cover of the text reinforces the

use of language to gain and maintain (passive) consent, and to sell the discourse(s) and ideology of neoliberalism to its audience.

My findings parallel Jane Mulderrig's collection of work (2003ab, 2008, 2011, 2012) which critically analysed political speeches about education in the UK. Although, I did not examine a corpus, I think this hints at how pervasive neoliberal discourse and ideology is in the globalized Western world. While Edwards and Usher (2007) note that "universities have become more consumer oriented, more dominated by a managerial discourse and a logic of accountability and excellence" (p. 78), this notion can be extended (with the help of Woodside-Jiron, 2011 and Pini, 2011) to include education at the primary and secondary levels.

As stressed earlier, the skills and characteristics that are named and highlighted in *Achieving excellence*—such as innovation and engagement—are indeed positive, and even necessary. The issue is that through these neoliberal discourses they have been "hollowed out" (Mulderrig, 2008), rendered cliché and meaningless. As Pini (2011) suggests, "the compatibility between corporate ideology and public education is dubious because corporate interests are always placed above the public good" (p. 284). Education through public schooling has become too engrossed with efficient business models and competition-based assessment which can result in teach-to-the-test paradigms (Lemke, 2007), and *Achieving excellence* may perhaps be an example. Instead, education should be truly critical and more socially just (Janks, 2014; Westheimer, 2010; Lemke, 2007; Cook-Sather, 2006).

Without meaning to denigrate the complexity of this issue, the future of education is uncertain at best, yet will likely be fraught with theoretical and practical

conflict across and within the myriad of stakeholders. The fear of change is undoubtedly a large factor in the reluctance many feel toward large-scale reform and reconstruction. However, there have been ample calls to action—many of which suggest scrapping schooling as it is known now in the belief that too many Band-Aids have been applied, causing a sticky mess (Lemke, 2007; Robinson, 2010). Lemke (2007) boldly asserts that “the basic problem [of schooling] is that our mass-production model of education-on-the-cheap cannot achieve its economies of scale except by rejecting individualization of instruction or anything approximating to it”, explaining that “modern schooling’s true functions are more closely aligned with custodial babysitting and preparation for mindless labor and political docility” (p. 57). This informed perspective is mirrored by many scholars, including Sir Ken Robinson (2010) in his illustrious TED talk, Westheimer (2015) in *THIS* magazine, and was also called for as early as Huxley’s (1963) discussion of the humanist revolution, wherein education should be an “instrument of social evolution” rather than merely factory-like preparation for employment. Lemke (2007) envisions alternative methods in a humanist perspective that allows for (meta)active³⁴ participation wherein students begin to choose subjects and activities of interest at an elementary school level. Westheimer (2015) proposes a more democratic education that does not stifle critical thinking and social activism. Cook-Sather (2006) explains that “critical pedagogies not only position students as active in their own knowledge construction but also foreground the political nature of education” (p. 23). Robinson (2012) suggests that educational change in Canada can be initiated through teachers rather than governmentally, which reflects a bottom-up approach, as

³⁴ Lemke does not give this a term; I have decided to call it (meta)active to show that it is a bit more developed from what is generally accepted as active learning.

well as an emphasis on individuals as part of a collective movement. Although positive lasting change is a daunting task, Westheimer (2011) reminds his readers that “change does not always happen at broadband speeds, but knowing one is a part of a timeless march toward justice makes much of what we do worthwhile”, and notes that small wins help to instill hope and perseverance (p. 3). However, there must be a willingness and courage to stand up against and speak out about education as mass-production of politically docile labourers.

Limitations and Future Directions

Since I have only analysed one text—as one example of educational discourse in Ontario—the findings of this thesis are not generalisable, and my interpretation of the text is also but one of many possible interpretations. Due to the scope of this project there are many aspects and analytical approaches that could not be fully explored. It would have been insightful to more fully explore the suppression and absence of teachers as agents, as well as to more fully tie in the text’s lack of attention to socioeconomic status. Furthermore, a more in depth corpus linguistic approach could be used to look at word keyness and incorporate quantitative results, while a systemic functional linguistics approach could look in depth at the meaning making potential and functionality of the text through elements such as register or transitivity. Other CDA tools could also have been employed to strengthen the findings of my analysis. It may also be beneficial to interview parents and teachers to identify and incorporate how they interpret the text. This may have resulted in a more triangulated approach. In the future, it may be fruitful to explore previous texts of this type published by the OME in a corpus linguistic manner to highlight consistencies and changes over a period of time.

Conclusion

To summarise (and simplify the complexities of the discourse), *Achieving excellence* discursively constructs education as the means to producing successful human capital. In the system constructed in the text, good citizenship is connected to employment and employment is promised to those who stay on the path laid out for them. *Achieving excellence* is a reassertion of a hegemonic neoliberal ideology and culture through an ostensible coexistence with social democratic commitments (Cahill, 2009), which puts emphasis on popular buzzwords such as “well-being” and “equity”, yet facilitates competition in the classroom as well as competition in the labour market—e.g., “Students will be fully engaged in their learning, building the skills and developing the attributes they will need to compete for and create the jobs of tomorrow.” *Achieving excellence* also rearticulates a hegemonic neoliberal society both through the text as a whole, but also in the knowledge, skills, and characteristics it wishes to instill in Ontario’s students. It appears that the OME hopes to create the ideal generation(s) of *actively engaged* (good) *citizens* who subscribe to the “learning society” (Mulderigg, 2003b) through continuous upgrading of skills and who are resilient to (rather than questioning of) economic instabilities and uncertainties in the global economy. In this case, “good” citizenship does not align with critical thinking and social justice, but with contributing to the economy. One might go so far as to say this system is producing human capital under the guise of enlightened citizenry. Furthermore, the text aligns with Mulderigg’s notion that inequalities and personal issues and/or disabilities are constructed as challenges that can be met and overcome by the individual. In other words, the text is constructed so that blame gets shifted from the system to the individual

if the “path” is not followed, which contributes to the stigma of those who use social assistance. The OME attempts to naturalise the discourses and ideologies (neoliberalism, globalisation, knowledge economy, etc.) that have been created and enforced by powerful agents by positioning them as inevitable and a challenge to be met through enthusiastically embracing them.

Recalling Chapter 2, in which I detailed the history and context(s) of education in Ontario, it is possible to see that the assimilationist and utilitarian undertones still exist today. However, they are marketed in a more attractive package, through discursive elements such as buzzwords, the politics of inclusion, synthetic personalisation, visual appeal and so on. Assimilation in this text is connected to human capital or neoliberal behaviour which enshrines individualism, entrepreneurialism, competition, and consumption. Furthermore, *Achieving excellence* does not explicitly discuss teaching approaches or pedagogies that are or may be incorporated into the Ontario curriculum. Rather, it discusses raising literacy rates through standardized testing measures, and the imparting of knowledge, skills, and characteristics that will be valuable for employment. In essence, it provides the big (practical) picture and forgets the details.

While it is hard to imagine alternatives and to definitively choose a direction change-agents should go in, Cahill (2009) makes the bold claim that the repudiation of neoliberalism is unlikely to come from those in power, which reflects Robinson’s (2012) discussion of bottom-up resistance in the classroom. With all of this in mind, awareness is a key to activating change. CDA is an optimal vehicle to address issues in education, as its goals are concerned with social equality and justice (Rogers, 2011; Fairclough, 2000). However, this critical awareness needs to extend from the realms of academic and

educational professionals to include students, parents, and the general public. Finally, I am aware that my conclusions about *Achieving excellence*'s influence on education in Ontario are grim. However, there is room for voices to carry and have impact, for improvement, and for change. With serious reflection, cooperation, effort, and dedication, a more democratic, humanistic, and critical approach to education can be possible.

References

- Allen, G. (2000). *Intertextuality: The new critical idiom*. London: Routledge.
- Anthony, Laurence. (2015). AntConc Corpus analysis toolkit software. Version 3.4.4.
- Archives of Ontario. (n.d.). Fonds F 1209 - Ontario Educational Association fonds.
Retrieved from <http://www.archeion.ca/ontario-educational-association-fonds>
- Armstrong, J. (2005). The disempowerment of First North American Native Peoples and empowerment through their writing. In D.D. Moses & T. Goldie (Eds.), *An Anthology of Canadian Native literature in English* (3rd ed., pp. 242-245). Canada: Oxford University Press.
- Ascough, R. S. (2011). Learning (about) outcomes: How the focus on assessment can help overall course design. *The Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, 41(2), 44-61.
- Atasay, E. (2015). Neoliberal multiculturalism embedded in social justice education: Commodification of multicultural education for the 21st century. *Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies*, 12(3), 172-204.
- Baldwin, D. (2008). *Teachers, students and pedagogy: Selected readings and documents in the history of Canadian education*. Markham, Ontario: Fitzhenry & Whiteside.
- Barton, A., & Sakwa, L. N. (2012). The representation of gender in English textbooks in Uganda. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 20(2), 173-190.
- Bhattacharjee, K. (2003). The Ontario *Safe Schools Act*: School discipline and discrimination. *Ontario Human Rights Commission*. Retrieved from <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/ontario-safe-schools-act-school-discipline-and-discrimination>

- Bernstein, B. (2000). *Pedagogy, symbolic control and identity: Theory, research, critique*. Bristol, PA: Taylor & Francis.
- Breau, S. (2014). The Occupy Movement and the top 1% in Canada. *Antipode*, 46(1), 13–33.
- Brown, L., & Rushowy, K. (2015, June 1). Class size the lightning rod behind school labour turmoil. *The Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thestar.com/yourtoronto/education/2015/06/01/class-size-the-lightning-rod-behind-school-labour-turmoil.html>
- Bruno-Jofré, R. (2014). History of education in Canada: Historiographic “turns” and widening horizons. *Paedagogica Historica*, 50(6), 774-785.
- Cachelin, A., Rose, J., & Paisley, K. (2015). Disrupting neoliberal discourse in critical sustainability education: A qualitative analysis of intentional language framing. *Environmental Education Research*, 21(8), 1127-1142.
doi:10.1080/13504622.2014.974023
- Cahill, D. (2009). Is neoliberalism history? *Social Alternatives*, 28(1), 12-16.
- Castree, N., Kitchen, R., & Rogers, A. (2013). Terra nullius. In *A Dictionary of Human Geography*. Online: Oxford University Press. Retrieved from <http://www.oxfordreference.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/view/10.1093/acref/9780199599868.001.0001/acref-9780199599868-e-1861?rkey=PIWMCn&result=3>
- Center on International Education Benchmarking (CIEB). (2015). Canada. *National Center on Education and the Economy* (NCEE). Retrieved from <http://www.ncee.org/programs-affiliates/center-on-international-education-benchmarking/top-performing-countries/canada-overview/>

- Chae, Y-G. (2008). Development discourse. In W. Donsbach (Ed.), *The international encyclopedia of communication*. Retrieved from http://www.blackwellreference.com/subscriber/uid=1752/tocnode?id=g9781405131995_yr2013_chunk_g97814051319959_ss27-1
- Chan, P. C. W., Morissette, R., & Frenette, M. (2011). Workers laid-off during the last three recessions: Who were they, and how did they fare? *Statistics Canada*. Retrieved from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11f0019m/11f0019m2011337-eng.htm>
- Cheng, W. (2012). Semantic prosody. In *The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics*. Blackwell Publishing. doi: 10.1002/9781405198431.wbeal1062.
- Christou, T. M. (2013). 'Schools are no longer merely educational institutions': The rhetoric of social efficiency in Ontario education, 1931–1935. *History of Education*, 42(5), 566-577.
- Chu, Y. (2015). The power of knowledge: A critical analysis of the depiction of ethnic minorities in China's elementary textbooks. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 18(4), 469-487. doi:10.1080/13613324.2015.1013460
- Connelly, F., & Clandinin, D. (1988). Recovery of curriculum meaning. In F. Connelly & D. Clandinin, *Teachers as curriculum planners: Narratives of experience* (pp. 81-97). Toronto: OISE Press.
- Cook-Sather, A. (2006). *Education is translation: A metaphor for change in learning and teaching*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Cornwall, A. (2010). Introductory overview – buzzwords and fuzzwords: deconstructing development discourse. In A. Cornwall & D. Eade (Eds.), *Deconstructing*

development discourse: Buzzwords and fuzzwords (pp. 1-18). Warwickshire:

Practical Action Publishing.

Croteau, J-P. (2014). History of education in French-speaking Ontario: A historiographic review. *Canadian Issues*, 23-30.

Curtis, N. (2013). Thought bubble: Neoliberalism and the politics of knowledge. *New Formations: A Journal of Culture/Theory/Politics*, 80-81, 73-88.

doi:10.1353/nfm.2013.0048

de Champlain, Samuel. (1880). Les voyages de Sieur de Champlain. In C. P. Otis (Trans.), *Voyages of Samuel de Champlain*, Vol. III, 1611-1618. Boston: Prince Society.

de Champlain, Samuel. (1922). *Les voyages de la Nouvelle France Occidentale*. In H. P. Biggar (Ed.), *The Works of Samuel de Champlain* (pp. 1-8). Toronto: The Champlain Society.

Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and education*. USA: The Macmillan Company.

Dewey, J. (1961). *The school and society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Dunaway, M. K. (2011). Connectivism: Learning theory and pedagogical practice for networked information landscapes. *Reference Services Review*, 39(4), 675–685.

doi:10.1108/00907321111186686

Earl, L. (1995). Assessment and accountability in education in Ontario. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 20(1), 45-55.

Education Act, R.S.O. (1990, c. E.2). *Government of Ontario*. Retrieved from

<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90e02#BK1>

- Eggins, S. (2004). *An introduction to Systemic Functional Linguistics*. New York and London: Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario. (2015). EQAO Testing. Retrieved from <http://www.etfo.ca/IssuesinEducation/EQAOTesting/Pages/default.aspx>
- Elliott, J., & Harkins, G. (2013). Introduction: Genres of neoliberalism. *Social Text* 115, 31(2), 1-17.
- Fairbairn, S. B., & Fox, J. (2009). Inclusive achievement testing for linguistically and culturally diverse test takers: Essential considerations for test developers and decision makers. *Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice*, 28(1), 10-24. doi:10.1111/j.1745-3992.2009.01133.x
- Fairclough, N. (1989). *Language and power*. New York: Longman.
- Fairclough, N. (1992a). *Discourse and social change*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Fairclough, N. (1992b). Intertextuality in critical discourse analysis. *Linguistics and Education*, 4, 269-293.
- Fairclough, N. (1993). Critical discourse analysis and the marketization of public discourse: The universities. *Discourse & Society*, 4, 133-168.
- Fairclough, N. (2000). Language and neo-liberalism. *Discourse & Society*, 11(2), 147-148.
- Fairclough, N. (2003). *Analysing discourse: Textual analysis for social research*. London: Routledge.
- Fairclough, N. (2011). Semiotic aspects of social transformation and learning. In R. Rogers (Ed.), *Critical discourse analysis in education* (2nd ed.). New York: Taylor & Francis

- Fairclough, I., & Fairclough, N. (2012). *Political discourse analysis*. Canada: Routledge.
- Fairclough, N., Graham, P., Lemke, J., & Wodak, R. (2004). Introduction. *Critical Discourse Studies*, 1(1), 1-7. doi:10.1080/17405900410001674489
- Fairclough, N., Mulderrig, J., & Wodak, R. (2011). Critical discourse analysis. In T. A. van Dijk (Ed.), *Discourse studies: A multidisciplinary introduction* (2nd ed.). (pp. 357-379). Great Britain: Sage.
- Feinburgh, Jonathan. (2014). Wordle [online software]. Available from www.wordle.net
- Fowler, R., Kress, G., Hodge, R., & Trew, T. (1979). *Language and control*. London: Routledge.
- Fowler, T. (2012). Neoliberalism, class and culture: The 2008 federal elections in Canada and the United States. *Socialist Studies*, 8(2), 189-201.
- Fox, J. (1989). *Let's talk evaluation*. Toronto, ON: Ontario Assessment Instrument Pool, 26 minutes.
- Fox, J. (1991, April). Facilitating learner-centred assessment. Springboards Conference, Montreal, QC.
- Fox, J. (2004). Curriculum design: Does it make a difference? *Contact*, 30(2), 1-4.
- Fox, J., & Cheng, L. (2007). Did we take the same test? Differing accounts of the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test by first and second language test-takers. *Assessment in Education*, 14(1), 9-26.
- Gee, J. (2011). Discourse analysis: What makes it critical? In R. Rogers (Ed.), *Critical discourse analysis in education* (2nd ed.) (pp. 23-45). New York: Taylor & Francis.

- Gidney, R. D., & Millar, W. P. J. (1990). *Inventing secondary education: The rise of the high school in nineteenth-century Ontario*. Canada: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Gilbert, J. (2013a). What kind of thing is 'neoliberalism'? *New Formations: A Journal of culture/theory/politics*, 80-81, 7-22.
- Gilbert, J. (2013b). Neoliberal culture. *New Formations: A Journal of culture/theory/politics*, 80-81, 5-6.
- Giroux, H. A. (2001). *Theory and resistance in education: Towards a pedagogy for the opposition*. London: Bergin & Garvey.
- Giroux, H. A. (2012). *Education and the crisis of public values: Challenging the assault on teachers, students & public education*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Government of Canada. (2001). *Achieving excellence: Investing in people, knowledge and opportunity*. Retrieved from <http://publications.gc.ca/site/archived-archived.html?url=http://publications.gc.ca/collections/Collection/C2-596-2001E.pdf>
- Guillet, E. C. (1960). *In the cause of education*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Halliday, M. A. K. (1978). *Language as social semiotic*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Halliday, M. A. K., & Matthiessen, Christian M. I. M. (2004). *An introduction to functional grammar* (3rd ed.). New York: Arnold.
- Harrison, C., & Young, L. (2004). Bureaucratic discourse: Writing in the 'comfort zone'. In L. Young & C. Harrison (Eds.), *Systemic functional linguistics and critical discourse analysis: Studies in social change*, (pp. 231-246).

- Hart, C. (2008). Critical discourse analysis and metaphor: Toward a theoretical framework. *Critical Discourse Studies*, 5(2), 91-106.
- Harvey, D. (2005). *A brief history of neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Heinzl, J. (2001, March 9). Real men drive big trucks. *The Globe and Mail*. Retrieved from <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/real-men-drive-big-trucks/article1030488/>
- Huckin, T. (2002). Textual silence and the discourse of homelessness. *Discourse & Society*, 13(3), 347-372.
- Huxley, J. (1963). Education and the humanist revolution. *Nature*, 197(4862), 8-13.
- Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. (2012). Discover Canada: The rights and responsibilities of citizenship. *Government of Canada*. Retrieved from: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resource/publications/discover/section-04.asp>
- Jackson Lears, T. J. (1985). The concept of cultural hegemony: Problems and possibilities. *The American Historical Review*, 90(3), 567-593.
- Janks, H. (1997). Critical discourse analysis as a research tool. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 18(3), 329-342.
- Janks, H. (2014). Critical literacy's ongoing importance for education. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 57(5), 349-356.
- Klinger, D. A., Rogers, W. T., Anderson, J. O., Poth, C., & Calman, R. (2006). Contextual and school factors associated with achievement on a high-stakes examination. *Canadian Journal of Education / Revue Canadienne De l'Éducation*, 29(3), 771-797.

- Kress, G. (2011). Discourse analysis and education: A multimodal social semiotic approach. In R. Rogers (Ed.), *Critical discourse analysis in education* (2nd ed.) (pp. 205-226). New York: Taylor & Francis.
- Kristeva, J. (2002). "Nous deux" or a (hi)story of intertextuality. *Romantic Review*, 93, 7-13.
- Lackoff, G., & Johnson, M. (2003). *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Lam, T. C. M., & Bordignon, C. (2001). Accountability testing without accountability? *Interchange*, 32(2), 191-201.
- Lawr, D., & Gidney, R. (1974). *Educating Canadians: A documentary history of public education* (2nd ed.). Toronto: Van Nostrand Reinhold Ltd.
- Lawton, K., & Potter, D. (2010). *Why interns need a fair wage*. Institute for Public Policy Research. Retrieved from <http://www.ippr.org/publications/why-interns-need-a-fair-wage>
- Leal, P. A. (2010). Participation: The ascendancy of a buzzword in the neoliberal era. In A. Cornwall & D. Eade (Eds.), *Deconstructing development discourse: Buzzwords and fuzzwords* (pp. 89-100). Warwickshire: Practical Action Publishing.
- Learning-Theories. (2016). Constructivism. Retrieved from <http://www.learning-theories.com/constructivism.html>
- Lee, M. (2015). Critical metaphor analysis of citizenship education discourse. *Public Relations Inquiry*, 4(1), 99-123. doi:10.1177/2046147X14559934
- Lemke, J. L. (1995). *Textual politics: Discourse and social dynamics*. Bristol, London: Taylor & Francis.

- Lemke, J. (2007). Re-engineering education in America. *Language Arts*, 85(1), 52-60.
- Lemke, J. L. (2008). Becoming the village: Education across lives. In G. Wells & G. Claxton (Eds.), *Learning for life in the 21st century: Sociocultural perspectives on the future of education* (pp. 34-45).
- Lim, L. (2014). Ideology, rationality and reproduction in education: A critical discourse analysis. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 35(1), 61-76.
doi:10.1080/01596306.2012.739467
- Littler, J. (2013). Meritocracy and plutocracy: The marketising of 'equality' under neoliberalism. *New Formations: A Journal of Culture/Theory/Politics*, 80-81, 52-72. doi:10.1353/nfm.2013.0045
- Ludeling, A., & Kyto, M. (2009). *Corpus linguistics: An international handbook*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Luke, A. (1995). Text and discourse in education: An introduction to critical discourse analysis. *Review of Research in Education*, 21(1), 3-48.
- Machin, D. (2013). What is multimodal critical discourse studies? *Critical Discourse Studies*, 10(4), 347-355.
- Machin, D., & Mayr, A. (2012). *How to do critical discourse analysis: A multimodal approach*. London: Sage.
- Mah, K. (2007). Classified landscapes of education: The Ontario Educational Exhibition of 1876. *Visual Studies*, 22(1), 74-84.
- Martell, G. (1974). *The politics of the Canadian public school*. Toronto: J. Lewis & Samuel.

- McNaught, C., & Lam, P. (2010). Using Wordle as a supplementary research tool. *The Qualitative Report*, 15(3), 630-643.
- Milewski, P. (2009). The scientisation of schooling in Ontario, 1910-1934. *Paedagogica Historica* 46(3), 341-355.
- Milloy, J. S. (1999). *A national crime: The Canadian government and the residential school system, 1879 to 1986*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press.
- Mitra, S. (2013). *Build a school in the cloud* [Video file]. Retrieved from http://www.ted.com/talks/sugata_mitra_build_a_school_in_the_cloud
- Monbiot, G. (2016, April 15). Neoliberalism – the ideology at the root of all our problems. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/apr/15/neoliberalism-ideology-problem-george-monbiot>
- Mulderrig, J. (2003a). Learning to labour: The discursive construction of social actors in New Labour's education policy. *Anglistik Und Englischunterricht*, 65, 123-145.
- Mulderrig, J. (2003b). Consuming education: A critical discourse analysis of social actors in New Labour's education policy. *Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies* 1(1), 96-123.
- Mulderrig, J. (2008). Using keywords analysis in CDA: Discourses of the knowledge economy in education. In B. Jessop, N. Fairclough, & R. Wodak (Eds.), *Education and the knowledge-based economy in Europe* (pp. 149-170). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

- Mulderrig, J. (2011). Manufacturing consent: A corpus-based critical discourse analysis of New Labour's educational governance. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 43(6), 562-578.
- Mulderrig, J. (2012). The hegemony of inclusion: A corpus-based critical discourse analysis of deixis in education policy. *Discourse & Society*, 23(6), 701–728.
- Olssen, M., & Peters, M. A. (2005). Neoliberalism, higher education and the knowledge economy: From the free market to knowledge capitalism. *Journal of Education Policy*, 20(3), 313-345.
- Ontario Ministry of Education. (2014). *Achieving excellence: A renewed vision for education in Ontario*. Ontario: Queen's Printer for Ontario. Retrieved from: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/about/excellent.html>
- Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. (2014). *Education policy outlook: Canada*. Retrieved from <http://www.oecd.org/edu/highlightscanada.htm>
- Osborne, K. (1999). *Education: A guide to the Canadian school debate – Or, who wants what and why?* Toronto: Penguin Books.
- Oxford Dictionary*. (n.d.) Retrieved from <http://oxforddictionaries.com>
- People for Education. (2016). *People for education*. Retrieved from <http://peopleforeducation.ca>
- Pidgeon, M. (2013). The questions of public education: Why, who, and what for? In J. L. View, D. A. Laitsch, & P. M. Earley (Eds.), *Why public schools? Voices from the United States and Canada* (pp. 2-20). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing Inc.

- Pini, M. (2011). The discourses of education management organizations: A political design. In R. Rogers (Ed.), *Critical discourse analysis in education* (2nd ed.) (pp. 267-291). New York: Taylor & Francis.
- Polster, C., & Newson, J. (2015). *Penny for your thoughts: How corporatization devalues teaching, research, and public service in Canada's Universities*. Montreal: RR Donnelly.
- Punter, D. (2007). *Metaphor: The new critical idiom*. New York: Routledge.
- Ricci, C. (2004). The case against standardized testing and the call for a revitalization of democracy. *The Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies*, 26, 339-361.
DOI: 10.1080/1071441049090537
- Robinson, K. (2010). *Changing education paradigms* [Video file]. Retrieved from http://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_changing_education_paradigms
- Robinson, K. (2012). *How you can change education in Canada* [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://vimeo.com/38434213>
- Rogers, R. (2011). *Critical discourse analysis in education* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.
- Rogers, R. (2014). Coaching literacy teachers as they design critical literacy practices. *Reading & Writing Quarterly*, 30(3), 241-261.
doi:10.1080/10573569.2014.909260
- Rogers, R., Malancharuvil-Berkes, E., Mosley, M., Hui, D., & O'Garro Joseph, G. (2005). Critical discourse analysis in education: A review of the literature. *Review of Educational Research*, 75(3), 365-416.

- Rogers, R., & Mosley Wetzel, M. (2014). *Designing critical literacy education through critical discourse analysis: Pedagogical and research tools for teacher researchers*. New York: Routledge. doi:10.4324/9780203070864
- Rossiter, K., & Clarkson, A. (2013). Opening Ontario's "saddest chapter": A social history of Huronia Regional Centre. *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies*, 2(3), 1-32.
- Rudd, K. (2009, February). The global financial crisis. *The Monthly: Australian Politics, Society & Culture*. Retrieved from <https://www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2009/february/1319602475/kevin-rudd/global-financial-crisis>
- Rushowy, K., Brown, L., & Ferguson, R. (2015, May 27). 70, 000 teens back to class as teacher strikes declared illegal: Ontario Labour Relations board rules high school teacher strikes in Durham, Peel and Sudbury are unlawful, sending 70, 000 students back to class Wednesday. *The Hamilton Spectator*. Retrieved from <https://www.thestar.com/yourtoronto/education/2015/06/01/class-size-the-lightning-rod-behind-school-labour-turmoil.html>
- Sackney, L. (2007). History of the school effectiveness and improvement movement in Canada over the past 25 years. In T. Townsend (Ed.), *International handbook of school effectiveness and improvement*, (pp. 167-182). London: Springer.
- Sagan, A. (2013, July 2). Unpaid internships exploit 'vulnerable generation'. *CBC News*. Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/unpaid-internships-exploit-vulnerable-generation-1.1332839>

- Samson, N. (2014). Transformation of the humanities and social sciences the focus of the Federation's annual meeting. *University Affairs*. Retrieved from <http://www.universityaffairs.ca/news/news-article/transformation-of-the-humanities-and-social-sciences-the-focus-of-cfhss-annual-meeting/>
- Siebert, S., & Wilson, F. (2013). All work and no pay: Consequences of unpaid work in the creative industries. *Work, Employment and Society*, 27(4), 711-721.
- Slomp, D. H. (2008). Harming not helping: The impact of a Canadian standardized writing assessment on curriculum and pedagogy. *Assessing Writing*, 13(3), 180–200.
- Sudbury.com Staff. (2015, April 25). Rainbow District high school teachers on strike today. *The Northern Life*. Retrieved from <https://www.sudbury.com/local-news/rainbow-district-high-school-teachers-on-strike-today-255044>
- Sudbury.com Staff. (2015, May 20). Still no answer from labour board on teachers strike. *The Northern Life*. Retrieved from <https://www.sudbury.com/local-news/still-no-answer-from-labour-board-on-teachers-strike-255511>
- Sutton, D. K. (2012). Drug testing welfare recipients? – When stereotypes infiltrate social policy. *The Left Call*. Retrieved from <http://leftcall.com/8313/drug-testing-welfare-recipients-when-stereotypes-infiltrate-social-policy/>
- Teo, P. (2007). Racism in the news: A critical discourse analysis of news reporting in two Australian newspapers. *Discourse & Society*, 11(1), 7-47.
- The Conference Board of Canada (TCBC). (2015). Education and Skills. *How Canada Performs*. Retrieved from <http://www.conferenceboard.ca/hcp/details/education.aspx>

- Tlili, A. (2007). Rendering equality and diversity policies in UK higher education institutions. *Critical Discourse Studies*, 4(3), 283-310.
- Tsapis, P. (2014, April 27). Canada must develop our knowledge economy. *The Globe and Mail*. Retrieved from <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/careers/leadership-lab/canada-must-develop-our-knowledge-economy/article18229988/>
- van Dijk, T. A. (1991). *Racism in the press*. London and New York: Routledge.
- van Dijk, T. A. (1993). Principles of critical discourse analysis. *Discourse & Society*, 4(2), 249–283.
- van Dijk, T. A. (2006). Discourse and manipulation. *Discourse & Society*, 17(3), 359-383.
- van Dijk, T. A. (2008). *Critical discourse analysis*. In D. Schiffrin, D. Tannen, & H. E. Hamilton (Eds.), *The handbook of discourse analysis* (pp. 352-371). Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- van Leeuwen, T. (1996). The representation of social actors. In C. R. Caldas-Coulthard, & M. Coulthard (Eds.), *Texts and practices: Readings in critical discourse analysis* (pp. 32-70). London and New York: Routledge.
- Warriner, D. S. (2011). Literacy. In J. Simpson (Ed.), *The routledge handbook of applied linguistics* (pp. 529-540). New York: Routledge.
- Westheimer, J. (2010). No child left thinking: Democracy at risk in Canada's schools. *Education Canada*, 50(2), 5.
- Westheimer, J. (2011). Confronting power: Success isn't everything—but it's not nothing either: A response to: “Beyond the Catch-22 of School-Based Social Action

- Programs: toward a more pragmatic approach for dealing with power”. *Democracy & Education*, 19(1), 1-4.
- Westheimer, J. (2015, November 16). What kind of citizen? *This*. Retrieved from <https://this.org/2015/11/16/what-kind-of-citizen/>
- Winton, S., & Brewer, C. A. (2015). People for Education: A critical policy history. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 27(9), 1091-1109.
- Wodak, R. (2001). The discourse-historical approach. In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (Eds.), *Methods for critical discourse analysis* (pp. 63-94). London: Sage.
- Wodak, R., & Meyer, M. (2001). Critical discourse analysis: History, agenda, theory, and methodology. In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (Eds.), *Methods of critical discourse analysis* (pp. 1-33). London: Sage.
- Woodside-Jiron, H. (2011). Language, power, and participation: Using critical discourse analysis to make sense of public policy. In R. Rogers (Ed.), *Critical discourse analysis in education* (2nd ed.) (pp. 154-182). New York: Taylor & Francis.
- Xiong, T., & Qian, Y. (2012). Ideologies of English in a Chinese high school EFL textbook: A critical discourse analysis. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 32(1), 75-92.
- Yousafzai, Z. (2014). *My Daughter, Malala* [Video file]. Retrieved from http://www.ted.com/talks/ziauddin_yousafzai_my_daughter_malala
- Zhang, Y., & O’Halloran, K. L. (2013). ‘Toward a global knowledge enterprise’: University websites as portals to the ongoing marketization of higher education. *Critical Discourse Studies*, 10(4), 468-485.

Zheng, Y., Klinger, D. A., Cheng, L., Fox, J., & Doe, C. (2011). Test-takers' background, literacy activities, and views of the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 57(2), 115-136.

Appendices

[Appendix A](#) is information on the knowledge economy.

[Appendix B](#) is a collection of images for social context.

[Appendix C](#) is textual examples.

[Appendix D](#) is my coding.

Appendix A

The knowledge economy differs from the traditional economy in several key respects:

1. The economics is not of scarcity, but rather of abundance. Unlike most resources that deplete when used, information and knowledge can be shared, and actually grow through application.
2. The effect of location is diminished. Using appropriate technology and methods, virtual marketplaces and virtual organizations can be created that offer benefits of speed and agility, of round the clock operation and of global reach.
3. Laws, barriers and taxes are difficult to apply on solely a national basis. Knowledge and information 'leak' to where demand is highest and the barriers are lowest.
4. Knowledge enhanced products or services can command price premiums over comparable products with low embedded knowledge or knowledge intensity.
5. Pricing and value depends heavily on context. Thus the same information or knowledge can have vastly different value to different people at different times.
6. Knowledge when locked into systems or processes has higher inherent value than when it can 'walk out of the door' in people's heads.
7. Human capital—competencies—are a key component of value in a knowledge-based company, yet few companies report competency levels in annual reports. In contrast, downsizing is often seen as a positive 'cost cutting' measure.

Source: David Skyrme Associates home page (www.skyrme.com/insights/21gke.htm).

Figure 13. "Characteristics of the knowledge economy" (Olssen & Peters, 2005, p. 332).

Appendix B

1 CAD = 0.8179 USD +0.00104 (0.127%)

Apr 19, 7:19PM GMT

Figure 14. Canadian Dollar 2007-2015

Figure 14 illustrates the recession of 2008-2009, and the the sharp drop in the Canadian economy in 2014.

1 CAD = 0.8179 USD +0.00104 (0.127%)

Apr 19, 7:19PM GMT

Figure 15. Canadian Dollar April 2013-April 2014

Figure 15 illustrates the steady decline of the dollar starting from a year before *Achieving Excellence* was published.

Ontario	<p>☆☆☆ (1 of 3 stars)</p> <p>For the 2013-2015 period, employment opportunities for secondary school teachers are expected to be limited in Ontario. This was one of the larger occupations in the province with a labour force of more than 71,000 at the time of the 2011 National Household Survey. The demand for secondary school teachers has been negatively affected by declining student enrolment in parts of the province and the consolidation of schools. This trend is expected to persist, tempering the need for these professionals over the forecast period. As a result of slower growth in this field, there is a surplus of teaching graduates which has been increasing steadily over the past few years. The oversupply of new teachers is causing heightened competition in the profession making it difficult to secure employment. Secondary school teachers are spending longer periods in transition stages and working on temporary contracts, as occasional supply staff, in private independent institutions or working multiple part-time teaching positions before finding permanent employment. Unpaid voluntary and practicum positions are also lasting longer than in previous years. More competition tends to exist for job openings within the public sector compared to vacancies within private institutions. In addition to lower wages in the private sector, secondary school teachers can expect non-traditional working hours, greater incidence of part-time employment and longer workdays than their public counterparts. As such, private teaching institutions tend to have a higher rate of staff turnover, therefore those wishing to enter this field may have better opportunities in this avenue.</p> <p>Secondary school teachers capable of teaching technological subjects and music may find it easier to secure full-time employment in this occupation. Also, with the supply of teachers increasing, some independent schools prefer hiring candidates with a master's degree in their primary subject. Those working occasional and supply positions will need to be flexible as they are often required to work on short notice at various locations. Public school teachers are encouraged to take additional courses in order to enhance their skills in the classroom.</p> <p>(Release date: 2014-07-31)</p>
---------	---

Figure 16. Job Bank's Outlook for Secondary School Teachers 2013-2015

Ontario	<p>☆☆☆ (1 of 3 stars)</p> <p>For the 2015-2017 period, the employment outlook is expected to be limited for Secondary School Teachers (NOC 4141) in Ontario.</p> <p>In recent years, the supply of secondary school teachers has exceeded the number of available positions in Ontario, leading to an oversupply of qualified candidates. While the labour market for secondary school teachers is expected to remain highly competitive during the forecast period, the extension of Ontario's education program by an additional year, a small increase in retirements and a decline in new graduates, are all expected to help improve employment outcomes. Even so, it will take some time for the oversupply of secondary school teachers in Ontario to decline. At the same time, a decline in student enrollment across most of the province will reduce overall demand for new teachers in the coming years.</p> <p>Secondary school teachers can expect to spend a longer time transitioning from term contracts, occasional supply work and/or multiple part-time positions to full employment. There has been an increase in the number of unemployed teachers working in occupations that do not require a teaching licence such as private tutoring. Furthermore, under legislation introduced by the Government of Ontario in 2012, new public school teachers are required to start with occasional assignments before they can apply for permanent positions.</p> <p>The majority of Ontario's secondary school teachers are employed by the public school system where wages and working conditions are often better than those at private institutions. However, employment prospects may be somewhat better at private schools where more teachers are being offered regular teaching contracts. Although secondary school teachers employed by private institutions do not need to be certified by the Ontario College of Teachers, many schools prefer to hire licenced teachers.</p> <p>Employment opportunities for Ontario-certified secondary school teachers are generally better outside of urban centres, in other provinces and abroad. Teachers qualified in certain subject areas such as mathematics, computer studies and science, are in greater demand. French-language teachers and English-language teachers qualified to teach French as a second language, may also find it easier to secure employment.</p> <p>Here are some key facts about Secondary School Teachers in Ontario:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approximately 66,150 people work in this occupation. • Secondary School Teachers mainly work in the following sectors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Elementary and secondary schools (NAICS 6111): more than 95% • 75% of Secondary School Teachers work all year, while 25% work only part of the year, compared to 66% and 34% respectively among all occupations. • They fall into the following age groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ 15 to 24: less than 5% compared to 13% for all occupations ◦ 25 to 54: 81% compared to 69% for all occupations ◦ 55 years and over: 17% compared to 19% for all occupations • The gender distribution of people in this occupation is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Men: 41% compared to 52% for all occupations ◦ Women: 59% compared to 48% for all occupations • The educational attainment of workers in this occupation is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ No high school diploma: less than 5% compared to 10% for all occupations ◦ High school diploma or equivalent: less than 5% compared to 26% for all occupations ◦ Apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma: less than 5% compared to 7% for all occupations ◦ College certificate or diploma or university certificate below bachelor's: 7% compared to 28% for all occupations ◦ Bachelor's degree: 49% compared to 18% for all occupations ◦ University certificate, degree or diploma above bachelor level: 44% compared to 11% for all occupations <p>(Release date: 2016-04-15)</p>
---------	---

Figure 17. Job Bank's Outlook for Secondary School Teachers 2015-2017

Figure 16 and 17 are screen shots from Canada's leading job website, Job Bank. Link:

http://www.jobbank.gc.ca/LMI_report_bynoc.do?lang=eng&noc=4141&reportOption=outline

This shows that the outlook for those wishing to pursue teaching secondary education have very little opportunity to do so in Ontario. The case is similar across Canada, with exception of some remote northern communities.

Appendix C

“Student engagement and curiosity could be addressed through stronger development of 21st century learning skills and well-being. We could call this the ‘new entrepreneurial spirit’ – a spirit characterized by innovation, risk-taking, commitment, and skilled problem solving in the service of a better future.”

– Council of Ontario Directors of Education

Goal: Achieving Excellence

We must give our learners the tools they need to reach their full potential, regardless of their individual circumstances. By raising expectations, the transformation in Ontario education will ensure that students achieve at high levels, acquire valuable skills and become engaged members of their communities.

Students will be fully engaged in their learning, building the skills and developing the attributes they will need to compete for and create the jobs of tomorrow. They will benefit from a wide array of opportunities both inside and outside of school that are compelling and contribute to their success, including the opportunity to benefit from the effective and appropriate use of technology in the classroom. In a world that is constantly changing, Ontario students will be better prepared to adapt, achieve and excel, regardless of the challenges they face.

The quality of student learning is closely related to the quality of the teaching force and its leaders. All high-performing education systems in the world, like Ontario's, have vibrant, engaged educators, support staff and administrative and other professionals who are committed to continuous learning. Educators are creating more relevant, applied and innovative learning experiences that spark learners' curiosity and inspire them to follow their passions. They are laying the foundation for children and students to gain the experiences, skills and knowledge needed for success, now and in the future.

Raising the bar for our teaching force, support staff and education leaders will increase student engagement – and student engagement is crucial. By being more engaged, our young people can be more successful in literacy, mathematics, science and the arts. They can gain important higher-order skills – like critical thinking, communication, collaboration and entrepreneurship. All of this will help them graduate from high school and advance to postsecondary careers, education and/or training.

Why We Need to Do This

Foundational skills for academic achievement include reading, writing and mathematics. In order for students to achieve excellence in an area like mathematics, there must be a balance between understanding basic math concepts, practicing skills like multiplication tables, and developing the thinking skills needed for advanced problem solving. These foundational skills remain a focus – and combined with creativity and critical thinking, innovative problem solving, effective communication and collaboration, they lead to excellence.

Our children, youth and adult learners will need this balance of skills to meet the opportunities and demands of tomorrow. To help promote this balance, schools must take advantage of the technologies that are connecting us to information and people around the world and around the corner. Our task is to modernize classrooms and support educators' efforts to bring innovation to learning.

Beyond reading, writing and mathematics, we know that to achieve excellence in the future, our learners will also need to develop characteristics such as perseverance, resilience and imaginative thinking to overcome challenges. Combined with a deep sense of compassion and empathy for others, our learners will develop the skills and knowledge they need to become actively engaged citizens.

The current challenge facing educators is that they are competing on a daily basis for the attention and interest of their students, which can be easily drawn outside the classroom. As the world continues to change and technology becomes more prevalent, that challenge will only increase. That is why it is so important to ensure that school is a compelling, innovative and engaging place to learn for all students.

The roots of achieving this goal are already in the ground. There are promising examples of what the future holds throughout Ontario's education system today.

The full-day kindergarten program reflects the connection of research, international best practice and policy to meet the combined needs of families, children, schools and our communities. Thousands of educators and students are participating in innovative projects that are making an impact on student engagement, learning and achievement. The inclusion of financial literacy across the curriculum provides the kind of practical learning that students will need in life. Programs such as [dual high school and college credits](#) and the [Specialist High Skills Majors](#) program have helped increase the graduation rate and raise expectations for excellence. And while all secondary school graduates complete their 40 hours of community involvement, thousands of students invest many more on their own.

While we take the next steps to achieve excellence in our education system, we are emboldened by the fact that Ontario has a great foundation for future success.

Figure 18. Page 4 and 5 of Achieving excellence

Shows the headings that occur in the text, as well as the layout, use of colour, space, images, etc.

“Making real world connections is essential ... [we need to] observe what students are interested in and use this to foster creativity.”

— An educator and consultation participant

“Every student should have the opportunity to excel and gain experience for a career field they are interested in ... entrepreneurship and innovation training really helps students learn to be creative and to see how being creative can help you be successful.”

— Secondary school student

Goal: Achieving Excellence (continued)

Plan of Action

To achieve success, Ontario will:

- Invest in the technology, design and infrastructure required for the classrooms of the future to serve the needs of all communities.
- Invest in innovative teaching practices and instructional methods enabled by technology to more precisely engage and address the learning needs of all students.
- Work with partners including TVO and TFO to build on existing online resources for students, educators and parents.
- Extend the principles of play-based learning established in full-day kindergarten and child care.
- Give students more flexibility and ownership in their learning, allowing them, for example, to determine whether they want to spend more time on e-learning or on learning outside of the classroom.

- Integrate family support programs such as Ontario Early Years Centres, Parenting and Family Literacy Centres, Child Care/Family Resource Centres, and Better Beginnings, Better Futures, and create a common look and feel.
- Expand relevant new learning opportunities, including the Specialist High Skills Major program and the Dual Credit program.
- Foster more young entrepreneurs in Ontario schools by increasing training in innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship for Specialist High Skills Majors students.
- Increase student engagement in mathematics, science and technology by expanding opportunities for K–12 students to explore the relevance of these areas to their future pathways.
- Promote the value of the arts, including the visual and performing arts, in developing critical and creative thinking skills that support success in school and in life.

- Provide greater support to ensure parents and guardians are welcomed, respected and valued by the school community as partners in their children's education.
- Expand learning opportunities outside school to include community-based, civic, humanitarian, scientific and artistic activities, as well as cross-cultural and international experiences.
- Explore different models of learning, such as project-based learning or learning across multiple subject areas.
- Document, develop and implement innovative leadership practices and resulting clear improvements in student learning.

To assess progress towards this goal, Ontario will:

- Continue measuring progress towards an 85 per cent five-year high school graduation rate and a 75 per cent success rate on elementary EQAO assessments, with a particular focus on mathematics.
- Continue the trend of increasing the four-year graduation rate, which has increased by 19 percentage points since 2003–04 and now stands at 75 per cent.
- Define and develop measures for higher-order skills, such as critical thinking, communication, collaboration and entrepreneurship.
- Work with teachers, principals, and supervisory officials and their professional associations to identify and share effective and innovative teaching practices that include the use of technology.
- Increase participation in programs like Specialist High Skills Majors and Dual Credits, increase training in innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship, and ensure that programming meets student demand.

Promising Practices for the Future

Conseil scolaire catholique Providence has developed a series of innovative cross-curricular projects that integrate the use of communication technology to facilitate interaction with francophone artists and business leaders across the province and Canada. For instance, as part of a Grade 5 project, a network of schools developed a learning community with a focus on Franco-Ontarian musical influences. Students were able to use Skype to communicate with various musicians in order to work on a collaborative board-wide project. Such projects support the innovation and entrepreneurial skills valued by 21st century teaching and learning.

Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario

6

7

Figure 19. Page 5 and 7 of Achieving excellence.

Shows more headings from the text.

Appendix D

Figure 20. Coding Example - Legend

"Ontario, which has a relatively large school system of nearly 5,000 schools, 120,000 teachers, and 2.2 million students, is among the world's highest-performing school systems. It consistently achieves top-quartile mathematics scores and top-decile reading scores in PISA."

— McKinsey & Company, *How the World's Most Improved School Systems Keep Getting Better* (2010), p. 47

would many of the stakeholders know what these mean?

Which employers

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.

Our renewed vision for education includes the valuable insights and contributions of many individuals and organizations, including representatives from the education, business, research and innovation, not-for-profit, municipal, multicultural, French language and Aboriginal communities. Time and again, our partners highlighted the innovation and creativity in teaching and learning that is already taking place in Ontario's classrooms. Spreading this approach across the entire education system will only be possible with the leadership and commitment of educators and the involvement of our many community partners, especially our learners and their families.

We know that change is never easy, and realizing the goals set out in *Achieving Excellence* will require the continued commitment of all of our partners. However, the evidence of the past decade demonstrates that our education system is capable of making real, positive change.

We know that in order to build a better system we need to value the work of all education professionals — early childhood educators, teachers, librarians, school bus drivers, and administrators. We also know that policy decisions and the allocation of resources have to be guided by evidence and research. It is through these principles that we have seen success in the past, and these principles will continue to guide us in the future as we develop more rigorous, relevant and innovative approaches to learning.

Our province has accomplished much over the past 10 years. As before, we will see inspiration become action and investments yield results.

Defining Our Renewed Goals

Achieving Excellence builds on the education system's three current priorities: increasing student achievement, closing gaps in student achievement and increasing public confidence in publicly funded education. It encompasses these goals and reaches deeper and broader, raising expectations both for the system and for the potential of our children and students.

Our renewed goals for education are:

- **Achieving Excellence:** Children and students of all ages will achieve high levels of academic performance, acquire valuable skills and demonstrate good citizenship. Educators will be supported in learning continuously and will be recognized as among the best in the world.
- **Ensuring Equity:** All children and students will be inspired to reach their full potential, with access to rich learning experiences that begin at birth and continue into adulthood.
- **Promoting Well-Being:** All children and students will develop enhanced mental and physical health, a positive sense of self and belonging, and the skills to make positive choices.
- **Enhancing Public Confidence:** Ontarians will continue to have confidence in a publicly funded education system that helps develop new generations of confident, capable and caring citizens.

These four goals are interconnected — success in one contributes to success in the others.

Our progress over the last 10 years tells us that when educators, students, parents and guardians, and our many other partners focus on a small number of clearly defined goals, those goals can be achieved.

→ Mulderrig:
lifetime learning

Figure 21. Coding example

Table 13. *Coding Spreadsheet*

Page	Classification of Social Actors															Rhetorical Tropes				
	Nominalisation	Presupposition	Use of we/us/our	Personalisation	Individualisation	Collectivisation	Specification	Generatisation	Nomination	Functionalisation	Honorifics	Objectivation	Anonymisation	Aggregation	Suppression	Metaphor	Hyperbole	Personification	Objectification	Metonymy
A	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
B	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	2	0	0	2	0	2	4	0	0	0	0
1	22	3	9	0	0	30	0	33	0	24	0	0	32	1	2	8	0	9	0	0
2	13	6	7	0	0	31	0	31	0	0	0	0	29	3	7	17	2	16	0	0
3	30	11	22	0	0	45	1	46	1	5	0	0	45	5	4	29	0	7	0	0
4	24	13	5	0	0	23	0	23	0	17	0	0	24	0	2	17	0	5	0	0
5	26	13	11	0	0	21	2	22	0	10	0	0	21	2	7	27	0	7	0	0
6	27	7	1	0	0	12	7	12	0	9	0	0	13	0	10	8	0	10	0	0
7	24	6	0	0	1	15	0	15	0	12	0	0	16	0	10	16	0	15	0	0
8	15	8	10	0	0	22	0	24	0	7	0	0	25	5	0	15	0	5	0	0
9	15	8	11	0	0	38	0	38	0	24	0	0	38	0	3	28	0	5	0	0
10																				
11	11	3	4	0	0	18	0	18	0	12	0	0	18	0	1	10	0	1	0	0
12	17	6	0	0	0	42	0	42	0	13	0	0	42	3	12	16	0	12	0	0
13	27	1	6	0	0	37	0	36	0	16	0	0	37	0	11	20	0	3	0	0
14	25	1	13	0	0	35	0	32	0	18	0	0	35	0	12	22	0	3	0	0
15	12	3	2	0	0	40	0	40	0	11	0	0	40	0	18	18	0	13	0	0
16	27	2	3	0	0	27	0	28	0	18	0	0	28	1	2	15	0	7	1	0
17	21	3	15	0	0	26	0	26	0	12	0	0	26	1	2	10	5	4	0	0
18	17	6	5	0	0	38	0	38	0	17	0	0	38	0	14	18	0	18	0	0
19	25	4	16	0	0	19	0	19	0	7	0	0	19	0	11	28	0	12	2	0
Total	380	105	141	0	1	520	10	524	1	234	0	0	528	21	130	327	7	152	3	0

Table 14. *Word Frequency List*

Rank	Frequency	Word	Rank	Frequency	Word
1	86	education	19	15	confidence
2	85	students	19	15	goal
3	58	will	19	15	goals
4	56	Ontario	20	14	achieve
5	46	children	20	14	achievement
6	45	learning	20	14	develop
6	45	system	20	14	educators
7	40	school	20	14	past
8	32	success	20	14	programs
9	31	student	21	13	years
10	29	high	22	12	across
10	29	more	22	12	become
11	27	need	22	12	communities
11	27	skills	22	12	community
12	24	can	22	12	funded
12	24	parents	22	12	including
12	24	well	22	12	increase
13	23	excellence	22	12	province
13	23	schools	22	12	public
14	22	child	23	11	build
14	22	work	23	11	early
15	19	being	23	11	help
15	19	ensure	23	11	know
15	19	future	23	11	publicly
16	18	learners	23	11	renewed
16	18	needs	24	10	best
16	18	youth	24	10	between
17	17	achieving	24	10	ensuring
17	17	engaged	24	10	expectations
17	17	world	24	10	families
18	16	continue	24	10	full
18	16	opportunities	24	10	not
19	15	care	24	10	together
			24	10	why