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**EXAMINING SCHOOL MANAGERIALISM IN THE CONTEXT OF CRISIS:
NEO-LIBERALISM AND EDUCATION POLICY**

by
ANNETTE K. ROGERS, B.A.H

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of

Masters of Arts

Department of Sociology

Carleton University

Ottawa, Ontario

April, 1998

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**Examining School Managerialism in the Context of Crisis:
Neo-Liberalism and Education Policy**

submitted by Annette K. Rogers, B.A.
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts

Thesis Supervisor

Chair, Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Carleton University
April 16, 1998

Abstract

This thesis examines how the neo-liberal ideology of the current Conservative government in Ontario is reflected in the *Fewer School Boards Act, 1997* and the *Education Quality Improvement Act, 1997*, and investigates how this ideology affects education policy. The research presented here shows the effects of neo-liberal ideology on the organization of the public secondary education system and investigates the potential consequences of this ideological influence on secondary education in Ontario.

Neo-liberal goals, and subsequent discourses, place secondary education within contexts of crises. These crises concern skill attainment, education finances and education governance. Consequently, modes of school management become legitimized and imposed upon the secondary education system. By critically examining the recent changes to education policy, state discourse on education, education in the contexts of crises and education management, this thesis explores and identifies how policy reflects power and normalization in the attainment of knowledge.

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INTRODUCTION

Public education across Canada is currently undergoing many structural and ideological changes. These changes are particularly relevant to Ontario residents. Currently, Ontarians face a reduction in the number of school trustees, the amalgamation of school boards, province-wide tests and standardized curriculum. Other changes to Ontario's education system will occur in the following months. These changes to education policy are the focus of this thesis, especially as they appear in the *Fewer School Boards Act*, 1997, and the *Education Quality Improvement Act*, 1997.

The question central to this thesis concerns the impact neo-liberal ideology has on the organizational aspects of secondary education in Ontario. This thesis examines how the neo-liberal ideology of the current Conservative government in Ontario is reflected in the *Fewer School Boards Act*, and the *Education Quality Improvement Act* and investigates how this ideology affects education policy. I examine the effects of neo-liberal ideology on the organization of the public secondary education system, and investigate the potential consequences of this ideological influence on secondary education in Ontario. I will examine how legitimized power relations create an environment for a normalization of knowledge attainment within the secondary school system in Ontario.

I argue that the *Fewer School Boards Act*, followed by the *Education Quality Improvement Act*, and the discourses surrounding these Acts, establish education within a context of crisis. From the state rhetoric surrounding education reform, and consequently, the education reform Acts, education is established as a commodity. As

a result, these Acts, and their surrounding discourses, establish actors within the educational institution as producers and distributors of knowledge. Finally, this re-definition of roles and goals for knowledge production establishes a normalization and standardization of knowledge attainment subject to industrial classification of "worth."

The theoretical framework I follow in this thesis comes from a number of perspectives, within Poststructuralism. Although the works of Foucault are not directly utilized in this thesis, many of the critiques made draw on his perspectives. The government's ideological justifications for education restructuring are legitimized through state discourse on education. Consequently, it is necessary to examine these discourses and the rhetorical devices the current government uses for establishing legitimized power relations within the secondary education system.

Discourses, for Foucault, "are about what can be said and thought but also about who can speak, when, and with what authority" (Ball: 1990, 2). Stephen Ball, in Foucault and Education: Disciplines and Knowledge, quotes Foucault further:

discourses embody meaning and social relationships, they constitute both subjectivity and power relations. Discourses are 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak. . . . Discourses are not about objects; they do not identify objects, they constitute them and in the practice of doing so conceal their own invention (Foucault: 1974, 49 cited in Ball: 1990, 2).

So, for Foucault, meaning is derived through institutional practices and, consequently, power relations (Ball: 1990, 2).

According to Foucault, "words and concepts change their meaning and their effects as they are deployed within different discourses. Discourses constrain the possibilities of thought. They order and combine words in particular ways and exclude

or displace other combinations” (Ball: 1990, 2). This shows the importance of historical research in examining social relations. Change occurs over time not only in content, but also in what the content means.

Broadly speaking, Foucault examined sites of power and how they frame our present understanding of the social world. As Lather explains, “Foucault’s method of archaeology looks at discarded systems of linguistic and institutional artifacts left behind by successive generations as each took up anew the task of creating categories to explain its perception of the human condition (Martin et al., 1998)” (Lather: 1991, 125). She further explains that “. . . the Enlightenment project of emancipation via reason has been marked by degeneration into social engineering and rationalist planning (Aronowitz, 1981; Sholle, 1988). What Foucault (1980) calls “the technologies of normalization” result in an increase of homogenizing surveillance, regulation and programming” (Lather: 1991, 37). This perspective can enable researchers to show that what we know as “normal and true” is a construction of power, executed through language.

Both Stephen Ball and Patti Lather apply Foucault’s ideas to education research. Ball claims that “Foucault has identified certain knowledges-human sciences-and certain attendant practices as central to the normalization of social principles and institutions of modern society” (Ball: 1990, 2). The school is one site for the perpetuation of such knowledges. However, structures which act upon the school may also play a role in the perpetuation of “normalization.” Of specific interest here is the *Fewer School Boards Act* and the *Education Quality Improvement Act*, and their

relationship to politics and economics.

Policy, as it is conceived in this thesis, has a past, a present and a future. Policy does not exist in a vacuum and thus should not be analyzed as such. What this means is that policy does not exist in isolation from the social framework under which it was conceived and created. The result of policy does not end with its implementation. Policy is created within a specific set of social constructs. Policy re-shapes these constructs. Consequently, the processes and outcomes of policy work to shape, and reshape, the everyday lives of those whom the policy was intended to affect. The structures within and surrounding policy that shape the every day are what I examine and problematize in this thesis. Consequently, policy analysis cannot end with an examination of the policy in question. It has to follow through with an examination of the social context under which it was created and implemented. This includes the political context for policy creation and implementation because social policy, such as education policy, is inherently political. It is also necessary to examine, or at least to discuss, the consequences of such policy implementation because policy does not cease to exist once enacted.

At the same time, although inherently political, education policy, its creation and application are more than reflections of current socio-economic conditions or political ideology. A "policy" is an active process containing text, discourses and action, including outcomes (Ball: 1993, 11). Policy does not necessarily say what to do or not do, but rather creates a set of circumstances where the options available for action have changed (Ball: 1993, 11).

Consequently, this investigation begins with an examination and explanation of the *Fewer School Boards Act* and the *Education Quality Improvement Act*. At the same time, I look at some of the rationales behind province-wide education reform in Ontario. Following this, I examine the workings of neo-liberal discourse and compare and contrast it with social justice discourse. These discourses, and the contradictions between them, are important to examine because they establish a context in which education is being placed. Due to this context, a series of discourses at the state level has been developed to describe education and justify education restructuring. These discourses are examined and deconstructed in order to explore the power relations inherent to them. Finally, after examining policy as text and discourse, I examine policy as action. Returning to some of the “problems” within education, as determined by the Ontario government, and reflecting on the deconstruction of state discourse surrounding education, I discuss some potential outcomes of education restructuring in Ontario.

In the last few years New Brunswick, Alberta and British Columbia have experienced changes to their educational structures similar to those seen in Ontario. Additionally, similar changes have occurred in Britain and the United States. Thus, research conducted in these jurisdictions will contribute to the research in this thesis and enhance the understanding of the many arguments presented. Part of the impetus for change in these jurisdictions is seen as stemming from socio-economic and political factors. The experiences of these jurisdictions have very closely mirrored the experience in Ontario concerning education restructuring.

As stated, political ideology and socio-economic trends may contribute to the changes experienced in Ontario, and elsewhere, regarding educational structure. For example, it seems that individuals are staying in the workforce longer while birthrates are falling in Canada. This makes for an older workforce, with fewer, younger workers entering the labour market (Young: 1995, 54). Additionally, skill requirements of many workers are changing rapidly due to the introduction of new technologies in the work place. These technologies often result in the creation of new, or different jobs, and the elimination of previous ones. Labour demands have also changed as the result of two recessions in the past decade that created a shift away from resource-based activities toward service-producing activities (Couillard et al.: 1994, 5; Young: 1995, 55). Finally, Ontario currently operates under a Conservative government. This government appears to focus its agenda around cost-cutting mechanisms, primarily targeting social services, one of which is the education system. Thus, changes in labour market demands and political agendas are reflected in changes in educational organization.

Although these changes are reflected in educational re-organization, a management discourse, established within a political, socio-economic and industrial context, has also emerged. This discourse can be seen operating in Ontario and other jurisdictions where educational restructuring has occurred thus far. By critically examining this discourse based on management techniques, this thesis presents an investigation of policy working as text, discourses, and action. In critically examining the recent changes to education policy in Ontario regarding secondary schools, this thesis will explore how policy reflects power and normalization in the attainment of

knowledge. This research serves to enhance our understanding of power within social institutions and how power relations shape the daily working and living conditions of those involved in the institutions. Specifically, as stated, I will focus on the secondary school system in Ontario.

The first chapter presents an examination of policy as text. Here I give an overview of the *Fewer School Boards Act*, 1997 and the *Education Quality Improvement Act*, 1997. This chapter presents a summary of the text for both the Acts. Additionally, it presents some of the conflicts that have occurred over the past year, since the Ministry of Education and Training announced its plans for education reform.

The second chapter first places Ontario's current political framework into an "ideological context." Here I present a discussion of the debates between neo-liberalism and social justice discourses. These two discourses were chosen for discussion because this debate helps exemplify the contradiction inherent to each discourse and exemplifies the motivation behind each political agenda. Secondly, these two political discourses typically lead Western democratic countries and neo-liberalism is the current political context for Ontario (Marshall: 1994, 289).

Reflecting on the goals of neo-liberalism, we see the desire to establish a free-market economy recurring throughout. Consequently, arguments centre on creating the structures that will support such an economy. One of the main goals of the current Conservative government is to reduce Ontario's provincial debt and deficit spending, and, in consequence, a main feature of the government's agenda has focussed on "cost-cutting" and increased "consumer confidence" in attempts to "boost" Ontario's

economy. The second section in Chapter Two establishes the context in Ontario under which education reform is taking place. Finally, this chapter includes a theoretical discussion of neo-liberalism in the current sociological literature. Drawing primarily on the work of Stephen Ball and Kari Dehli, we see how neo-liberal ideology becomes reflected through education policy. Here the link between neo-liberal ideology and the context within Ontario is made and how this is exemplified in Ontario's restructuring policy is discussed.

The Ontario education reform Acts exist in a larger context. An entire discourse has emerged surrounding the education system in Canada. Much of the rhetoric speaks directly to "crises" within education. These "crises" are predicted to lower standards of living, create higher taxes, fewer jobs and a loss in Canada's "edge" in the competitive global economy. This larger context of "crisis" within education, both at a national and international level, lead to my use of research and educational critiques from outside Ontario. Work like that produced by Stephen Ball, is important to this thesis. Chapter Three examines the "crisis" discourse surrounding education and works to deconstruct the meaning of some of its terms. Specifically, this section looks at the meaning of "quality," "excellence," "relevance," "accountability" and "restructuring" as they apply to education within the context of "crisis."

Finally, the last chapter examines the justifications and rationale the government gives for placing education within a crisis context. More simply, here I examine the issues, as seen by the Ministry of Education and Training, that warrant a province-wide restructuring of education. I then look at responses to these arguments as seen in

current sociological research.

However, as we will learn, the arguments are not new and there are at least two distinct sides to each argument. As of yet, there has been a lack of systematic assessment of school curriculum, school outcomes and the impact of educational restructuring in Ontario and Canada. Thus, it is actually difficult to assess what is occurring. However, it is less difficult to examine the potential effects education restructuring will have on students and teachers based on our current theoretical and empirical knowledge.

This discussion of potential outcomes occurs in the concluding chapter. Here I compile the research I have conducted so far and assess the consequences of Ontario's restructuring policy based on the information we do have. As I return to the original question of this thesis, I conclude that neo-liberal ideology has profound implications for the way education is organized. I summarize how legitimized power institutionalizes the way knowledge is produced and attained. Consequently, we are seeing profound changes in social relations in Ontario.

An examination of the *Fewer School Boards Act*, 1997 and *The Education Quality Improvement Act*, 1997 as text compose the following chapter. From this, comes an examination of these policies as discourse and finally as action.

CHAPTER 1

ONTARIO'S EDUCATION REFORM ACTS

Many changes have occurred in Ontario's social programs and institutional organizations as a result of the Conservative government coming to power during the summer of 1995. One social program and institutional structure recently affected, gaining widespread media coverage, is Ontario's public education system. In 1998, *The Fewer School Boards Act* (formerly Bill 104) and the *Education Quality Improvement Act* (formerly Bill 160) will come fully into effect. This thesis will examine how neo-liberal ideology, reflected in the *Fewer School Boards Act*, and the *Education Quality Improvement Act*, affect education policy. I examine the effects of neo-liberal ideology on the organization of the public education system in Ontario, focusing on the restructuring of the secondary school system, and the potential consequences of this ideological influence on education in Ontario.

This thesis focuses primarily on the *Fewer School Boards Act*, which was the first action the Ontario Conservative government took on education reform. However, the thesis also examines issues raised by the *Education Quality Improvement Act*, as they pertain to discussion of the former Act. Throughout the thesis, I question the actions and justifications for the Ministry of Education and Training's position on education. In order to begin this examination, it is necessary to discuss what the government defines as "problems" within the education system and how both education reform Acts propose to solve them.

One problem with education in Ontario, is that “despite, 24 separate reviews since 1950, including two Royal Commission reports, Ontario is one of the last jurisdictions in Canada to launch a reform of its education system” (Ministry of Education: 1997, 1). More explicitly, the fact that Ontario has not done a province-wide restructuring of its education system is the first issue for the government. Why is this an issue? According to the Ministry, “as early as 1992, other provinces began to reform their education systems, reducing the number of school boards and increasing provincial responsibility for the fair funding of education” (Ministry of Education and Training: 1997, 1). Students in restructured jurisdictions ranked higher than Ontario students in some scholastic areas on inter-provincial tests, this posing a concern for Ontario’s government (Ministry of Education and Training: 1997, 1). As the Ministry sees it, the restructuring endeavours in other jurisdictions contributed to higher scores on inter-provincial tests.

Thus, from the outset, the government positions student scores as an area of concern because they are not as high as student scores in other, restructured jurisdictions. This concern, which will be elaborated in proceeding sections, establishes Ontario students as somehow being behind other students. The concern over test scores implies that students are not receiving the kind of education they should in order to remain competitive in the labour force. Thus, Ontario’s student performance on international, national and provincial tests becomes an issue in itself for the Ministry. Student performance on these tests, particularly in Math, Science and English, indicates to the government that the standards students are held to are

inadequate. Similarly, because student results on recent tests varied across the province, the government sees a need for changes in the curriculum. Curriculum is not standardized across the province and thus students in different regions learn different things at different times (Ministry of Education and Training: 1997, 3). In order to strengthen test results at a provincial level, according to the government, it is important to standardize curriculum province-wide.

The next major issue for the government concerning the education system is that “parents got insufficient information about what their children were learning and how well they were doing” (Ministry of Education and Training: 1997, 1). It is assumed that the Ministry reached this conclusion through its consultations with more than 20,000 groups and individuals. Finally, for the Ministry, the current education system is “a system that burdened taxpayers with uncontrolled increases in spending and offered little public accountability” (Ministry of Education and Training: 1997, 1). This claim is based on calculations and economic forecasts produced by the Ministry that suggest “total enrolment in our schools increased by only 16 per cent in the past 10 years. The cost of living increased by 40 percent. But school board spending increased by 82 per cent and education property tax revenue increased by 120 percent” (Ministry of Education and Training: 1997, 1). Consequently, according to the government, “if these trends keep up, residential property taxpayers will be paying \$6.2 billion for education by the year 2000, far more than is necessary” (Ministry of Education and Training: 1997, 1). How does the Ministry propose to address the problems it sees in the education system? The *Fewer School Boards Act* is the first step in a province-

wide education restructuring plan.

Included in the first section of the Act is its mission statement as follows:

Bill 104 1997:

An Act to improve accountability, effectiveness and quality of Ontario's school system by permitting a reduction in the number of school boards, establishing an Education Improvement Commission to oversee the transition to the new system, providing certain matters relating to elections in 1997 and making other improvements to the Education Act and the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 (Ministry of Education and Training: 1997, 1).

The purposes of the Act are to:

(a) to provide for the establishment of district school boards; (b) permit the transition to a new system of education governance in Ontario under which there will be fewer school boards and under which district school boards will govern schools, as defined in section 327 of the *Education Act*; (c) establish the Education Improvement Commission to oversee the transition to the new system of education governance in Ontario; and (d) provide for certain matters related to elections in 1997 relating to school governance (Ministry of Education and Training: 1997, 1-2).

The *Fewer School Boards Act* makes amendments to the *Education Act* and reduces the number of school boards in Ontario by amalgamating them into "District Boards" (Ministry of Education and Training: 1997, 1). In fact, the number of school boards in Ontario will be reduced by almost half, from 129 to 66. The Act establishes that there will be no more than twenty-two district board members and establishes the geographical areas for each board (Ministry of Education and Training: 1997, 6, s327(5)). District boards are placed under a number of restrictions within the Act (Ministry of Education and Training: 1997, 18, s341). These restrictions concern the purchasing power of boards, the ability to transfer money from existing funds or to enter into certain contracts. Boards are also required to submit budgets and monthly

spending reports to the Education Improvement Committee for approval.

The Act also reduces the number of school trustees, from 1,900 across the province to 700 (Ministry of Education and Training: 1997, 1). Additionally, trustees will no longer be able to take home the equivalent of a full time salary and will be awarded an honorarium of at most \$5,000 per year (Ministry of Education and Training: 1997, 1). In addition to reducing the number of school trustees in Ontario, the *Fewer School Boards Act* adjusts the eligibility of candidates and voters in school board elections. Because school boards and their geographical coverage may change with amalgamation, school board candidates and who may vote for them could change from previous elections. These changes to candidate and eligible voting status are made through further amendments to the *Education Act* and the *Municipal Elections Act*, 1996. As well, through further amendments to the *Education Act*, the *Fewer School Boards Act* removes taxing authority from the school boards and places it solely under government control for the purposes of education (Ministry of Education and Training: 1997; Ministry of Education and Training: 1997, 1-2; Ministry of Education and Training: 1997, 3-4). Finally, the Act establishes the Education Improvement Commission, and local Education Improvement Committees to oversee the transition to this new system of education (Ministry of Education and Training: 1997, 1).

The Education Improvement Commission (EIC) is composed of not less than five and not more than seven members appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council who will hold office "during the pleasure of the Lieutenant Governor in Council" (Ministry of Education and Training: 1997, 12). The EIC has numerous responsibilities

including co-ordinating processes relating to elections of several positions dealing with school and school districts, identifying issues relating to the establishment of French-language district school boards that should be addressed and identifying issues to be addressed relating to representation of Native Canadian students and the interests of members of bands on district school boards (Ministry of Education and Training: 1997, 14).

According to the Act, the EIC will “identify other key issues that should, in the opinion of the Commission, be addressed, including but not limited to issues relating to the distribution of the assets and liabilities of existing boards and the transfer of staff of existing boards, and [will] consider and make recommendations to the Minister on those issues” (Ministry of Education and Training: 1997, 14). In identifying some of these issues, the EIC is permitted to conduct research, create discussion and make recommendations to the Minister on such financial issues as: the outsourcing of non-instructional services by school boards, strengthening the role of school councils and increasing parental involvement in education governance (Ministry of Education and Training: 1997, 14). Additionally, the EIC may order existing school boards to provide reports and information relevant to the Commission’s work, appoint an auditor to audit part or all the affairs of existing boards and make recommendations on ways to increase the financial accountability of existing boards (Ministry of Education and Training: 1997, 13). The Commission will also make annual reports to the Minister, and may make additional reports as the Minister sees fit (Ministry of Education and Training: 1997, 13). The Commission is responsible for approving and amending

school budgets, when necessary, and establishing guidelines with respect to appointments, hiring and promotion and related issues such as the end of an employment relationship (Ministry of Education and Training: 1997, 18). Additionally, the Commission is responsible for the establishment of Education Improvement Committees, and any decision made by the Commission is final and cannot be subjected to judicial question or review (Ministry of Education and Training: 1997, 21, 344(2)).

Education Improvement Committees consist of two to three members appointed by the Commission, and may be members of the Commission itself (Ministry of Education and Training: 1997, 17). As stated in the Act:

338(2) In developing the process [of the Committees], the Commission shall have regard to the importance of achieving representation on the committees of the interests that, in the opinion of the Commission, are likely to be affected by the transition to the new system of education governance, including but not limited to the interests of persons represented by existing boards, minority language sections of existing boards and French-language advisory committees (Ministry of Education and Training: 1997, 16, s338(2)).

In terms of matters to be referred to the committees, the Act states:

(3) The Commission may refer to an education improvement committee any matter relating to the transition to the new system of education governance, including but not limited to matters relating to the distribution of assets and liabilities of existing boards and the transfer of staff of existing boards (Ministry of Education and Training: 1997, 16, s338(3)).

The specific duties of the committees consist of considering "(a) any matter referred to it; (b) following guidelines and format specified in relation to the referral; (c) following any procedures specified in relation to the referral; (d) make recommendations, where directed to do so by the Commission, and submit them to the Commission and; (e)

develop a plan, where directed to do so by the Commission and submit it to the Commission” (Ministry of Education and Training: 1997, 17). The committees are an extension of the EIC at a more local level. Since the committees report to the Commission, and the Commission reports to the Ministry, establishing the committees works to further centralized control over education, and educating in Ontario. Centralized control is increased because the establishment of the committees is the direct responsibility of the Commission. Consequently, the committees are created with the interests, and needs, of the Commission in mind.

Interestingly, the Act claims not to impose on any rights or freedoms as established within the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. However, an important issue, as seen by teacher’s organizations in Ontario, concerns the amount of control the provincial government will gain over public education with the passing of the Act. According to the editor of “Education Today,” a magazine published by the Ontario Public School Boards Association (OPSBA), commenting on the pending court challenge launched by the OPSBA against Ontario’s Ministry of Education and Training, “by establishing new district school boards without giving them taxing authority, the legislation is the province’s first step toward a total takeover of education” (Dion: 1997, 4). However, the court challenge is not about amalgamating school boards or reducing the number of trustees. The position of the OPSBA, and other associations, is that “public school boards should have the same constitutional rights, including taxing powers, as Catholic school boards” (Dion: 1997, 4).

The second part of the challenge relates to the Education Improvement

Commission. Under the new legislation, the Commission can interfere with “the powers of elected school trustees to manage the fiscal affairs of existing boards” (Dion: 1997, 4). Thus, the Commission, containing provincially appointed members, has the authority to override decisions made by school boards and their elected officials. Recently, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that the public school system is “an integral part of the Confederation compromise” and is thus protected under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This recent ruling is the basis of the court challenge in that this legislation removes fundamental rights from school boards (Dion: 1997, 4).

As I have stated, the *Fewer School Boards Act* is the first step the Ministry has taken in education restructuring. The *Education Quality Improvement Act*, is the next step. I will now briefly outline the second Act as issues surrounding it will become pertinent in the following discussions.

The *Education Quality Improvement Act*, is the second piece of legislation that makes amendments to the *Education Act*. The *Education Quality Improvement Act*, continues to change several major areas (including governance, finance, labour relations and matters related to instruction in Ontario's schools) of the *Education Act* which began with the *Fewer School Boards Act*. According to the Ministry of Education and Training, “these changes are necessary to implement and further the reforms begun in Bill 104 in order to attain high quality education and the best student achievement in Canada in the most cost effective manner” (Ministry of Education and Training: 1997, 1). Further, the Ministry contends that:

the purpose of the bill is to ensure a smooth transition to the new forms of school governance, ensure fair and equitable funding for publicly funded schools, and create an efficient collective bargaining framework. These goals will be accomplished in a manner that respects the constitutional rights of all Ontarians (Ministry of Education and Training, 1997, 1).

The *Education Quality Improvement Act* allows for the Minister to issue guidelines on many aspects of school governance, such as the roles and responsibilities of board members and senior officials, and requires boards to submit any reports, financial or otherwise, as required by the Minister (Minister of Education and Training: 1997, 1). This Act also allows the Minister (pending approval from the Lieutenant Governor in Council) to determine the number of instructional days, number of instructional hours per day, how many days teachers will work prior to the start of the school year, examination days, school terms, holidays, and professional activity days (Minister of Education and Training: 1997, 1-2). Additionally, the *Education Quality Improvement Act* sets out conditions under which schools may be closed due to strikes and lockouts and determines school attendance rights and admissions under the new system of school districts established by the *Fewer School Boards Act* (Ministry of Education and Training: 1997).

The next main sections of the *Education Quality Improvement Act* again pertain to regulations for school boards and elections. Those include refined and more detailed provisions for the establishment of school boards, voting entitlements, representation on, and elections to, district school boards and the establishment of school authorities for public, Roman Catholic and Protestant schools (Ministry of Education and Training, 1997, 2).

The *Education Quality Improvement Act* provides for the funding and financial administration of school boards, government provided grants, government authority to set education tax rates, for municipalities and school boards to collect taxes and amends provisions for designating property taxes (Ministry of Education and Training, 1997, 3). With reference to teachers and school administrators, this Act sets out regulations for the Ministry to assign an Ontario Education Number to students. This number is used to track students and their progress throughout their primary and secondary school careers. Instead of identification numbers used for administrative purposes at the school level, these numbers will be used for administrative purposes at the level of the Ministry. Additionally, the *Education Quality Improvement Act* readjusts the time frame for collective bargaining so that it is in accordance with changes to school boards. All district school boards are required to employ a Director of Education to supervise programs in schools (Ministry of Education and Training: 1997, 4). This Act also sets out the obligation of district school boards to provide education in their designated language (English or French) (Ministry of Education and Training: 1997, 4). Finally, both the *Fewer School Boards Act* and the *Education Quality Improvement Act*, include provisions pertaining to the Education Improvement Commission including protection "from liability for persons working for or on the Commission and its committees" (Ministry of Education and Training: 1997, 4). This refers to responsibility for the consequences of any action or decision made by the Commission.

What I have provided is an abridged version of the acts. These acts are lengthy and, as one can see even from the abridged versions, reform several aspects of

education in Ontario as we currently know it. From these two reforms to education, the government will have a degree of control over public education that has not been seen before in Ontario's recent history. Although certain authority established by the acts has always been available to the Ministry of Education and Training in some form, the Ministry has not necessarily taken advantage of it until now. What the government has done is form a powerful new body, namely the EIC and its Committees, as a central unit of control over education in Ontario. The Ministry has had the ability to amalgamate school boards and change taxation laws for the purposes of education previous to these reform acts. However, through the reform Acts, the current Ministry has taken this ability one step further. By establishing the EIC and its Committees, the Ministry has taken control out of the hands of taxpayers, parents, school administrators and students, and placed control at the discretion of one organized body. The EIC has been accorded numerous discretionary powers ranging from assigning assets and liabilities to school boards, to assessing the utility of school programs. At the same time, the Acts absolve the EIC of responsibility for the consequences of its decisions. Further, as established within the Acts, the EIC is no more required to divulge the rationale behind any of its decision-making processes than we have previously seen with school boards. What I mean by this is that, the EIC has no increased responsibility to show how financial decisions are made, for example, than school boards have had in the past. It is only responsible to make school budgets and funding reports available for public review. So what has this changed in terms of how school resources are spent? What programs are considered appropriate at the school level?

How is parental participation in school administration increased? These questions are difficult to assess because the EIC is not responsible for legitimizing its existence or the decisions it makes. However, through a discourse of crisis, which we will discuss at length, the Ministry has legitimized this centralization of control.

Additionally, the response to the government's actions by those within the education system is beyond anything that has occurred in Ontario's recent history. In reacting against the Ministry's reform proposals, Ontario's teachers participated in a province-wide strike lasting for two weeks. The only other province-wide demonstration by teachers in recent history occurred in a single day walk-out in 1973, more than twenty years ago (Brennan: 1997, 2). High school students have also participated in demonstrations over the last year. They have walked out during class to protest the many changes to the education structure and working conditions for teachers (Letters: 1997, B6; Laucius: 1997, D1-D2; Laucius: 1997 D1-D2; Abraham: 1997, D2).

These two reform acts raise a number of questions. Why has the government now decided to introduce such changes to educational organization? Why are these changes being strongly contested? How does the political ideology under which the Conservative government works contribute to its desire to implement change in education? These questions will be addressed below.

In addition to the ideological interests of the government, changes in education policy may also be related to socio-economic trends. For example, it seems that individuals are staying in the workforce longer while birthrates are falling in Canada. This makes for an older workforce, with fewer, younger workers entering the labour

market (Young: 1995, 54). Additionally, skill requirements of many workers are changing rapidly due to the introduction of new technologies in the work place. These technologies often result in the creation of new, or different jobs, and the elimination of previous ones. This fact, as will be shown, is quickly taken up by Ontario's government. This is evident in their discourse surrounding education, and the goals towards which the government feels education should be working. Labour demands have also changed as the result of two recessions in the past decade, creating a shift away from resource-based activities toward service-producing activities (Couillard et al.: 1994, 5; Young: 1995, 55). Finally, Ontario's government, following a neo-liberal ideology, focuses its agenda on cost-cutting mechanisms, primarily targeting social services, one of which is the education system. Why is this? One of the main platforms for the Conservative government is to reduce the debt in Ontario. Thus, changes in education are related to changes in labour market demands and political agendas. Further, in partial answer to the questions of the previous paragraph, the fact that Ontario is one of the last provinces to engage in province-wide education restructuring, results in an impetus for education restructuring.

Changes to social and political contexts mean that changes to education policy are situated within a larger context incorporating both social and political elements. Stephen Ball recognizes the important relationship between global change and development and changes to education policy. Consequently, his analysis of education policy in Britain helps exemplify the relations education policy and changes to it have within a larger context. According to Ball's analysis of the education crisis in

Britain under the Thatcher government, "it was the 1988 Education Reform Act, rather than academic debate, which transformed the agenda for research and confronted policy analysts with a whole new set of methodological, conceptual and theoretical problems and opportunities" (Ball: 1993, 1). Ball asserts that, until recently, sociologists studying education tended to take policy for granted, focusing on implementation which "ends up providing us with a highly partial and incomplete view of 'what' has happened, rather than helping us to understand *why* the content and organisation of education has become such a target of Government reform" (Ball: 1993, 2).

Recently, Ball has noticed a renewed willingness from education policy researchers to analyze and problematize policy through several levels or "moments" of activity and effect. At the same time, these analyses are insisting on the continued exploration of basic sociological questions regarding educational practices and social inequality (Ball: 1993, 2). Ball regards this standpoint as important to the usefulness of policy research. In fact, he claims to "regard this renewed willingness to engage in debate and take cognizance of contemporary developments in social theory as crucial to the future of education policy studies if they are to have *any* lasting impact" (Ball: 1993, 2).

Ball's stance is that education should not be divorced from the social, especially when studying education policy, which is essentially a social policy. Ball disagrees with separating "changes in education from more general ideological and economic shifts in global society" (Ball: 1993, 2). Concerning both Acts in Ontario, I find it impossible to

examine critically these documents apart from current and past social developments.

As we will see, the discourses from which these two reform Acts arise are directly derived from discourses surrounding the labour market both globally and nationally.

Thus, it is essential to place the development of these Acts in a larger social network by taking into account relevant social developments.

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND ON NEO-LIBERAL IDEOLOGY

This chapter places Ontario's current political framework in its ideological context, and exemplifies the debates between differing ideological discourses typically dominant on Canada's political scene. While my description and discussion are brief, they will familiarize readers with the context surrounding the issues in this thesis.

The current Conservative government espouses a neo-liberal ideology. Neo-liberalism is a combination of many schools of liberal thought and is said to take some of these ideas to their extremes. Neo-liberalism can be defined as "a loosely knit body of ideas which became very popular during the 1980's and which were premised upon a (slight) rethinking and a (substantial) reassertion of classical liberalism. The most prominent neo-liberals are libertarians, enthusiastic advocates of the rights of the individuals against those of the coercive state" (Marshall: 1994, 352). Liberalism is thought to be the dominant ideology of Western democracies. However, there are many variations of its doctrines (Marshall: 1994, 290). Although it is difficult to pinpoint exactly what liberalism, and thus, neo-liberalism is, it is much easier to see what these ideologies oppose. Specifically, liberalism is against "political absolutism in all its forms, be they monarchist, feudal, military, clerical, or communitarian. In this opposition it attempts to ensure that individuals and groups can resist any authoritarian demands" (Marshall, 1994, 290). In practice, the most typical example is the split between a public and private world (Marshall: 1994, 290). Thus, writers of classical

liberalism "emphasize social-contract theory, a world where human beings are guided by enlightened self-interest, rationality, and free choice and argue for the minimum intervention of the state in the lives of individuals" (Marshall: 1994, 290).

Liberalism is strongly associated with the concepts of laissez-faire economics and "with constitutional guarantees and representative democracy" This means that all citizens hold inalienable rights to particular freedoms, such as the right to life, property, free speech, association, and religion. Also, citizens have some say in the running of the country typically by the right to vote (Marshall: 1994, 290).

Laissez-faire economics is defined as "an approach to economics that asserts the importance of a free, competitive market of individual suppliers and individual purchasers to the efficient production, distribution and allocation of goods and services as well as to the maximization of individual choice, and emphasizes the need to keep state regulation to a minimum" (Marshall: 1994, 283-284). A result of the increased institutionalization of laissez-faire economics in recent political history has been "an increasing privatization of state activities and a return to an all-pervasive market economy" (Marshall: 1994, 284). However, laissez-faire theorizing bears little resemblance to actual markets. In reality, "markets are beset by so-called imperfections: there are often monopolies of supply, imperfect information, new purchasers, external constraints and so forth" (Marshall: 1994, 284). Further, consumer choices are shaped by cultural and social norms. So, the ideal of efficiency and equitable allocation via market choice works much better as a myth, than as a reality (Marshall: 1994, 284).

For sociologists, the main objections to liberal conceptions of society and social values are the assumptions made about the individual. Liberalism centres on the presumption that the individual is autonomous and can abide by neutral "rules." However, "both arguments are asocial - assuming the existence of individuals and abstract rules without a society that shapes them" (Marshall: 1994, 284).

The final source of influence for neo-liberal thought is libertarianism. Libertarianism primarily stems from the writings of the seventeenth-century English political philosopher John Locke. Again with Locke, we see the insistence on the priority of individual rights to life, liberty, and property, and "the elimination of the coercive intervention by the state, the foremost violator of liberty" (Marshall: 1994, 291). However, the value of individual liberty above all else is also an identifiable strand of conservative thought. Libertarians form part of the Conservative radical right in both the United States and Britain, and we can see this line of thinking in the actions of the Conservative government in Ontario (Marshall: 1994, 291). This reasoning becomes apparent through government claims to eliminate government bureaucracy, claims to make the government more efficient "for the people" and so forth.

Some libertarians "maintain that the ideal economy and polity is a "catallaxy" - a spontaneous organization resembling the free market - within which interpersonal relationships are modeled on market exchanges" (Marshall: 1994, 291). Here, the "government is reduced to the minimal tasks of maintaining social order and providing those public services which cannot spontaneously emerge because of huge initial capital outlays. This allegedly results in a plurality of personal and social values"

(Marshall: 1994, 291). Simply, libertarians advocate a maximum of individual rights, a minimum of state intervention and a free-market economy.

Neo-liberalism and its components are strongly contested by social justice ideologies. I say ideologies because, as with neo-liberalism, there is no single definition or conception of social justice. As Marshall notes, "justice is a central moral standard in social life, is generally held to have a prominent role in social theory and social action, and so it is perhaps not surprising that all the social sciences have examined the concept at some length" (Marshall: 1994, 262).

It is often necessary to distinguish between "formal justice" (the law) and material justice (morality and politics). However, some theorists treat the two as overlapping and "argue that since legal or communal justice concerns the distribution of penalties to the guilty, it has much in common with social justice, which deals with the allocation of scarce goods (and "bads") to a population" (Marshall: 1994, 262). In any case, both concepts are based on the ideas of due process, impartiality, and distribution, according to appropriate criteria (Marshall: 1994, 262). According to Marshall:

in older literature, a distinction is usually drawn between social (or as it is frequently termed "distributive") justice and retributive justice. The latter holds that the guilty should be punished simply because wrongdoing as such ought to be punished, regardless of the consequences of doing so in terms of deterring further misdemeanors, or making any other contribution to social utility. Retributivism is, therefore, only one theory of communal justice (Marshall: 1994, 262).

There are two main principles available to regulate social and economic inequalities which is partly why the concept of social justice is essentially contested (Gallie: 1956,

187).

Theories of justice that demand that people be rewarded according to their differential deserts or merits are probably more familiar to sociologists. According to this line of reasoning, "if justice consists of giving people their due, and those dues are different, then justice seems clearly to require unequal outcomes. However, this approach to justice does then raise the question of what it is that constitutes the bases of desert or merit, and which qualities of individuals it is just to reward" (Marshall: 1994, 263).

The idea that unequal rewards are just because people are entitled to unequal resources is distinguishable from arguments based on principles of desert or merit. The former argue that people are entitled to certain goods without in any sense deserving them (Marshall: 1994, 263). For example, "Nozick's libertarian emphasis on property rights and freedom of choice leads to a conception of justice as entitlement which is quite different from the idea that people should get what they deserve" (Marshall: 1994, 263).

As the concept of justice itself is so disputed, debates tend to arise over concepts such as equality and related concepts of efficiency or utility. In other words, debates arise within the ideology of social justice around issues of equality, and subsequently, how useful issues surrounding equality are in the name of the distribution of assets, entitlements, opportunity and so on. As Marshall further explains:

for example, while it is well known that socialists tend to place emphasis on justice as needs and equality of outcome, it is perhaps less well known

that Karl Marx considered the desert-oriented distributive principle "to each according to his labour" as appropriate to the first or lower stage of socialism, to be superseded by the maxim, "to each according to his need" only in a second or higher stage. Similarly, liberals tend to endorse the value of opportunity, with inequalities of outcome deemed legitimate if they reflect differences in merit, but then cannot agree either about the conditions that are necessary to ensure equality of opportunity or about what constitutes merit. Some liberals hold a more extreme libertarian position (often confused in popular terminology with conservatism), and argue both that people are entitled to do as they choose with whatever resources they have acquired legitimately, and that this is more important than equality of opportunity. Contemporary thinkers of the New Right tend to conflate the principles of entitlement and desert (Marshall: 1994, 264).

In this case, unequal outcomes are justified simultaneously on the grounds that they give people incentives, and in doing so contribute to social justice by helping the poor, and also because they give individuals what they deserve (Marshall: 1994, 264).

Marshall contends that "old-style conservatives, by contrast, tend simply to regard hierarchy as a good thing, either because inequality is a necessary prerequisite of culture and civilized values, or because they respect tradition and inequality is tradition" (Marshall: 1994, 264-265). Thus, the concept of justice fulfils the requirements established by Gallie to be essentially contested (Gallie: 1956, 167-198).

First, the concept of justice is appraisive in that it signifies a valued achievement. Second, this achievement is complex, as we have just discussed. Third, this achievement is describable and sets the component parts of the concept of justice in some sort of order. This order of importance is open to change in changing circumstances and still returns the desired outcome. As we can see from our discussion, the concept of justice is used both "aggressively and defensively," in that users of this concept must be able to use their interpretation against others and

recognize others will contest their conception (Gallie: 1956, 171-172).

It is not my position to resolve the debates around the concept of social justice. However, it is important to establish these debates in comparison to neo-liberalism in order to understand whence many of the criticisms of neo-liberal ideology stem. Further, the contradictions within and between these ideologies offer modes of resistance to neo-liberal order, as we have seen in the events over the past year in educational restructuring. The contradictions within neo-liberal ideology and how this ideology deals with social justice weakens neo-liberal legitimations of power. Neo-liberalism's contention that it retreats from state monopoly over the lives of individuals, is contradicted by the actions of the current Conservative government. Specifically, this is contradicted through the formation of, and the centralization of control through, the Education Improvement Commission. The emphasis on laissez faire economics as a defining social relationship, as has been argued, cannot exist as it is conceptualized. Thus, the Conservative government's claim for the legitimacy of the structures it has put in place to perpetuate such an economy appear unfounded.

However, I am not in a position to resolve the debates occurring between the advocates of neo-liberalism and social justice ideologies. The point here is to exemplify these debates and make them familiar to the reader. Putting some of the concepts and debates examined in this thesis in context allows us to look more closely at what is happening in Ontario surrounding neo-liberal ideology and education. Additionally, the contradictions within each ideology and between social justice and neo-liberalism allow us to understand how arguments are developed on each side of

the restructuring debate.

In reflecting on the goals of neo-liberalism, we see the desire to establish a free-market economy recurring. Consequently it is important to have the structures that will support such an economy. Thus, one of the main goals of the current Conservative government is to reduce Ontario's provincial debt and deficit spending. Hence, a main feature of the government's agenda has focussed on "cost-cutting" and increased "consumer confidence" in attempts to "boost" Ontario's economy.

NEO-LIBERALISM IN ONTARIO: ONTARIO'S DEBT AND SCHOOL BOARD SPENDING

During the 1996-97 fiscal year, the Conservative government lowered the deficit to \$7.5 billion "an improvement of \$710 million over the 1996 Budget Plan" (Minister of Finance: 1997, 3). For the 1997-98 fiscal year, the projected deficit will be reduced to \$6.6 billion (Minister of Finance: 1997, 3). According to the Government, because of Ontario's high level of debt, it spends more than \$9 billion in interest payments each year. This is more than is spent on education (\$8.9 billion) and almost half what is spent on health care in Ontario (\$18.5 billion). In order to reach targeted deficit reductions, the government has both reduced spending and offered tax benefits to individuals and businesses (Minister of Finance: 1997, 3). This strategy hopes to reduce government expenditures and at the same time increase consumers' confidence so people will spend more money, benefit the economy and increase government revenue. While there are other government initiatives, such as streamlining

government bureaucracy, cutting taxes and spending simultaneously has never occurred before in Canada.

Some reports indicate that these deficit-reducing strategies will actually increase Ontario's debt load and thus interest payments, adding a "drag" to Ontario's economy (Toronto (CP): 1997, 1). Further, it is held that even with reducing personal income taxes and some retail taxes which, combined, account for just more than 50% of the government's revenue, because the government has removed \$8 billion in services, consumer spending cannot make up this loss (Toronto (CP): 1997, 1). More simply, although the government has reduced taxes in order to increase consumer spending, it has also decreased funding for many government services. However, the revenue derived from any increase in consumer spending is not enough to sustain the funding for current services.

Consequently, what this means is the potential for increased borrowing, in order to compensate for the loss in revenue. Although Ontario may start operating at a surplus, or at least on a balanced budget by the year 2000-01, as the Ministry of Finance predicts, because Ontario will have increased its debt, and consequently interest on that debt, Ontario could end up paying more than \$11 billion in interest. This could be a larger share of the budget than it is now at 17%. This "simple" economic framework could be sabotaged by some national economic crisis such as recession or consistently high interest rates. However, these are possibilities. The actualities have been many cuts in services such as social service benefits, childcare, healthcare and education in Ontario.

According to Ontario's Ministry of Education and Training, "between 1985 and 1995, school enrolment increased by only 16 per cent, but school board spending increased by 82 per cent, and education property taxes by 120 per cent" (Ministry of Education and Training: 1997, 2). This statement gives the impression that the costs of education are spiraling at a pace that is "out of control." Interestingly, as I have stated, education spending accounts for 16% of the provincial budget. This is less than healthcare, social services and interest payments on the provincial debt. Additionally, even up to this point in time, education spending has been well within the control of the provincial government.

Before the Conservative's sweeping funding changes, the mill rate, upon which property taxes are derived, was based on a statute passed in the legislature (Monahan: 1997, A25; Dibski: 1995, 68). Each province "develops a standardized system, usually referred to as equalized assessment, in order to put some value on property for tax purposes" (Dibski: 1995, 68). Using a common denominator, or a mill rate, school boards or municipal councils could then set property tax rates for residential and industrial properties to compensate for any changes in provincial funding or to maintain levels of educational programs. Now, property taxes rates will be established through government regulation (Monahan: 1997). Further, school boards have always had to submit budget reports to the provincial government upon which various grants were put in place, and, the provincial government has always had discretion regarding the types and the amount of the grants awarded to school boards (Dibski: 1995, 74-76).

A number of principles guide provincial allocation of resources to school boards

such as school boards' ability to pay, equalization of tax burden across municipalities and equalization of educational opportunity (Dibski: 1995, 69, 72). A school board's ability to pay refers to "its capacity to raise revenue from its own sources to pay for educational programs" (Dibski: 1995, 69). In conjunction with ability to pay is the concept of equalization of opportunity. As some students require increased funding for education, as with students with special needs for example, equal dollars per pupil within a school system limits vertical equity ((Dibski: 1995, 72). Thus, provincial funding mechanisms take into account both the vertical and horizontal equity of educating pupils (Dibski: 1995, 72). Finally, equalization of tax burden limits discrepancies in burden between rich and poor school districts. The mill rate on which taxes are based, is reviewed and voted on by the municipalities. However, the provincial government is responsible for ensuring that the tax burden is in proportion to educational programs. More simply, although tax rates may be the same in a rich and poor municipality, the tax burden would be higher for the poor municipality. Depending on the educational programs available to the less affluent municipality, this burden could increase. Consequently, less affluent municipalities could actually pay more money from property taxes for less, in terms of educational programs. The provincial government is responsible for ensuring this does not occur. Consequently, the province can increase grants to less affluent areas, refuse grants to affluent school boards or the province can impose an equalized assessment for "all school systems in their jurisdiction" (Dibski: 1995, 73). Thus, the provincial government has to review its funding mechanisms and decide on which mechanisms to put in place depending on

different and changing school board needs. The main point of this argument is to show that school boards have not had the autonomy in spending, or revenue gathering, that the government has identified as one justification for reform.

Before the education reform Acts, school boards could raise additional money needed for the continuation of school functions from local property taxes (Pierce: 1997, 28). The government claims that school board spending has increased property taxes at alarming rates (Ministry of Education and Training: 1997, 1-9; 1995, 1-2), again giving the impression that school board spending is “out of control.” However, money collected from property taxes accounts for less than half of school board income (Pierce: 1997, 28). Additionally, the money collected is allocated to the entire board, not for each school. This is important because through government rhetoric, it is implied that each school in a particular district has control over the collection and distribution of assets. This is implied through the Education Improvement Commission’s ability to collect and audit financial information from each school. However, this has not been the case, nor is it the case now. The difference is that under the current reforms, the authority to distribute assets rests at the discretion of one organized government body, specifically, the EIC. This then furthers the centralization of control over education. The right to be able to collect taxes, for the purposes of education, and it is a right, is protected under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Dion: 1997, 4). Now, with the advent of the EIC, school boards lose this right. Further, because the Ministry has failed to produce an account of its new funding model, it is difficult to assess if the model will protect vertical and horizontal equality of

opportunity. Recall from the discussion of political ideologies that neo-liberalism conflicts with social justice conceptions of equality of opportunity. When applying these conflicts over equality of opportunity to education, it becomes questionable whether both vertical and horizontal equality will be protected.

What the Ministry also fails to address in its account of funding issues is that, of the school boards that raised property taxes in 1996, the majority of these increases did not exceed the decrease in government funding (Ministry of Education and Training: 1996, 1-4). More simply, most of Ontario school boards raised taxes in 1996. However, comparing the decrease in government spending with the increase in property taxes, the percent change in property taxes is less than the percent change in government funding. Consequently, most boards in Ontario are operating on a decreased income. They are not equally compensated for the loss of government funds through property taxes.

The government has dismissed the increase in enrolment, which has steadily occurred since the mid 1980's, as a contributing factor in increased education spending (Zander: 1997, A15). Additionally, the government has not reported increases in inflation as contributing to increased school spending. Finally, a large majority of instructional costs have to do with teacher salaries (Statistics Canada: 1996, 33). According to a recent Statistics Canada publication, "increases in the number of teachers, annual negotiated contract increases, changes in teacher certification levels, and increasing years of service are all significant contributors to the increase in the cost of instructional services" (Statistics Canada: 1996, 33). Looking at information

provided by the Ministry of Education and Training, 93% of secondary school teachers hold university degrees and the median years of teaching experience is almost 17 (Ministry of Education and Training: 1997, 4). This is not to justify increased instructional costs. It is to say, however, that there are more factors contributing to increased educational costs than the government reports. One example, as just discussed, is the demographics of the teaching population in the education system in Ontario. It is important to look beyond the easily seen indications that school board spending has increased. It is important to look into why this is occurring as well as the fact that it is occurring. By examining how money is being spent can lead to ways for changed spending habits. Finding the cause of ailment can lead to a cure. However, just noting an illness exists, misses a lot of important information.

As Dibski notes, the government has always had certain powers over the school system. The Ministry has always had the ability to establish school districts, regulate the curriculum and assess school board spending. So, the changes put forth by both Acts are not necessarily “revolutionary” (Monahan: 1997, A25). However, as we have been discussing, many of the proposed changes are problematic. Since the government is allowed to establish property tax rates without having statutes voted on, tax rates could appear arbitrary. The Ministry claims it will still use taxes derived from business property to fund education and these taxes will remain in the business’ communities. The Ministry’s new funding model is unclear as to what will happen in rural communities. Additionally, the Premier has not indicated that education funding cuts will cease in the near future. So, school boards will no longer have any recourse

to compensate for these decreases.

At the same time, while the Conservative government in general, and the Ministry of Education and Training in particular, claim to be interested in limiting bureaucracy, overspending and government involvement in the education system, under the new Acts, the Ministry becomes solely responsible for property tax and financial allocation to school districts. This actually increases the government's involvement in education and through the EIC, the Ministry exercises its bureaucratic power.

Bureaucratic power is not a new phenomenon for sociological research. This concept is commonly understood as one of Weber's three bases of domination: traditional, rational-legal and charismatic (Marshall: 1994, 412). Specifically, bureaucratic power follows the rational-legal model. Power, in order to be utilized, must also be legitimized. This institutionalization and legitimation of power relations works to transform this relationship into one of domination. As Marshall explains, "domination, or the legitimate and institutionalized exercise of power, requires some kind of administration, and therefore a role for the functionary interposed between leader and electorate within a democratic system" (Marshall: 1994, 35). The kind of organization that develops depends on how power is legitimated (Marshall: 1994, 35). Bureaucracy develops "when that legitimation is of the rational-legal variety, emphasizing the impersonal exercise of power, according to rational rules" (Marshall: 1994, 35). Within bureaucracy, power is further legitimized through the use of expert knowledge and also in knowledge that officials hide behind routine and procedure.

(Marshall: 1994, 36). This is what is occurring through the establishment of the Education Improvement Commission and subsequent committees. At the same time, bureaucracy can cease to be efficient, and therefore, lose legitimacy, once “personnel proliferate beyond what is needed for the task in hand; when responsibilities are shunned and passed around the system; when rules, formalities and files proliferate, again beyond what is necessary; and officials stick rigidly to the letter of the regulations without regard for the purpose they are supposed to serve” (Marshall: 1994, 36). Therefore, the size of a bureaucracy is important in terms of maintaining power. Since the EIC and its committees exist throughout the province, the potential exists for their purpose to become as redundant as the Ministry reports school board administration is now.

In the present tense however, the government has yet to establish what the new funding model will be other than its “per student” basis. Thus, while superficially, the government may appear to increase “fair funding” between school districts, which is difficult to tell without an explanation or financial plan, the government is actually increasing its control over the school environment. Without giving school districts the authority to finance their programs, the government, specifically the EIC, can dictate the “worth” of various programs within schools. This could ultimately affect such programs as special education programs, English as a Second Language, adult education or continuing education programs and school clubs. Consequently, it is important to re-evaluate the financial “crisis” our schools are in. This need for re-examination represents another conflict for neo-liberal ideology as it is being applied to

education. Neo-liberalism asserts minimal state involvement in the lives of citizens. However, I have been presenting arguments that the Ministry of Education and Training is actually increasing its control over education. However, neo-liberal ideology supports state intervention in institutions which could not financially support themselves otherwise. However, if there is a need to re-examine the educational financial crisis, as it is occurring in Ontario, then there too is a need to re-examine the Ministry's control over those finances.

As they stand, the reform Acts renegotiate the conditions under which teachers work and students learn. Essentially, these Acts reconstruct the daily lives of these individuals and reorganize the relations of ruling within the education institution. Some argue, as we have discussed, that the Acts call into question notions of democratic justice. Further, now that school finances are controlled by the Ministry, school boards are accountable to the Education Improvement Commission, and not necessarily to the public (Ministry of Education and Training: 1997, s335).

The *Fewer School Boards Act* purports to be the first step to increased parental involvement in school governance and in school accountability for parents. However, the EIC is only accountable to the Ministry. The members are government-appointed, and their decisions cannot be appealed under a court of law (Ministry of Education and Training: 1997, 344(2)). Thus, the EIC appears to be above parental influence. However, the Education Improvement Committees, which are an extension of the Commission, appear to involve participation at a local level. In forming the committees, the Commission will regard "the importance of achieving representation on

the committees of the interests that, in the opinion of the Commission, are likely to be affected by the transition to the new system of education governance . . .” (Ministry of Education and Training: s338 (2)). However, there is no guarantee within the *Fewer School Boards Act*, that this representation will be equitable. Recall from the first chapter that committee members are appointed by the EIC and may be members of the EIC themselves. So far, the government has included Native communities, special education and French-speaking interests. The address of these groups has been vague and limited. There is no mention of immigrant groups, single parent groups or distinction among special education groups in reference to representation on the Education Improvement Committees.

SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

In any case, these two particular examples, school finances and potential difficulties with the EIC, show the increasing trend toward school “management.” With the changes to education governance, the school is coming more under the control of some outside entity, whether it is the EIC, or specifically the Ministry of Education and Training. This loss of control over governance shifts the way in which schools function. It changes the roles of teachers, administrators and students because now there are different apparatuses under which they work. Although inherently political, education policy, its creation and application are more than reflections of current socio-economic or political ideology. Policy also develops and changes power dynamics. A “policy” is

an active process containing text, discourses and action, including outcomes (Ball: 1993, 11). Thus, when examining policy, looking at how actors play out policy is important. As Stephen Ball claims, “policies do not normally tell you what to do; they create circumstances in which the range of options available in deciding what to do are narrowed or changed” (Ball: 1993, 12). When incorporating this aspect into analysis, one must question if the policy is about the individuals it affects and how policy translates into action.

According to Ball, introducing the “market mentality” of neo-liberal ideology into schools “means that teachers are now working within a new value context in which image and impression management are more important than the educational process, . . .” (Ball: 1993, 108). In this context, power is shifted from teachers as producers, to parents as consumers. Schools, and ultimately teachers, have somehow to be accountable to parents and the community (we will discuss the concept of accountability in more detail shortly). This then, removes authority from the teacher over how curriculum is taught for example, and yet holds the teacher responsible for education outcomes (Ball: 1993, 108). Ultimately, this ideology confuses “social” and “exchange” relationships, a key element for legitimizing neo-liberal order.

With the “market mentality” or corporate mentality comes “management.” Ball claims that management assumes a “no hands” form of control. In other words, this form of control is not necessarily coercive in the traditional sense of the word. The managed, or teachers in this case, assume a pro-active instead of a reactive role where constraints are replaced by incentives (Ball: 1993, 111). Consequently, “prescription is

replaced by ex-post accountability based upon quality or outcome assessment.

Coercion is replaced by self-steering - the appearance of autonomy. Opposition or resistance are side-stepped, displaced" (Ball: 1993, 111).

According to Ball; management

articulates self-regulation with a micro-technology of control and ramifies the value and cultural changes set in by finance-led decision-making and competition. It is a disciplinary practice. But, *importantly*, as a discourse, management is productive rather than simply coercive. It increases the power of individuals - managers and managed in some respects - while at the same time making them more docile. It offers flexibility and autonomy to some, although within the constraints and rigors of a market system and in relation to fixed indicators of performance. Management is both a body of precepts, assumptions and theory, to be learned by managers, and a set of practices to be implemented, encompassing both managers and managed (Ball: 1993, 111-112).

Drawing on the work of Michel Foucault, we can see management as a double-edged discourse, "it both liberates and enslaves. It empowers subjects" (Ball: 1993, 112). On one hand, Ball notes that reduced budgets may be viewed positively by senior teachers. They allow for greater flexibility and autonomy. However, classroom teachers may have very different experiences (Ball: 1993, 114). What then occurs is a "gap" or polarization between the managed and the managers, primarily based on different value systems. There comes to be a distinction between professional responsibility and efficiency (Ball: 1993, 115).

Thus Ball concludes:

management is both a *means* and *end* in the reform process. That is to say, management is taken to be 'the one best way' to organise and run schools and, to the extent that management embraces enterprise and commercialism, it shifts schools away from 'culture of welfare' and towards the 'culture of profit and production' - that is management does profound ideological work in relation to the conception and conduct of

schooling. It is an end in itself. But management is also seen as a way of delivering other changes. It is a mechanism for ensuring the delivery of a national curriculum, and it ties classroom practice, student performance, teacher appraisal, school recruitment and resource allocation into a single tight bundle of planning and surveillance (Ball: 1993, 119-120).

In our case, this is clearly seen through the establishment of the EIC and the loss of control schools have over their finances. By establishing the EIC with the right to conduct research into the conduct of schools, to demand information from schools at will, to audit schools and review and validate school budgets, the surveillance discussed by Ball becomes evident. This surveillance is furthered by the Ministry's focus on education outcomes. Specifically, the focus on student performance on standard tests is problematic for both teachers and students. The consequences of student performance evaluation will be discussed shortly.

Thus, the way in which teachers, parents and students live within the education system is becoming radically different from anything we have seen in the past. Part of this is the actual language of the *Fewer School Boards Act*, and the actual "things" it does or changes. These changes are tangible, we can see and feel them. However, there is an entire discourse surrounding both reform Acts, and education restructuring in general. This discourse is "outside" the reform Acts, but is directly related to the direction these Acts are taking public education. This is to be the focus for the rest of this section.

DISCOURSE SURROUNDING EDUCATION RESTRUCTURING

Stephen Ball also discusses school management issues within the British context in his paper, "Management as Moral Technology: a Luddite Analysis" (1990). Ball claims that "in education circles the term 'management' now holds a particular and reverential place. The need for 'good' management in schools, colleges and universities provides a point of massive agreement among educational practitioners of all leanings and persuasions. Management is firmly established as 'the one best way' to run educational organizations" (Ball: 1990, 153). Here, Ball is mainly concerned with the impact of this ideology on teachers and their profession. He discusses how management plays a key role in the continual restructuring of teachers' work (Ball: 1990, 153). According to Ball, the shift in political ideology results in a shift of school governance from "professional/collegial in style to managerial/bureaucratic" (Ball: 1990, 153). Thus, controlling the work of teachers is executed through "techniques of management" and the act of schooling, as we have begun to discuss, is increasingly at the mercy of industrial production and competition (Ball: 1990, 153).

For Ball, techniques of management are processes by which systems of dominating, and typically political, power encroach upon structures of relative agreement. Again we see the workings of bureaucratic power, based on a rational-legal model. Here, decisions are nullified by this bureaucratic-administrative system and issues such as moral and cultural identity are shuffled and even thrown aside with the goals of administrative efficiency (Ball: 1990, 154). Thus, the question Ball raises

here is for whom is this system efficient? (Ball: 1990, 154). The professionalization of the education system systematically excludes others (namely teachers) from the decision-making process (Ball: 1990, 154).

In this era of industrial management within education systems, a discourse is created in which the curriculum “becomes a delivery system and the teachers become its technicians or operatives” (Ball: 1990, 154). Ball suggests that these shifts in ideology are attempts by right-wing governments to increase their control over the mode of education. These techniques of management and management discourse serve to justify new forms of control (Ball: 1990, 155).

Ball defines “management” as what Foucault calls a “moral technology”:

it is a modern, all-purpose equivalent of Bentham’s panopticon, ‘a generalizable model of functioning; a way of defining power relations in terms of the everyday life of men [sic]’ (Foucault 1979: 205). Management is an all-embracing conception of organizational control. It subsists both as a body of theory to be learned and internalized by managers, and as a set of practices to be implemented, encompassing managers and managed (Ball: 1990, 156).

Further, for Ball, management is both a theoretical and practical method, appealing to rationality, efficiency, practicality, and ultimately the gaining of control (Ball: 1990, 157).

Control over the organization and thus over the individual actors within the organization, is placed within a realm of technical discourses. Ball claims that “the selection of appropriate courses of action rests upon and is limited to the expertise of those, the managers, who possess appropriate scientific knowledge and training. It is thus a closed system which separates policy from execution, and reserves policymaking to those designated and trained in its techniques” (Ball: 1990, 157).

Further, this form of knowledge is presented as objective and neutral (Ball: 1990, 157).

Within school management is an entire set of discourses derived directly from the market mentality of neo-liberalism. Due to the nature of management itself, management discourse is thus inherently imperialistic. As Ball sees it, "management theory views the social world as locked into irrational chaos, as needing to be brought into its redeeming order. . . . It is the linguistic antithesis of crisis and as such it has a central political role in the 1980's" (Ball: 1990, 157). Using ideas like rationality and efficiency, management shifts relations of power into notions of control. Thus, "as a discourse, a system of possibility for knowledge, it eschews or marginalizes the problems, concerns, difficulties, and fears of 'the subject' - the managed" (Ball: 1990, 157)

Kari Dehli's article "Ontario's Royal Commission on Learning: Constructing a "Public Good" for the Incoming Tories?" show these consequences of policy through the use of expert testimony. Without the authors of "For the Love of Learning," the most recent Royal Commission on Learning in Ontario intending to do so, Dehli argues that their report "creates a framework for the [current Conservative Ontario] government to think and act on state-funded and state-regulated schooling" (Dehli: 1995, 107). Dehli focuses "on one area of the report, community education and parental involvement" to "show that this framework can easily be used to justify a right-wing agenda in education" (Dehli: 1995, 107). Dehli argues that "whether or not the recommendations of commissions are actually implemented as their authors intend, such inquiries help to shape, confirm or shift political discourse, including the ways in

which collective actions vis-a-vis Society by those who act in the name of the State becomes thinkable, and thereby organizable" (Ashforth 1990:1 in Dehli: 1995, 108).

In a way similar to Ball, Dehli argues that in creating modes of understanding, acting and intervening in society, "Commission reports also mark out and occasionally help to shift the boundaries between activities that belong within the domain of the state and ought to be its responsibility, as compared to those which belong in civil society or the "private" realm" (Dehli, 1995: 108). Again we see the common thread tying these arguments in with neo-liberal discourse which is very determined to separate the responsibilities of the state and those of the individual (Marshall: 1994, 291). Additionally, we see the same rhetorical strategies that Ball mentioned in that these kinds of reports compel us to agree with the authors' definition of the problem, be accepting of their facts and to adhere to the benefit of the common good, or best method (Dehli: 1995, 108-109). As Dehli puts it, "Commissions of inquiry, royal or otherwise, are meant to produce consensus, to raise controversial or troublesome issues and elevate them "above" politics" (Dehli: 1995, 118).

Dehli argues that:

Commissions of inquiry such as the Ontario Royal Commission on Learning negotiate, confirm and shift notions of what the state should be, do and know. At the same time, commissions aim to persuade the state's subjects - us - of our rights and responsibilities and of what the kinds of actions or services we might properly expect the state to provide (Dehli: 1995, 118-119).

Therefore, Commission reports construct the everyday world by orienting readers towards particular ways of seeing social problems and their solutions (Dehli: 1995, 119). Dehli argues that because these kinds of documents are authorized by

governments and based on “expert” testimony, and the public is placed in the position of being an important member of this process with a vested interest in the outcomes, they become the “truth” about the condition of our social world (Dehli: 1995, 119). These discourses deriving from the concept of crisis, shape and direct how we view education and the educational system. Thus, it is necessary further to discuss the rhetorical devices that work to serve this purpose.

STATE DISCOURSE AND EDUCATION

Current state discourse on education appears to derive from corporate discourse on restructuring and occurs at both the national and provincial levels of government (Harp: 1992, 6). This derivation comes from discourse emphasizing a need for greater competitiveness in a global economy. According to Harp, in reference to higher education, “The salience given to this economic agenda marginalizes the social agenda inherent to earlier policies championing “recurrent education.” The latter include: reducing social inequality through the increase of learning opportunities in adult life, the democratization of work life, and more open and flexible education institutions (Hommen 1991: 1 cited in Harp: 1992, 7). This is seen in public education where at one point, a goal for education was to ensure accessibility and retention, whereas currently, there has been a shift which emphasizes employability.

For Harp, the shift from education access and equity to an emphasis on employability skills and global competitiveness parallels our period of economic and

social crisis (Harp: 1992, 7). He claims, “the hegemonic project, which can no longer rely solely on processes of economic and cultural domination, moves into social reorganization and restructuring” (Wexler 1987: 187 cited in Harp: 1992, 7).

Underlying the discursive focus of current restructuring is a market driven ideology “designed to abstract schools from their public and civic functions in the interest of concerns derived from human capital theory. This implies that education is meaningful only in terms of job preparedness” (Aronowitz and Giroux 1991:189 cited in Harp: 1992, 8). Thus, central to state discourses on education restructuring are “the interrelated themes of competitiveness in a global economy, skills training and education/business partnerships” (Harp: 1992, 9).

As we move into an era of social crisis, “much is made of the alleged need for “high-tech” skills and knowledge that the schools should impart for the now-proverbial “information society.” According to this vision, we need a highly educated workforce - wherein “education” is, in effect, equated with technocratic competence” (Weeks: 1995, 84). One way to examine political agendas concerning the financial, skills and governance crises in education, is to examine the “buzzwords” that reflect assumptions about education and provide an ideological framework (Weeks: 1995, 84).

What do these “buzzwords” really mean in terms of education restructuring? Why are they important here? The following chapter will look more closely at these questions within the context of the educational crisis in which Ontario schools have been placed.

CHAPTER 3

DECONSTRUCTING STATE DISCOURSE ON EDUCATION: CRISES IN EDUCATION

We have seen the move toward outcome-based education reform proposals and implementations, strongly influenced by, and catered to, the corporate world. In his article, "Current Education Reform Initiatives in New Brunswick," Weeks sets out to "describe the current process of educational reform in New Brunswick in the context of what Wotherspoon (1991) has termed "educational retrenchment" a general trend in Western industrial societies to reduce public spending and to redirect education very *deliberately* toward commercialization and what Martell has called "a corporate/bureaucratic perspective" (Martell: 1993, 68 in Weeks: 1995, 83).

Within this perspective, Weeks claims there exists a distinct discourse surrounding education. For example, Weeks claims "we find almost a unison chorus throughout the country at both the federal and provincial level about the need for educational reform to be responsive to the globalization of the economy and the need to be internationally competitive" (Weeks: 1995, 83-84). Thus, it is important to examine the "buzzwords" common throughout the Ministry's public pronouncements. Weeks claims that "in terms of the assumptions about education they reflect the 'ideological work' that their use involves" (Weeks: 1995, 84). The "buzzwords" that Weeks discusses in reference to education reform in New Brunswick are very familiar to Ontario residents in the face of profound education reform already taking place.

The examples Weeks looks at include "Excellence," "Accountability,"

“Partnership” and “Life-long Learning” (Weeks: 1995, 84–85). According to Weeks, “accountability refers to public access to measures of performance in a number of educational areas” (Weeks: 1995, 84–85). Not only has there been a push for more “accountability” on the part of the schools from business, but there has also been a considerable push for schools to form partnerships with businesses. We need to ask, “partnership with whom? And to whose benefit? . . . who is going to be in charge of that partnership?” (Weeks: 1995, 85). Again Weeks raises questions of authority and autonomy in the educational relationship with bureaucratic ideology.

Meaghan and Casa observe that “a disturbing trend has been the demand - couched as a call for *quality education* - to reconstruct the education system to make it conform to a philosophy which views the primary mission of schools as the production of a good workforce to satisfy the needs of business” (Meaghan and Casa: 1995, 37–38). Again, we see this relationship with business. Similar to the Ministry’s arguments for improving the *quality* of education in Ontario, are the Ministry’s arguments that a curriculum must be relevant to students’ needs. The educational system must also be accountable to the public both as parents and taxpayers. This is to be accomplished through system “report cards,” standardized student report cards and student outcomes on provincial tests.

An additional, and often overlooked phrase, widely used regarding changes to the education system, and not usually questioned is the concept of “restructuring” itself. The term restructuring:

has different meanings to various constituencies who employ it. For example, business leaders emphasize national standards in curriculum

and call for tests to match, new forms of accountability and basic changes in curriculum and instruction. In contrast, some reform-minded parent groups call for greater decentralization in governance, more autonomy for teachers and collegial decision making, and more attention to getting students to think (Tyack, 1990 cited in Harp: 1, 1992).

Consequently, stepping outside the education reform Acts, for a moment, we see that an entire discourse has emerged surrounding the education system in Canada. Much of the rhetoric speaks directly to “crises” within education. Harp provides a definition that I will also use to conceptualize discourse. He states:

by discourse I refer to a system of interpreting the world, including assumptions about legitimate sources of knowledge and authority, specific normative contours and consensus regarding the nature of the social world, including possibilities for its improvement. By text, I refer to a partial representation of discourse, as well as any discursive formation sanctioning particular patterns of speaking, writing and analyzing (Harp: 1992, 1).

“Crises” in education, if not dealt with immediately, are predicted to lower standards of living, create higher taxes, fewer jobs and a loss in Canada’s “edge” in the competitive global economy. According to Harp, in his discussion of the crises in higher education in Canada, “it is now commonplace for critics of higher education to invoke the notion of a crisis. In fact, this notion of crisis is being used in at least three ways: to refer to a fiscal crisis, a knowledge crisis, and a crisis of governance” (Harp: 1992, 1). The focus in Ontario is now on the public school system. However, the arguments, or crises, have remained very similar.

In his paper, “The Crisis in Contemporary Education: Alternative Models of Reform,” Harp attempts to contextualize the rhetoric of crisis in higher education by situating it within the widespread educational reform movements calling for a

“restructuring” of education. During 1992, the focus of education restructuring may have been on higher education within Canada (Harp; 1992, 1). However, as we have seen in Ontario, secondary education is equally targeted for “restructuring.” The aim of Harp’s paper is to argue that “it is business and the relevant state agencies which are the driving force in framing definitions of “crisis” and proposing strategies for “restructuring” public education” (Harp: 1992, 1). We have begun to see this link, with current political ideology and an increasing interest in education and business partnerships, with Ontario’s situation of education restructuring

SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND THE KNOWLEDGE CRISIS

We have already discussed some of the implications of incorporating corporate ideology in the education system. We have also looked at issues of governance and finance within education restructuring. Now it is important to examine more closely the issue of business-driven pedagogy as framing the knowledge “crisis” within secondary education. Specifically, we are talking about the claims from business institutions that schools are not producing adequately skilled workers. As Mulvihill indicates in the post secondary context, “an integral component of these business driven links was the restructuring of the production of knowledge itself in order to serve more directly state programs of industrial restructuring” (Mulvihill 1987:272 cited in Harp: 3, 1992). However, this idea is applicable to the situation surrounding secondary education as well.

As we have seen, part of the crisis in education comes from the crisis in social areas outside education, such as the current restructuring of the workforce. Harp claims that “central to these changes is a new form of documentary knowledge useful in coordinating internal and external institutional relations and forming part of new management practices. As such, they represent a new way of managing the labour force” (Harp: 1992, 3). This happens because the schools are being pushed to produce a new form of “managed” workforce. On the one hand, business claims to want critically thinking, problem solving, workers (Conference Board of Canada: 1992, 1-6). On the other hand, it wants docile workers, easily adaptable to management/efficiency discourse.

As a result, we see a push for skills training, such as the introduction of technological partnerships within education, emphasis on literacy skills, a return to the basics and so forth. Consequently, “in problematizing the nature of the work/education nexus, skills training takes precedence over education per se. Subsequently, attention is directed toward education’s functional correspondence to economic needs. These changes are paralleled and facilitated by shifts in the nature of [educational] governance” (Harp: 1992, 3). Management discourse and efficiency discourse, as the “one best method,” seep into education discourse. This kind of crisis is clearly established by the Ministry as it emphasizes new goals for education, specifically in the push for streamed classrooms, technological skills and standardized outcomes (Ministry of Education and Training: 1997, 1-9). Thus, we are confronted by the Ministry’s arguments on the “relevance” of a curriculum. However, for whom is the

curriculum to be relevant? Again, the desire is presented for developing a compliant workforce.

In his paper “Where to Now? New Directions of BC Education,” Larry Kuehn examines two education reform proposals in British Columbia. After a Royal Commission Report in 1988, the BC Government announced its proposals for education reform entitled “The Year 2000 Program.” In 1993, BC’s premier replaced the Minister of Education, declared “The Year 2000 Program” a failure, and announced plans for the “New Directions” reforms for education.

Here, Kuehn looks at ideas such as the nature of teaching and learning, accountability, curriculum and assessment. He examines and compares how each of these reform packages attempts to deal with these ideas and their impact on the school system. What is interesting is the distinct shift in the ideology behind each reform proposal, and how similar this shift is to the Ontario context. While “The Year 2000” directives focussed on choice, inclusiveness and educating the “whole” child, the “New Directions” campaign included very little of these philosophies and focussed much more on measurable outcomes and standards set by people removed from the education process.

For example, when focussing on curriculum, Kuehn notes the following differences (for ease, Kuehn has labelled “The Year 2000” program as program A and the “New Directions” program as program X):

3. What is the nature of curriculum?

A. The Curriculum is organized around broad ideas or themes and broad developmental objectives for the students. It is organized in clusters of ages or years of schooling (identified as Programs, as in Primary

Program), with the expectation that different students will move through the curriculum experiences in different stages and speeds.

X. The curriculum is the accumulation of intended learning outcomes, specified by specific grade level, with the expectation that students will move through the outcomes in a grade/age sequential order (Kuehn: 1995, 76).

Kuehn also discusses such pressure groups as businesses which may have influenced the decision to eliminate "The Year 2000" program and which appear to send mixed messages to students and educators about what they are looking for as to employable skills. On one hand, they require creative thinking, and flexibility (McLaughlin: 1992, 5). On the other hand, businesses also demand accountability measures "that are concrete and inflexible and which produce a more rigid system, less capable of preparing the 'product' from our schools that they claim to want" (Kuehn: 1995, 81). The religious right in BC is a second pressure group demanding change in the education system. This group feels that education should occur in a hierarchical environment where students learn through transmission, as opposed to learning through open discussion and multiple perspectives (Kuehn: 1995, 81). Finally, there were those who saw The Year 2000 program as a threat to the "authority of academic disciplines" (Kuehn, 1995: 81). Such groups were mainly from universities and some secondary schools (Kuehn: 1995, 81). It is possible that similar pressure groups could have played a role in the changes proposed by Ontario's provincial government.

Mangan looks at the computer industry's influence in Ontario schools during the latter half of the 1980's. His piece is interesting because many of the ideological frameworks used to push for computers in Ontario schools are reemerging within current education restructuring, particularly those pertaining to issues concerning

students' skills. One of the most significant aspects of Mangan's account was the relationship he found between the government and the computing industry in Ontario. The Conservative party had political control in Ontario during the latter half of the 1980's. Within the Conservative party in general and specifically the Ministry of Education at the time, was such a "close identification of the interests of business with those of education and the population in general, that it had the nature of an unquestioned, if not unconscious axiom. This value position was frequently reflected in a view of schools as vocational training grounds, organized to serve the needs of employers" (Mangan: 1994, 266). This value position is still in existence and is exemplified through both education reform Acts.

This model of schooling is present in many industrialized countries. However, "it is usually balanced by concepts of schooling as a process of introducing students to the values and traditions of the culture, and of providing them with critical intellectual skills" (Mangan: 1994, 266). As Mangan notes, these models are frequently in conflict with each other. If the system does not present itself as legitimate, it is up to the government to make it appear at least to make sense. Thus, Mangan's main point is to attempt to show the discourse surrounding educational computing actually legitimated a new aspect of education and fueled the crisis of the time. As Mangan notes, "although some alternative purposes of schooling were occasionally given lip-service as the ideology of educational computing developed, the dominant rationale presented was overwhelmingly one of preparing students for the world of work" (Mangan: 1995, 267).

As several critics have pointed out, the concept of future job markets requiring computer skills stems from a superficial analysis of vocational trends (Mangan: 1994, 268). As current trends indicate, it is much more likely that only a minority of future jobs created out of the Information Age will require the ability to program a computer, or to deal with software in a creative and sophisticated manner. As Mangan and others note, "rather, the biggest growth areas will be in service and clerical jobs, precisely because traditional semiskilled jobs are being displaced by computers and automation" (Mangan: 1994, 268). This shift in emphasis ignores the fact that many workers in the current labour market are de-skilled through the increase of automation. Such a high emphasis on the requirements of the Information Age in public schools perhaps only increases the computer literacy of a large number of semi-skilled workers (janitors, sales-clerks and waiters for example) (Mangan: 1994, 268). Consequently, this shift in emphasis will produce only a few potential workers who will satisfy business needs for a new technocratic elite, if for no other reason than that the jobs are not simply there (Mangan: 1994, 268).

However, placing corporate interests before other purposes of education was a fairly consistent feature of the Ministry's rhetoric throughout this period (1980-1985) and currently (Mangan: 1994, 268). Further, "when other motivations for introducing government-supported computing into schools were mentioned, they often had more to do with the concepts internal to the Ministry of Education than with broader public issues" (Mangan: 1994, 268). In fact, Mangan argues that, according to the Ministry of Education at the time, this "need" for improving the computer literacy and competency

of Ontario's youth arose from the fact that the government perceived itself to be losing control of major developments in the province's curriculum (Mangan: 1994, 268).

Consequently, the government turned to a rhetorical use of "everyone" to gain support for moving control over curriculum out of the hands of school boards and teachers and into their own. As Mangan notes, this rhetorical device is one way to create an instant consensus and is one of the most frequently used in this process. As a result, "such a statement not only made a particular point of view appear to be common knowledge and common sense, but it also helped close off any potential debate, and to marginalize anyone who might have had doubts" (Quoted in Parr 1984, 9 in Mangan: 1994, 273). The consensus-building statements were asserted without substantiation as very few consultations were conducted with those in the education system. What is important about government statements at the time was "the close linking of "productivity improvements," economic competitiveness, and most disturbingly, "attitudinal conditioning" in the need for a computer literacy program" (Mangan: 1994, 273). These ideologies are disturbing when there is no forum for debate or dissenting opinion. Essentially, these "goals" become part of the education system without being questioned.

These new visions of education which underlay the advent of computers in Ontario classrooms were debated by only a few with certain forms of power within the education system. These individuals soon took it upon themselves to be expert enough to speak for "everyone" justifying this shift in education on a distorted image of the future with little evidence to support it (Mangan: 1994, 275). As Mangan confesses:

there is still today an indisputable cachet of modernism surrounding educational computing, which makes those who question its necessity seem terribly backward. Anyone who is less than enthusiastic about classroom computers is generally suspected of trying to hide their own incompetence or fear of technology. The pressure to spend public resources on educational computer programs comes from many sides: from industry representatives anxious to sell computing hardware; from parents who are convinced that their children need to be equipped to compete, both in school and at work; and from other teachers and administrators who want to feel that they are up-to-date (or who are carving themselves a career niche as a "specialist") (Mangan: 1994, 275).

In Mangan's discussion he claims that ideological discourse can "provide opportunities for those in positions of power to express a social and political philosophy which will set the terms of debate . . . In these ways, ideologies are used to shape opinion, to demand accountability from the system, and to spur further initiatives" (Mangan: 1994, 264). Thus, one important function of ideology is to hide its own operation. Subsequently, "the appearance it tries to foster is that of a one-way flow from logic to action, and from the 'will of the people' to the formation of government strategies" (Mangan: 1994, 264).

DECONSTRUCTING THE CONCEPTS OF EDUCATION RESTRUCTURING

This ideological structure, specifically the appearance of linear movement from logic to action, is clearly expressed in government rhetoric surrounding current education restructuring. Many government "pitches" to win favourable public opinion include such phrases and implications as: "our students are failing," "let's put our students first," "we need to improve the quality of our education," "parents don't know

what is going on,” “education spending is out of control,” “school boards raise taxes,” “a more streamlined system can produce better results” etc. (Ministry of Education and Training: 1997, 1-3; 1997, 1-2; 1997, 1-3; 1997, 1-5; 1996, 1; 1997, 1-9; 1996, 1; 1995, 1-2). Many more examples can be drawn from existing government publications. Not only does the government use notions of crises and consensus to foster agreement for educational restructuring, we are also seeing the confusion of “social” and “exchange” relationships in the “buzzwords” surrounding state discourse on education restructuring. More simply, within public pronouncements, the government increasingly uses terminology often found when dealing with industry and products. Examples such as “quality,” “excellence” and “accountability,” are recently and increasingly used to describe “education” and exemplify the shift toward education as a commodity.

We are increasingly seeing the assumption that knowledge, and knowledge production is a commodity, or a “goods and service” that can be measured on a scale - from poor quality to good quality. The question that remains, however, is the quality of what? Are we talking about the quality of the curriculum, the quality of education spending, the quality of education outcomes? What about the quality of the educational experience for teachers and students? It is difficult to assess what is being measured by “quality education.” What this phrase does, is couch education and learning as an item - some fixed and static “thing,” as opposed to an ongoing process that can extend beyond the classroom and throughout an individual’s lifetime. However, the demands of business include workers who are adaptable to change and workers who have learned how to learn. Is this included under “quality?”

Ranson argues that “the Conservative government in the UK has over time introduced complex administrative regulations designed to create a highly structured market of educational choice” (Ranson: 1993, 334). Although the Conservative government in Ontario has yet to develop a strategy for a market between schools, the corporate market mentality, treating parents as “consumers” and schools as “producers” of goods and services, is clearly seen in the government’s restructuring package and the rhetoric surrounding it.

In the market, most goods and services are unchanging products, “but in education the market has chameleon-like qualities which can actually change the characteristics of the goods being purchased” (Ranson: 1993, 335). Although we are not talking about a market concerning choice between schools, we are talking about a market in the product that schools deliver, and that product has changed dramatically in recent history. According to some research, the education system went from an elite institution reserved for society’s “best and brightest” (namely, white, upper-class and male), to a public forum interested in education for its own sake; for the sake of knowledge production (Ranson: 1993, 335). Today, public education is considered a commodity bought strictly for the purpose of producing a workforce.

A similar argument can be made for the term “excellence.” In fact, the Ministry of Education produced a document titled “Excellence in Education: High School Reform.” (Minister of Education and Training: 1996, 1-17). This again assumes education is a fixed and measurable “thing.” However, we have discussed that many aspects of education and learning are not necessarily “measurable” in the sense proposed by the

government. "Excellence" is a phrase open to many interpretations. In this case it tends to raise more questions than it answers. For example, "Excellence in what? Is it in terms of 'education' however we define it or does it refer to such things as employment level of graduates or "cost-effectiveness?" Is it excellence in terms of what is clearly and 'objectively' measurable, such as high score attainment on standardized tests? Who defines 'excellence' and, more specifically, 'excellence' in whose interests?" (Weeks: 1995, 84).

Excellence is a noun used to describe the "quality" of education. Since 'quality' in a product has a range, from poor to good, it is assumed that "excellence," in reference to education, proclaims the absolute best 'quality' education. As discussed in the prior section on quality in education, the product being assessed is the student. Consequently, does the government want to increase excellence in education, which could focus on curriculum issues facilitating enquiry, discovery and creativity? Or the excellence of the product, which would focus on high performing students?

In the discussion paper, "Excellence in Education: High School Reform," the Ministry of Education and Training highlights what it sees as "issues critical to the future success of our students" (Ministry of Education and Training: 1996, 1). The Ministry contends that these issues can be addressed through the education reform Acts. These issues include: "higher standards of academic excellence; greater accountability to parents; comprehensive testing to measure academic performance; expanded co-op opportunities with employers; successful transition-to-the-workplace programs; enhanced technological learning in the classroom" (Ministry of Education

and Training: 1996, 1). Aside from the issue of accountability (which will be discussed in further detail shortly), what these issues show is the increased focus on creating a student body that can score well on tests. These issues also show the increased willingness of the government to allow business to dictate what education and learning mean.

Human beings are not commodities. Teachers and schools are not producers. Parents and businesses are not consumers. The Ministry claims that teachers, parents and students are the true owners of education (Ministry of Education and Training: 1996, 2). This claim is contradictory and further emphasizes the important place business ideals have established for themselves within education. The educational institution is a social institution. Therefore, there can be no ownership of education or learning. However, with issues of “excellence,” as with issues of “quality,” we see the increase of industry philosophy saturating the education system. Thus, mechanisms used to measure “quality” are also used to measure “excellence.” Excellence in education is part of the quality of education. Consequently, mechanisms of surveillance and control, disguised under concepts of managerialism, and contextualized within crisis, are established and legitimized.

With arguments for increasing the “excellence” and “quality” of education, come increasing demands for the school system to be accountable. Weeks claims that “underlying this term is a move toward *increased control* of the work of schools and, particularly, the teachers within them. This is part of what we call ‘managerialism’ . . . Thus ‘the corporate/bureaucratic agenda’ appears in yet another form” (Weeks: 1995,

84-85). Again, the notion of accountability has strong connections with the corporate world. In fact, many ministries of education throughout Canada have been very open about this business relationship in their accountability frameworks and models. Such relationships are evident in the use of such titles as “business contracts,” or the reference to society as “clients” of educational services, when referring to accountability structures (McEwen: 1995, 37; McEwen et al.: 1995, 100). Through such conceptualization, we see the continued trend toward treating education as a commodity and schools and teachers as producers. When an industry does not deliver its “product” or the product is somehow less than expected, someone is to be held accountable. For what is the school system to be held accountable? For what are teachers to be held accountable? To whom is the system accountable? Additionally, to whom are the teachers within the school system to be accountable? Are we talking about accountability for the structure of the labour force or Ontario’s current economic climate? Are teachers to be held responsible for the number of graduates who gain employment after graduation, go on to further their academic studies or who decide to leave the school system? These questions lead to that of the shoulders on which this responsibility should fall.

Although the concept of accountability in education is not new in Canada, accountability mechanisms are relatively new in Ontario (Earl: 1995, 45). The demand for accountability typically increases during times of economic and political uncertainty (Earl: 1995, 45). This is most likely why there has been an increased demand for educational accountability in Ontario’s recent history. In times of financial constraint,

pressure tends to mount for reports on “what schools are doing, and how well their efforts are working” (Earl: 1995, 45).

During the 1980's there was evidence that Ontario's public was losing confidence in its education system (Earl: 1995, 46). Additionally, concern grew around issues of equity within the education system and the fact that high school graduates lacked essential skills needed to enter the work force (Earl: 1995, 46-47). From this growing concern around elements of schooling, student achievement has “moved to the forefront of the accountability agenda” (Earl: 1995, 47). Since the current government has couched secondary schooling in a context of financial and skills crises, accountability measures continue to focus on student attainment, school financing and public opinion via program “report cards.” Yet again we are faced with unpacking the meaning behind these statements. As one author reiterates, “accountability in education is not new. The mechanisms may have changed, but the questions remain the same: *Who* is responsible for *what* and to *whom*? Although the questions are straight forward, the answers are not, and accountability systems are complex” (McEwen: 1995, 3).

Consequently, accountability has many meanings to many people. Currently, the Ministry uses such accountability structures as schools reporting where money is spent and reporting on how students perform on standard tests. We already know that school boards have always outlined where money is spent, and we have explored why school finances are an issue in government rhetoric. However, it is important to explore why student performance is a primary issue for the Ontario government's

accountability structure and what consequences emphasizing student performance has for learning.

Student performance on standard tests is a quick and easy method for obtaining information (Meaghan and Casa: 1995, 48). Students, teachers and jurisdictions are quickly and easily ranked based on scores from standard tests. Implementing accountability structures tend to be expensive (Nagy: 1995, 97-98). Thus, using test scores allows the Ministry of Education to obtain information on students without appearing to spend unnecessary money. This information allows the government to report on student progress, school progress and curriculum progress as compared to previous years. Consequently, the government can make claims showing educational improvement, or can more easily identify and address areas of weakness and implement methods of correction.

However, using scores on standard tests as the primary focus for assessing and reporting educational accountability is problematic. The first major difficulty in using test scores are the tests themselves. Standardized testing methodology and operationalization has been questioned for many years (Meaghan and Casa: 1995, 41, 48). Do tests measure what the government wants them to measure? Do test questions adequately reflect what students learn in the classroom? Are the skills that tests measure adaptable to the everyday, and even working environments? These questions are central to test operationalization. Additionally, issues of cultural and gender bias surround testing methodology. In an ever increasingly linguistically and culturally diverse society, issues of bias become paramount. Do test questions

adequately represent and reflect these differences?

Another issue surrounding standard tests is that they only capture one element of learning. Educational outcomes “are not just things that are measurable. For example, appreciation of cultural diversity, adaptability to change, values clarification, a sense of personal worth and responsibility, and character development are all important outcomes but are difficult to measure” (Bacon: 1995, 87). Thus, standard tests miss capturing many important elements of learning. In doing so, standard tests miss many influences on learning that are beyond the scope of the school or teacher (Nagy: 1995, 93). For example, the socio-economic conditions of the community has been shown to influence student performance in general. There exist performance gaps between more and less affluent school districts (Nagy: 1995, 93). Using test scores alone, without considerations of the socio-economic climate within which schools are working, misses important information that can be useful for increasing student achievement and addressing access issues in education. Additionally, ignoring socio-economic conditions in the community assumes that teachers are solely responsible for student performance, and this is simply not true.

Standard tests have also been shown to limit creativity in both learning and teaching. In a study conducted in British Columbia, Wideen et al., looked at the effects “high stakes” testing had on the teaching of science (Wideen et al.: 1997, 428–444). “High stakes” testing is defined as tests which have both monetary and career implications for students (Wideen et al.: 1997, 433). Specifically, this meant looking at the effects that grade 12 exit exams and scholarship exams had on how science was

taught. The evidence gathered was compared with evidence gathered from grade 8 and grade 10 science classes. This study observed and interviewed a large number of teachers drawn from ten districts throughout British Columbia, as well as interviewing principals, students and district personnel (Wideen et al.: 1997, 428).

Very simply, this study found a “decrease in the variety of instructional approaches from Grade 8 to Grade 12” (Wideen et al.: 1997, 428). According to teacher interviews, high-stakes examinations are primarily responsible for the differences the researchers observed (Wideen et al.: 1997, 428). The researchers concluded “not only that the examinations discouraged teachers from using strategies which promoted enquiry and active student learning, but also that this impoverishment affected the language of classroom discourse” (Wideen et al.: 1997, 428). This further affected learning in the classroom. Due to the pressure of high-stakes examinations, “students wanted only information useful in examinations; they did not want to be bothered by understanding” (Wideen et al.: 1997, 441). Thus, high-stakes examinations can undermine many goals of education at various levels. Teachers become focused on “teaching to the test” and students become focused on “learning to the test.” Consequently, the memorization and regurgitation of facts become important as opposed to problem solving, creativity and discovery.

Student performance, or lack of performance, adds to the crisis of education. This educational crisis, which stems from the greater social crisis, feeds back into the social crisis. For example, “if our students are failing, how are we ever going to build a more economically sound society?” Thus, we are faced with a vicious circle which

focuses on education as finding the answers. Consequently, if teachers “teach better” and are held responsible for their teaching, we will have improved educational outcomes - however those are defined.

In the US, due to various crises in education similar to those seen in Canada, many states and agencies began implementing strategies to improve student performance (Newmann et al., : 1997, 42). According to Newmann et al., “a key strategy of these efforts has been to strengthen school accountability, meaning school reporting measures. According to Kirst (1990), forty states increased their accountability mechanisms during the 1980's. The central question that arises is: “will increased accountability of schools to external agents improve school performance throughout the United States” (Newmann et al.,: 1997, 42)? Here, Newmann et al. are talking about grades and graduation rates. Accountability is a concept derived directly from the corporate world which serves a very different and specific function in society than education. However, the links between education and business and thus management, are clear in the use and implementation of this concept within education.

According to Newmann et al., “historically, the concept of accountability has reflected a relationship between a steward or provider of a good or service and a patron or agent with the power to reward, punish, or replace the provider” (Kirst, 1990 cited in Newmann et al.,: 1997, 43). This is an example of how social relationships have changed into exchange relationships. Parents become consumers and the voice of teachers, and students for that matter, becomes lost in any part of the decision process.

The assumptions that this theory regarding accountability holds are that by increasing accountability measures, teachers will try harder and become more effective in meeting goals for student performance, hence standardized tests, curriculum and reporting measures (Newmann et al.,: 1997, 43). Newman et al hold that, "this theory offers a compelling explanation for organizational performance in commercial enterprises where customers and clients exercise careful surveillance of the quality of outputs" (Newmann et al.,: 1997, 43). However, we have already seen how notions of surveillance and performance have already penetrated the school system. The concept of accountability increases the legitimacy and prevalence of surveillance and management of the working and learning conditions of teachers and students.

In business, accountability structures assume that business organizations will "behave in ways to continue their existence and to maximize the economic rewards, the accountability system is a major stimulus for the organization's workers to produce high-quality goods and services"(Newmann et al.,: 1997, 43). Conceptualizing knowledge and skills as commodities is problematic because it increases the urgency of crisis within education. It increases the fear that our country or province will collapse because we cannot maintain our "competitive edge."

The study conducted by Newmann et al., on American schools that implemented accountability structures "did not allow (them) to specify direct connections between school accountability and student achievement, but analysis of how accountability worked in the schools did reveal three main problems with the proposition that strong external accountability will enhance school performance" (Newmann et al.,: 1997, 42,

parentheses added). Essentially the authors found that schools need more than simply an organizing body constructed to measure accountability in order to improve student performance. Thus, it is most likely that schools presenting budgets to the EIC, standard tests and report cards and standard curriculum will do little to improve overall student performance as measured by the government. Specifically, these factors are likely to do little to facilitate improved student scores on standard tests.

According to the authors:

the first problem is the difficulty of implementing comprehensive external accountability across U.S. schools. The second is the recognition that even if external accountability could be implemented, this would not guarantee high performance of schools that began with low organizational capacity. The third is that strong accountability can occur internally within a school community; it need not be prompted by demands from external agencies (Newmann et al.,: 1997, 42).

This article explains these points and the implications they have for implementing state and district policy aimed at increasing school accountability. Thus, the authors conclude that:

we began by asking how accountability systems might enhance school performance. We outlined the four central features of an accountability system (information on performance, standards, consequences, and an influential agent) and explained that these features raise complex issues for US schools, especially when agents external to schools attempt to impose them. We further argued that even when strong external accountability can be established, the performance of many schools could languish for lack of school organizational capacity. That is, external accountability alone offers no assurance that a school faculty will have adequate technical knowledge and skill, sufficient authority to deploy resources wisely, or shared commitment to a clear purpose for student learning (Newmann et al.,: 1997, 62).

With the discussion so far, we have yet to examine the implications of the concept of restructuring itself. In today's labour market climate, the term restructuring

invokes images of “downsizing” in order to “streamline” and make cost-effective. In any sense, the notion of restructuring invokes images of change. Restructuring changes the space in which we work and live.

Hargreaves examines “some of the meanings of restructuring, along with a number of key choices and dilemmas that restructuring poses for educators, particularly with regard to teacher development and professional growth” (Hargreaves: 1994, 47). According to Schlechty, “while the specific components of restructuring vary from one writer to another, most seem to agree that what is centrally involved is a fundamental redefinition of rules, roles, responsibilities and relationships for teachers and leaders in our schools” (Schlechty, 1990 cited in Hargreaves: 1994, 49). While education reform focuses more specifically on mandating improvement through bureaucratic control, restructuring adds another level to this. Restructuring implies a redefinition of the very nature of the education process. For Hargreaves, “while the particulars vary from scheme to scheme, certain general patterns of restructuring are becoming evident which embody quite distinct principles of power and control and which serve very different purposes” (Hargreaves: 1994, 49)

Hargreaves looks at two scenarios of education restructuring which encompass these common patterns and principles of power. Elements of both restructuring scenarios are common to Ontario’s current restructuring context. The first scenario is drawn from Sarson’s account of education reform which takes a sectional approach to restructuring, focusing on curriculum (Sarson, 1990 cited in Hargreaves: 1994, 49). Sarson gives two reasons for why a sectional approach to education restructuring

typically fails. First, he claims “different components of educational reform have neither been conceived nor addressed as a whole, in their relationships, as a complex system” (Sarson, 1990 cited in Hargreaves: 1994, 49). For example, significant changes in curriculum or assessment will fail to provide desired outcomes unless “attention is paid to teacher development and the principles of professional judgement and discretion contained within it. Second, teacher development and enhanced professionalism must also be undertaken in conjunction with developments in curriculum, assessment, leadership and school organization” (Sarson, 1990 cited in Hargreaves: 1994, 49).

Sarson’s second explanation for the failure of this type of reform is that “major educational change is unlikely to be successful unless it addresses school power relationships” (Sarson, 1990 cited in Hargreaves: 1994, 49). This argument comes from the understanding of schools “as places not only devoted to teaching and learning, but also defined through relationships of power and control” (Hargreaves: 1994, 49). As stated, restructuring means redefining these relationships in fundamental ways (Hargreaves: 1994, 49). We have discussed the centralization of control currently evolving through Ontario’s restructuring endeavours. We have also discussed some of the consequences of removing teacher authority and discretion in terms of curriculum through the increased dependence on standard tests. Thus, the current education reforms in Ontario mirrors Sarson’s claims. Although the government reports to provide and enforce certain elements of teacher enhancement, it has failed to describe how it will do this. Consequently, restructuring is occurring before teachers and administrators are equipped in terms of how they will approach restructuring. This

further disempowers teachers in the restructuring process.

The second scenario put forth by Hargreaves was developed by Schlechty, who examines the corporate focus in education restructuring. It is well argued at this point that the main impetus for education restructuring in Ontario is economically and industrially driven. As Hargreaves points out, the corporate element, or “market mentality” as described so far, narrows the focus of what are appropriate and inappropriate expectations for the function of schools (Hargreaves: 1994, 50). The discussion on assessment and accountability have examined this at length. What is particularly striking in Schlechty’s discussion is his perspective on power and leadership in school restructuring.

According to Hargreaves, “while, superficially, Schlechty appears to support changes in power relationships, in practice it is only the ‘symbols of power’ that are to be rearranged” (Hargreaves: 1994, 50). Thus, Hargreaves concludes that this kind of restructuring (the “market mentality” focus) is “restructuring in a corporate context- corporate in its proposed structures for schooling and corporate in its desired outcomes for learning. This corporate perspective gives Schlechty a limited purchase on power relationships and teacher empowerment - one where bold rhetoric disguises balder realities; where professional growth is subsumed into a framework of administrative control” (Hargreaves: 1994, 52).

This has been mentioned briefly in the Ministry of Education’s method of legitimization. Laissez-faire economics focuses on a free-market economy. Further, neo-liberal ideological frameworks emphasize lack of government interference in the

lives of citizens. However, I have discussed at length how the provincial government is actually increasing and centralizing its control over the education system.

Consequently, a contradiction in reasoning seems to appear. However, this is not the case. In fact, this contradiction is very useful in how the Ontario government legitimizes its control over education. Thus, it is very likely that the appearance of disengagement is actually a new form of engagement.

Recall from previous discussions that the provincial government has given the Education Improvement Commission a number of responsibilities over education governance. Here is where the appearance of disengagement occurs. The provincial government has, in a sense, backed away from its control over education governance. At the same time, the EIC is a direct extension of the provincial government. Recall further that the EIC reports directly to the Ministry of Education and Training and the actions of the EIC are only accountable to the Ministry. Thus, in reality, the Ministry has given up very little of its control over education in Ontario and has actually increased its dominance in terms of governance. At the same time, neo-liberal ideology contends that increased control over social institutions is acceptable, if the institution is financially unstable and could not continue operation without government interference. Using the various rhetorical techniques discussed, the Ministry of Education and Training has couched education into a context of crisis and economical disparity. Therefore, such control over education governance is legitimized for citizens and the government's ideological framework.

Referring to the above restructuring scenarios, Hargreaves further concludes

that “these two scenarios remind us that there is nothing inevitably good or inherently bad about restructuring. Much depends on who controls it, who is involved in it and the purposes to which it is to be put” (Hargreaves: 1994, 50-51). For the situation in Ontario, it appears so far that the Ministry’s purposes for restructuring are complex and tightly linked with meeting business goals. Thus, it becomes important to examine more specifically why the Ministry is intent on reconstructing Ontario’s secondary education system. What is the rationale behind these changes? We have introduced some of these arguments in the context of crisis. It is now important to look more closely at where this crisis comes from in order to assess the validity of the government’s arguments justifying province-wide changes to Ontario’s secondary education system.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSING THE JUSTIFICATION FOR EDUCATION RESTRUCTURING

Many issues and arguments raised by the *Fewer School Boards Act* and the *Education Improvement Act*, namely, changes to school curriculum, funding, and the working and learning conditions for teachers and students, are continually debated (Girard: 1997, A11; Small: 1997, A5; Brennan: 1997, A5; Ministry of Education and Training: 1996, 1-15). According to Meaghan and Casa, Canadian politicians use many “myths” to justify radical changes in education structure across the nation (Meaghan and Casa: 1995). The following reviews allegations made by the Ministry or echoed in the Ministry’s platform on education restructuring.

The first argument the Ministry puts forth is that Ontario schools have somehow failed students and parents (Ministry of Education and Training: 1997, 1-5; 1996, 1-17). Part of this stems from labour market changes and what this means to “skills” and training. Although I have touched on this issue in the context of crisis, it is important to return to it now in the context of reform. According to the Ministry, Ontario’s education system has failed to keep pace with the changes in the labour market (Ministry of Education and Training: 1997, 1-5; 1996, 1-17). Many Canadian politicians, including those in Ontario, claim that schools must produce highly trained and skilled workers to compete effectively in the global economy, thus improving Canadian society. For example, the Ministry claims “learning computer technology is no replacement for the three R’s, but students today need to be computer literate to succeed” (Ministry of

Education and Training: 1997, 4).

Meanwhile, according to Meaghan and Casa, other reports have shown a steady increase in employment and opportunities, in unskilled, low-wage service sector jobs (Meaghan and Casa: 1995, 37). On the other hand, there has been an increase in employment opportunities requiring at least one post-secondary degree if not two (Himelfarb: 1991, 355). According to a recent Statistics Canada report, "changes in technology modify the variety of jobs available and skills needed to accomplish them. By the end of the century, more than 40% of new jobs will require at least 17 years of education and training. This is compared to the 26% in 1995" (Couillard et al: Statistics Canada, 1997). Thus, we see changes in labour demands and a polarization of the labour force in the two extreme ends of the labour force spectrum. We see, on one end, very skilled technical jobs and unskilled labour on the other, with very little in between. However, some researchers question if this implies that the secondary school system is failing to teach children the "basics" to find employment.

The Minister of Education wants to make education "relevant" for students who wish to pursue various goals, like working or pursuing further academic studies after high school (Ministry of Education and Training: 1997, 1-5; 1996, 1-17). Further, the Ministry has stated in the past that the relevance of school curricula for student goals is important in school retention. In his highly critical account of the Canadian education system and advocacy of many of Ontario's education changes, Thomas Schweitzer discusses this issue. Schweitzer's chapter on accessibility questions why Canada's high school drop out rate is high, citing 32% as the national average, as do other

researchers (Schweitzer: 1995, 22; Meaghan and Casa: 1995, 38). Unfortunately, his commentary fails to discuss what this drop out rate might indicate, besides the relevance of school curriculum. Why is having a high dropout rate a problem? Does this indicate poor schooling, no classroom stimulation or easy access to employment?

In any case, Schweitzer notes that this rate does not address certain circumstances such as a return to high school. Thus, he cites a more accurate drop-out rate of 23.7% for 18-20 year olds from Statistics Canada's "School Leavers Survey." However, Schweitzer and the Ministry do not differentiate between those who leave school permanently and those who return. Schweitzer admits that this rate contains both populations. Thus, the 23.7% rate is NOT close to the 32% national average (Schweitzer: 1995, 24). Further, as Meaghan and Casa note, some researchers often derive this roughly 30% drop out rate from studies which do not account for alternative means of receiving a secondary school diploma, interprovincial migration or that some students graduate before or after their entering cohort.

As Meaghan and Casa show, a recent Statistics Canada Survey of young adults aged 18 to 20 "found that 63% were graduates, 21% were still in school and only 16% were leavers. Since some of the continuers will eventually graduate and some of the leavers may return to high school, Statistics Canada concluded that a reasonable estimate of the proportion of youngsters who will never graduate is 18%, significantly below the 30% figure still being widely used in the media" (Meaghan and Casa: 1995, 39). In fact, the follow up study to the *School Leaver's Survey*, found the rate dropping further, to 15%. In other words, more individuals in the cohort had returned to high

school and completed their studies by 1995 (Frank: 1997, 38).

We see a push from the Ministry for a return to the “basics,” meaning reading, writing and arithmetic in both elementary and secondary school curriculum (Ministry of Education and Training: 1997, 3; 1997, 1-8). This indicates that students are not gaining new technological skills, nor are they receiving basic literacy and numeracy skills while in school. As the Ministry claims, “a return to the 3 R’s is long overdue” (Ministry of Education and Training: 1997, 3). This argument for reform appears to be in response to scores on interprovincial and international English, Math and Science test scores (Ministry of Education and Training: 1997, 2).

According to Meaghan and Casa, “quality education advocates would have us believe that every Canadian high school graduate is illiterate, innumerate and unprepared to meet the demands of the contemporary labour market” (Meaghan and Casa: 1995, 40-41). Indeed, Schweitzer furthers this debate as he claims that literacy rates are related to levels of income. He concludes that individuals with higher literacy scores earn more money from their jobs (Schweitzer: 1995, 46). However, Meaghan and Casa describe current attempts to measure literacy and the difficulties with them, such as using educational attainment as a measure of literacy. Using this tool to measure literacy is problematic because school systems are too different both internationally and within Canada to compare grade content adequately (Meaghan and Casa: 1995, 41).

The second recent measures of literacy are standardized tests. Although standardized tests produce results that give more insight into literacy skills than

educational attainment alone, standardized tests are not without difficulty. Some studies show that people perform better on reading tests when exposed to familiar material. Standardized tests do not usually do this and thus their methodology and operationalization become questionable (Meaghan and Casa: 1995, 41). More simply, what the tests want to measure and how they go about it becomes questionable. Do we really end up measuring what these tests are designed to measure, whatever that may be?

The 1989 Statistics Canada literacy survey used the most sophisticated scoring system seen thus far, breaking down reading levels into four categories. The results showed that:

7% performed at level 1 (had difficulty with printed materials and identified themselves as unable to read), 9% could use printed materials for limited purposes and recognized themselves as having difficulty with common reading materials, 22% could use printed materials in a variety of situations provided they were simple, clearly laid out and involved simple tasks; such individuals tended to avoid situations requiring reading and 62% met most everyday reading demands and possessed a wide range of reading skills (Meaghan and Casa: 1995, 43).

Thus, literacy is seen as occurring on a scale with various ranges. Literacy and numeracy are more complex than simply “can or can’t.” Literacy also becomes situational. Additionally, the *International Adult Literacy Survey* discovered that illiteracy is not confined to young high school “dropouts.” The issue of illiteracy extends to older adults. Literacy declines over time, generally due to an insufficient use of literacy skills. Meaghan and Casa contend that “focussing on the reform of the school system in an attempt to reduce the dropout rate would leave these adults disenfranchised and particularly at risk at a time of accelerating technical change and

economic restructuring aimed at reducing costs by shedding workers in the midst of a tenacious recession" (Meaghan and Casa: 1995, 43-44). Consequently, elementary and secondary school reform is only part of a solution to the literacy problem. (Meaghan and Casa: 1995, 43-44).

Finally, Schweitzer's claims about literacy skills and income do not take into consideration level of education and income. It is possible that with increased schooling comes increased income AND an increase in literacy skills. Remember that Meaghan and Casa found that the longer people are removed from the education system, the less likely they are to retain high levels of literacy skills. The Adult Education and Training Survey found a correlation between a person's initial number of years of schooling and the likelihood of individuals taking additional education or training later in life (Couillard et al.: 1995, 18). Thus, it seems that level of education, literacy skills and income could be highly correlated. It is not apparent that literacy skills alone can alter income as drastically as Schweitzer claims.

The Ministry overtly advocates streaming in the high schools. Although the NDP government had destreamed grade nine, this will change with the new curriculum. Additionally, the Ministry's discussions on "career training," where students focus their schedules around future goals (academic or employment), are also parallel to the discourse on streaming (Ministry of Education and Training: 1997, 1-5; 1996, 1-17; 1997, 5). In fact, it is claimed that streamed classrooms coupled with "improvements" to the curriculum, will aid students in gaining the skills and knowledge they need "to succeed at college, university or work" (Ministry of Education and Training: 1997, 5).

On the other side, Meaghan and Casa, among others, note that there is no evidence to support claims that separating children according to “cognitive ability increases overall ability or performance. On the other hand, there is evidence (including a higher proportion of students in the basic and general streams who drop out, compared with the advanced stream) that segregating those with lower academic achievement levels may condemn them to a lifetime of underachievement” (Meaghan and Casa: 1995, 45). Curtis, Livingstone and Smaller also support this evidence in their historical study of streaming in Ontario schools (Curtis, Livingstone and Smaller: 1992).

Further evidence shows that the number of students in advanced streams has risen over the past years, up to 80% sometimes (Meaghan and Casa: 1995, 45–46). Thus, the claim that streams consist of a homogeneous group of students is no longer true. However, general and basic streams are disproportionately filled with “blacks, natives, immigrants, low-income and non-English speaking students” (Meaghan and Casa: 1995, 46). Therefore, while concerns from teachers about the human and financial resources to address the needs of disadvantaged groups are legitimate, destreaming reflects the philosophy of educational equity (Meaghan and Casa: 1995, 46).

One of the most recurrent platforms we have seen in the current restructuring debate in Ontario, and one we have discussed at length, is the need for increased school “accountability.” One way the government proposes to increase accountability is through standardized testing to measure the quality of education Ontario youth

receive. Standard tests are supposed to measure if students are learning what they are supposed to learn, at particular points in time, as established by the Ministry. If not, and students score poorly, this becomes a reflection on how the information is taught, specifically, how teachers perform their jobs. Consequently, are we measuring how students learn to incorporate different teaching methods to enhance this? Are we measuring how students can apply material learned to new situations, thus increasing and exercising problem solving skills? Or are tests instilling incentives, such as the threat of disciplinary action, for teachers to adhere to Ministry-established curriculum and standards? Are we creating a forum, through standard tests, for teachers to “teach to the tests” simply for their students to attain high scores? Are we stifling creativity on the part of teachers and of students as the goal of attaining high test scores become all consuming?

According to Meaghan and Casa, there is overwhelming evidence against standardized testing, such as methodological and operational issues discussed with literacy tests, which many who propose education reform ignore. The authors claim that standard tests distort the actual information, specifically on curriculum and instruction, we are seeking such as information retention and problem solving skills (Meaghan and Casa: 1995, 48). The authors question the appeal of standardized tests, claiming that they are only a temporary solution to the urgency of accountability. However, Meaghan and Casa recognize that standardized tests are an inexpensive and quick method for ranking students.

Rice and Walsh, in “Equity at Risk: The Problem with State and Federal

Education Reform Efforts,” also address the issue of standardized tests in the American context. Their argument is that governments at various levels are attempting to “even the playing field for all students” by creating a standard curriculum with standard tests. However, the US government has not been addressing equity issues in its culturally diverse education system (Rice and Walsh: 1996, 12). We can ask the same of Ontario’s reform proposals. Are these tests conducive to an environment made up of culturally and linguistically diverse people? Do these kinds of tests really measure what children are learning? Is every student going to get the same opportunity to learn the required skills needed to attain pre-established standards? Rice and Walsh argue that “education reform as it is being conceived and practised at local, state, and federal levels suggests a re-forming of more of the same; the policies and practices that have systematically denied a “quality” education to linguistic and racial minorities in the US schools are neither the subject or the focus” (Rice and Walsh: 1996, 18). We can make a similar argument for Ontario. Although education reform has occurred elsewhere, is there any evidence that the reforms have worked? The only evidence lies with international and interprovincial testing. With the methodological issues surrounding these tests, can we confidently attribute improvement in educational outcomes only to structural changes?

Finally, we return to some of the arguments presented earlier in this paper concerning school board financing and education governance. The Ministry argues that school board spending is out of control. However, we have seen that this is not the case and education spending accounts for very little of Ontario’s budget. However,

because school board spending has been reconceptualized in this manner, the government argues that taxpayers need to be protected from intolerable raises in property taxes by school boards. However, we have seen that school board tax increases have not been “outrageous” or without cause. We have also examined evidence for the need to change educational governance and we have looked at the potential consequences these changes will have.

However, as we can see, these arguments are not new and there are at least two distinct sides for each argument. As of yet, there has been a lack of systematic assessment of school curriculum, school outcomes and the impact of educational restructuring in Ontario and Canada. Thus, it is actually difficult to assess what is really going on. However, it is less difficult to examine the possible effects Ontario's new education restructuring will have on students and teachers based on our theoretical and empirical knowledge gained so far.

CONCLUSION

The question central to this thesis was what impact does neo-liberal ideology have on the organizational aspects of secondary education in Ontario? To answer this question, I examined how legitimized power relations create an environment for the normalization of knowledge attainment within the secondary school system in Ontario. Specifically, I examined the relationship between the Education Improvement Commission and the Ministry of Education and Training, and how this relationship has established centralized control over Ontario's education system is legitimized. Further, I have shown that the Ministry's reforms have effected how learning happens. The Ministry's reforms seek a standardization of education and in consequence, it needs to establish mechanisms to sustain this standard and to correct deviations. Such mechanisms include the EIC, standard tests and curriculum. The thesis has examined how the neo-liberal ideology of the current Conservative government in Ontario is reflected in the *Fewer School Boards Act*, and the *Education Quality Improvement Act*. The effects of neo-liberal ideology on the organization of the public secondary education system, and the potential consequences of this ideological influence on secondary education in Ontario have been examined.

To understand how neo-liberal ideology and discourse affects the organizational aspects of public secondary schooling in Ontario, a number of arguments were made. I argued that the *Fewer School Boards Act*, the *Education Quality Improvement Act*, and the discourses surrounding these Acts, establish education within a context of crisis. State rhetoric on education reform, couched within the context of educational crisis,

establishes education as a commodity. As a result, these Acts, and their surrounding discourses, establish actors within the educational institution as producers and distributors of knowledge. Finally, this re-definition of roles and goals for knowledge production establishes a normalization and standardization of knowledge attainment subject to industrial classification of "worth."

To support these contentions, I had not only to examine the text of the *Fewer School Boards Act*, 1997 and the *Education Quality Improvement Act*, 1997, but also to move beyond this text. It was important to explore the meaning of these Acts for their authors and for those affected by the implementation of the Acts. Consequently, I had to move beyond the government's reform package to examine the issues and debates underlying, and surrounding, the *Fewer School Boards Act*, 1997 and the *Education Quality Improvement Act*, 1997.

Due to restraints imposed on the research by the recent nature of the changes it studies, the research is theoretically based. There has been no quantitative or qualitative work done on Ontario's recent reforms. Thus, this thesis contributes to future research by acknowledging where gaps in information occur, where the potential exists for new and dynamic qualitative and quantitative research, and by laying theoretical groundwork to place future research in context.

However, the events happening in education in Ontario today are not unique. Similar events have taken place in other countries, other jurisdictions in Canada, and at different levels of educational institutions in Ontario. Thus, this research pooled much of the information and knowledge that has been gained through other work done on

education restructuring and applied it to the context of the secondary school system.

As stated throughout this thesis, policy is more than a reflection of current socio-economic or political ideology, although it is inherently political. Policy also develops certain power dynamics. It is an active text which changes the “space” policy actors have to work with. Under this framework, this thesis presents an investigation into policy working as text, discourses, and action. Specifically, this thesis examined recent changes to education policy in Ontario regarding secondary schools, and tried to learn how policy reflects power and normalization in the attainment of knowledge. To do this I first looked at what was in the two education reform Acts. Then I looked at what neo-liberal ideology was and how that ideology was reflected in both Acts.

We saw that neo-liberal ideology was very much against state interference with personal rights. We also saw a distinction between public and private realms and an interest in a market-driven economy. In its current education reform policies, the Conservative government gives the appearance of little state intervention, especially by handing over a great deal of responsibility for education governance to the EIC. This works to keep the appearance of minimal interference thus justifying their ideological framework. At the same time this action gives the government a great deal of control over education. On one hand, the EIC is, for all intense and purposes, an extension of the government and because of its role in education governance, the EIC is an example of state regulation and control. At the same time, because the Ministry has established the education system as out of control and unable to sustain itself because it is such a “drain” on Ontario's economy, such state interference is justifiable. This

position is further justified by appealing to the self-interest, rationality and efficiency, of taxpayers. By including them as having a vested interest in the improvement of the education system, the government legitimizes its position as the “one best method” for improvement with the long range forecast of improving the socio-economic conditions in Ontario as a whole.

However, this presents a first step toward the possibility of the privatization of education in Ontario and thus contributing to the redefinition of the public and private worlds. This goal of privatizing state affairs has been stated throughout the Conservative government's term. In fact the Ministry of Finance has stated that government spending could be reduced by allowing the private sector to assume some government responsibility (Ministry of Finance: 1997, 1). The inclusion of non-instructional teaching staff, and the push for technology in the classroom potentially creates private markets centred on education and new tenders for curriculum packages. The market mentality which is pervasive throughout the government's rhetoric surrounding education creates a competition for schools to produce the best “product” or students. As education has been placed within a discourse of crisis, this competition can easily open up between publicly funded and privately owned educational institutions. Consequently, as other jurisdictions in Canada have seen, this can lead to a two-tiered system or even voucher systems.

Speaking of rhetorical devices used to place education within a crisis situation, we can turn to management theory and see how neo-liberal ideology, reflected in education policy establishes “new rules” for teachers and students. Further, links with

the corporate world change many goals for education, further changing the “space” education actors have to work with. Stemming from this, we see an array of rhetorical devices that are used to frame and justify the changes to the “rules of the game.”

As I have just stated, education is placed within a discourse of crisis, particularly referring to skills and school spending. Further, words such as quality, relevance and excellence are used to reflect a “product” that is somehow defective. This adds fuel to the education crisis. However, we have seen evidence that suggests these claims of crisis are not as evident as they might appear. Further, we have seen that many of the arguments the Ministry uses as evidence for these needed changes are unfounded, or at least only partially founded.

What this all leads to, is an institutionalized construction of power with the ability to shape what knowledge is produced and how it is produced. This then has far reaching implications beyond simply students choosing to continue on in academia or pursue work after graduating from high school. This is in fact, a distinct intrusion into the very nature of Ontario’s social system.

This thesis does not suggest that any change in education, or how it is organized, is inherently “bad.” However, we really need to examine under what circumstances change is taking place. Are we changing how education is organized simply for the sake of change? Are we sure that the potential outcomes of this change, which will impact the labour market and related social institutions are ones which are justifiable? Additionally, we need to be aware of the implications of this change for future governments, and what doors this opens. Perhaps this current government will

not pursue the privatization of education. However, they have set up the framework for this to become possible.

Returning to the original question of this thesis, we see that neo-liberal ideology has profound implications for the way education is organized. I have shown how legitimized power can institutionalize and standardize the way knowledge is produced and disseminated. Consequently we are seeing profound changes in social relations in Ontario. Seeing these changes in education unfold, the rhetoric that has come out of educational restructuring and exploring the debates within these changes has been an enlightening experience. These revelations can only serve to enlighten our understanding of how political ideology and social structure can change the way in which social institutions operate and the purposes they serve.

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