

Ontario's Curriculum for Individuals with Disabilities: A Textual Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the disability discourses present in Ontario elementary schools curriculum. The study used a critical social analysis perspective to employ a textual discourse analysis on the Planning [title of subject] Programs for Students with Special Education Needs (PPSEN) section of the curriculum. The present study utilized Parker's (1992) seven criteria for distinguishing discourses and discovered five main discourses; Independent, dependent, legal, scientific and agency discourses. The second step to this research was the placement and discussion of these five discourses on three diverse texts, Paulo Freire's (2008) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, *Psychiatry Inside Out*, Selected writings of Franco Basaglia, written by Scheper-Huges and Lovell (1987) and Aronowitz and Giroux's (1985) *Education Under Siege: The Conservative, Liberal and Radical Debate over Schooling*. These unique perspectives were used as methods of analysis tools to further analyze the dominate disability discourses. The texts provided textual support in three major areas; dialectics, critical education and structural conditions of power and language of traditional roles and responsibilities. The findings and discussions presented in this project contain significant implications for anyone involved with students with disabilities in any education system.

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Literature Review

Disabilities in Ontario Schools

“From grade school on, we are all encouraged to cross the threshold of the classroom believing that we are entering a democratic space – a free zone where the desire to study and learn makes us all equal” (Hooks, 1994, p. 142). However, for approximately 290,800 students who receive special education services in Ontario, (Bennett, Dworet & Zahos, 2008) a free and equal environment is not always available. In 2008, the Ontario education system spent over 1.8 billion dollars on special needs education which includes resource teachers, new technology, transportation, building foundation accommodations, program enhancements and many other grant opportunities for individuals with disabilities (Ministry of Education, 2008). Although this type of funding and support may seem like a strong system, there is a complexity of services for individuals with disabilities. Through debates and research, surrounding political and philosophical perspectives and varying disability paradigms in research and practice, Bennett, Dworet and Zahos (2008) argue that inconsistent methods of supports are provided throughout the province of Ontario. As a result, numerous students are not being adequately supported in the province due to problematic identification, funding processes, outcome measures implemented in determining success, as well as students falling through the cracks and not receiving the necessary support (Aronowitz, & Giroux, 1985; Dudley-Marling, 2001; Ryndak, & Alper, 1996). Furthermore, the ongoing debates within research hinder the special needs field in education in

taking significant steps towards successful reforms.¹ Over the past fifty years, the transformations in the field of special needs in Ontario have been extremely significant, however it is imperative to continually challenge and strive for a more comprehensive system in order to further support everyone in the education field.

For the purposes of this paper, the term disabilities will refer to the definition provide by the Ontario Ministry of Education. According to the Standard for School Boards' Special Education Plans, (SSBSEP) Ontario school boards use the term exceptionalities to describe individuals who are gifted or with disabilities (Ministry of Education, 2000). Specifically, these schools utilize the definition of exceptional pupils as, "a pupil who's behavioural, communicational, intellectual, physical or multiple exceptionalities are such that he or she is considered to need placement in a special education program by a committee" (Ministry of Education, 2000, p.32). These definitions are broken down into detailed statements representing each category of the definition: behavioural, communicational, intellectual, physical and multiple exceptionalities.

In order to fully comprehend the challenges, successes and drawbacks of the current state of disabilities within the province of Ontario, this project will analyze main educational documents provided by the ministry and offer an inside perspective of their constructions of disabilities. It is acknowledged that there are numerous supplementary and supportive documents that provide teachers and resource teachers with tools to support these individuals. However, one of the main issues surrounding support in the school system is the main teaching tool document that all the supplementary tools are focused upon, the curriculum.² Although each supplementary tool is

¹ I am thinking here of the significant inconclusive debates surrounding, placement of inclusive or separated classrooms, whether or not identification the most appropriate way to determine if a student is in need of support and the effectiveness of the IEP system as cited by Poplin (2001) and by Reid and Valle (2001).

² It is acknowledged that issues such as the hidden curriculum or the implementation of the curriculum through teachers are important elements in supporting individuals with disabilities within the school system. However, these issues could be analyzed in future research projects.

extremely significant to the learning environment and thus the student's education, the major debates and controversy's highlighted in disability research focuses upon questions surrounding obtaining knowledge, implementation of skills, teaching methods and inclusive education, all of which is contained in the base element of curriculum. Currently there is a gap in disability research that focuses on the concepts and constructions of disabilities provided by the Ministry of Education through the curriculum.

Ontario's Ministry of Education's Curriculum

According to the Ministry of Education (2009), curriculum is defined as,

What students are taught in Ontario public schools. The curriculum details the knowledge and skills that students are expected to develop in each subject at each grade level. By developing and publishing curriculum documents for use by all Ontario teachers, the Ministry of Education sets standards for the entire province" (Ministry of Education, 2009, p.1).

Ontario's curriculum is based upon an expectation curriculum model, also known as the objective curriculum model (Rose, 2007). Every subject that is taught in Ontario contains a curriculum document that outlines in specific detail the Ministry of Education's expectations per grade and further per overall concepts. These expectations highlight the knowledge and skills required of the students and provide supportive information about the ways in which students are expected to demonstrate their learning, how deeply they will explore concepts, what level of complexity they will perform procedures, and the processes they will learn and apply throughout the grade (Ministry of Education, 2005).

These expectations are broken down into two major categories: overall expectations and specific expectations. The overall expectations are main concepts and skills that the students

must comprehend and demonstrate by the end of the school year. For example, by the end of grade two, the student should be able to, “estimate, measure, and record length, perimeter, area, mass, capacity, time, and temperature, using non-standard units and standard units” (Ministry of Education, 2005, p.45). Also they should be able, “to compare, describe, and order objects, using attributes measured in non-standard units and standard units” (Ministry of Education, 2005, p.45).

The specific expectations outline in detail the previously mentioned knowledge and skills. This section helps to support teachers in their planning and executing of curriculum related activities to foster the students learning of the specific topic. For example, the grade two math class will be learning how to, “estimate and measure length, height, and distance, using standard units (i.e., centimeter, meter) and non-standard units” (Ministry of Education, 2005, p.45).

The Ontario curriculum documents contain more than just what the students are expected to learn. It discusses the role and responsibilities of everyone involved in the learning process, the specific program as a whole, some of the overall processes (such as in math, how to problem solve) which are expected to be taught throughout each lesson, support for teachers including assessment tools, planning for exceptional students and ESL students and how to use technology within the program (Ministry of Education, 2005). These sections are unique per subject since the expectations, supports and concepts will be different for each school subject. For example, the health and safety section for math is extremely limited in comparison to the health and physical education curriculum.

Curriculum for Individuals with Disabilities

In order to support individuals with disabilities, the curriculum contains a section labeled, Planning [title of subject] Programs for Students with Special Education Needs, here on after referred to as PPSSSEN (Ministry of Education, 2005). Within this section, individuals with disabilities have three options to follow in order to support their learning: no accommodations or modifications, accommodations only, or modified expectations with the possibility of accommodations. The most significant aspect of this section is the reference to individual education plans (IEP's). An IEP is a formal plan outlining an individual's educational program that is based on assessments of the student's strengths and needs which affect the student's ability to learn and display their learning (Ministry of Education, 2004). The curriculum claims that if a student requires accommodations or modified expectations, then this change from the curriculum must be recorded in the student's personal IEP. Through these IEP's there is a large variety of teaching methods, physical supports, in and out of school resources and other support programs that determine the personal nature of each and every plan.

Although there are numerous and varied supports for individuals with disabilities within the Ontario Education system, the majority of these supports are put in place in order to support these students in learning the outlined curriculum. Therefore, the curriculum provided for all students is the same curriculum expected of those with disabilities with accommodations or modified expectations attached.

Curriculum Discourses and Disabilities

Schools and disabilities (specifically LD), according to Reid and Valle (2001), are mutually defining and structurally aligned since the meaning of disabilities is closely tied to the meaning of schooling. They claim that the two discourses are connecting and mutually defining

concepts (Reid and Valle, 2001). Furthermore, Parker (1992) suggests that discourses support, reinforce and reproduce the structure of institutions. It will be argued here that to critically analyze the relationship between structure and meanings assigned to disability through the curriculum is to reveal the discursive practices that both conceptualize individuals with disabilities in the education system and to determine the effect of these educational discourses. Therefore, by using the curriculum as a primary text provided directly from the administration of the education system, it could be argued that the discourses present in the curriculum reflect conscious and unconscious discourses of education reinforced through the expectation curriculum model.

It should be noted that according to Foucault, (1972) individuals and groups are not fully determined by any discourse since humans have the ability to resist any discourse, thereby expanding, challenging, or otherwise reformulating it. Thus, constructions and discourses of disabilities are in a constant state of re-appraisal and re-working based upon the methods and analysis processes deployed (Macleod, 2008). Fairclough and Burman define discourses as outlined in Macleod (2008) as, “a form of social practice... socially organized frameworks of meaning that define categories and specify domains of what can be said and done” (p.5).

Fairclough (1995) notes that through the diverse definitions available in academic literature, a few main underlying assumptions are present when discussing discourse. All forms of discourse contain elements of language, ideology and power (Fairclough, 1995). The process of how “truth” or “reality” is formulated within a society could be seen through these assumptions and it is argued that discourses cluster around culturally available understandings as to what constitutes the truth of a topic (Macleod, 2008). Ontario's education system is one method of promoting and reinforcing language, ideology and power since discourses are created

through active policy and curriculum changes (or as the school boards call them “reforms”)
(Ryndak & Alper, 1996).

The field of disabilities is a large complex area of research, diagnosis and practice with many varying perspectives and paradigms. This creates enormous amounts of discourses related to the field with what I would argue are inconsistent theoretical assumptions attached. However, Poplin (1988) outlines four main discourses that discuss major historical models, theories and changing paradigms present in the fields of learning disabilities and disabilities as a whole. For our purposes, highlighting the medical model of the late 1940's and 1950's, the psychological process model of the 1960's, the behavioural model of the 1970's and the cognitive/ learning strategy model of the 1980's, will support some of the main historical discourses which have significantly affected today's special needs education system.

The medical model. Arriving in the late 40's early 50's, the medical model was the most predominate paradigm in the field of mental retardation. This model's main contribution to the disability field is the transformation from generalizing all individuals who did not function correctly in society to deciphering individuals who were mentally retarded. This process began to distinguish between exogenous and endogenous mental retardation. There was a prominence of testing and treating of neurological symptoms. Near the end of the 50's, test such as the Wechsler Intelligence test began to read disability through a neurological perspective and EEG's became important in assessments as they could help to distinguished a small variety of disabilities. Medication was frequently administered based on the results of the soft neurological tests. Instruction and assessments did not occur in schools, but in doctor's offices and hospitals with a focus on learning of basic skills.

Although Poplin (1988) argues that the public schools did not attach themselves to this model directly, the emphasis socially upon using this version of disabilities affected many educational affiliations, i.e. research and parental meetings. One of the major assumptions of this model was the hope that a “cure” could be found for these children through medication similar to polio and PKU. The medical model failed at further determining the differences and variations of disabilities in order to support the individuals more specifically. Further, another drawback was that the model’s research and diagnosis processes designed to improve functioning in the community were implemented in clinical classrooms and structured, sterile environments resembling a hospital. Although significant, this method failed to support students and research from school and classroom settings.

The psychological process model. With the evidence rising against the failure of the medical model in the 1960’s, public schools began to take on more responsibility for supporting these students. This switch resulted in changing the support from the doctor’s office to the psychologist’s office and public schools allowing individuals with minimal brain dysfunction to be a part of the education process. Although medication was still used, the learning process focused on teaching, “assumed prerequisites to academic learning” (p.391) with the assumption that this style of training would then reflect overall academic learning. Similar to the medical model, Poplin (1988) argues that the psychological model’s assumptions did not successfully allow students to be diagnosed appropriately as it was unable to determine some of the more complex brain dysfunctions resulting in failing tests, performances and social skills. Furthermore, the psychological model was unable to prove an increase in performance on many academic tasks with an acceptable generalization (Poplin, 1988).

The behavioural model. In the 1970's, a new disability discourse arose in which educators were directed to teach their students with disabilities solely on academic and behavioural necessity in order to allow the students success within the classroom. Thus, academic and behavioural performance became essential to determining a student's achievement. Criterion-referenced tests were predominantly used in diagnosis and measurement of academic success. Poplin (1988) argues that the major goal of the 70's was to have successful integration of individuals with disabilities in the regular classroom. Although this model did further the diagnostic processes and focus upon school success, similar to the previous models, the longevity and generalization were not significant (Poplin, 1988).

The cognitive/learning strategy model. One of the more recent educational disability discourse models is the cognitive and learning strategy model that became widely used in the 1980's (Poplin, 1988). This model is based on the assumption that teachers must comprehend how the students know what they know and teach them strategies based upon their thinking processes. The model suggests that by supporting the student's knowledge processes, the students will be able to transfer these skills to other areas of learning. Poplin (1988) argues that this model involves teaching skills training and social problem solving. However, this model was less successful in the classrooms than the behavioural model and thus used less often (Poplin, 1988). Similar to the other three models, this process could not generalize to all students with varying and similar disabilities. Poplin (1988) argues that this model was the least successful since it borrowed many underlying assumptions of previous failed models.

There are many disability discourses present within the education system and even more within the special education field for example, invisibility, normality, agency, broken, dis-abled body and diversity to list a few (Bower, & Tuffin, 2002; Leathwood, 2006; Blackmore, 2006;

Charlton, 2006). However, all the previously mentioned discourse models reinforce the normative model of success in which typical behaviour and levels of achievement and success are strived for and expected of all students. It has been argued that this learning and development process is not educationally supportive for individuals with disabilities (Bennett, Dworet & Zahos, 2008). Although these models are not specifically utilized today, it is argued that their underlying assumptions and methods are still used and supported in Ontario's curriculum.

Discourse of Oppression in the Education and Disability Fields

Parker (1992) suggests one perspective on discursive practices refers to discourses that reproduce the structure of institutions (Parker, 1992). The institution of education, for example, provides many reinforcing discourses of power, ideology and hegemony. Therefore, Charlton (2006) argues that schooling contains a power imbalance in which students are defined as an oppressed group. He defines oppression as, “a phenomenon in which relations between people and between groups are experienced in terms of domination and subordination, superiority and inferiority” (p.222). Charlton (2006) claims that the education system has two primary political functions. The first is to teach compliance to power relations operating in the system where power comes from above with little innovation or flexibility. The second is to teach students about the work force and reinforce their acquiescence with its power imbalance. Charlton (2006) further suggests that there is an existing connection between ideology and hegemony and students with disabilities. Through labelling, power symbols, structure (for example segregation and pull-out programs), curriculum, testing and evaluation, school culture and discipline, students with disabilities are produced as oppressed since they are controlled and consistently reinforced in their status in society as “other” (Charlton, 2006).

For the purposes of this paper, the term “other or othered” will refer to the definition provided by Kumashiro (2000), “refer[s] to those groups that are traditionally marginalized in society, i.e., that are *other* than the norm,” (p.26). When the term othered or oppressed individuals is used, although the context may extend to other marginalized groups, i.e., students of colour, student who are perceived to be or are queer etc, for the purposes of this paper it will refer to students with disabilities.

In order to change the othering that occurs within the education system, it might be useful to determine specifically how and where oppression is being distributed. Basaglia (1987) claims that any contemporary institution is a social arrangement in which individuals and groups with power discipline, punish and control those without power. Thus, these individuals without control are submerged into accepting their roles as “objects of violence” (p.54).

Basaglia argues that the solution for radically altering and changing the method of support for individuals in institutions, is a long overdue, “calling into question the relations of power and violence” that exists within the disability field (Basaglia, 1987, p.54). This calling into question is similar to Freire’s (2008) argument for liberation as a praxis. Freire (2008) explains that in order to free individuals who have been oppressed by power, action combined with reflection will transform the current oppressive state (p.79). Therefore, the calling into question the Ontario curriculum’s constructions of disabilities through a power and violence lens will allow for a reflection upon the current state of the system.

Critical Disability, Critical Pedagogy and Radical Oppressive Literature

The focus of this research project is to determine discourses and discursive practices that are present in Ontario’s curriculum documents. This process makes the assumption that language is an essential component of any social network (Fairclough, 1995). Any text becomes

dialectically interconnected with other elements of social life, thus social analysis is obligated to consider the element of language (Fairclough, 1995). Therefore, employing a textual analysis will allow for a strong and effective discourse analysis to occur. According to Fairclough, (1995) text analysis is an essential part of discourse analysis since it is imperative to analyze the texts to determine the discourses within them. Thus, this research project will be employing the use of critical pedagogy, critical disability and radical oppressive texts to dialectically open up new relationships with the current discourses present in the curriculum.

Utilizing the texts. From radical literature that challenges oppression, the primary text that will be used to derive some instrumental tools is Paulo Freire's (2008) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. This text contains suggestions for methodologies for educational settings, liberation, discussions and dialectical discourses. The second text written by Scheper-Huges and Lovell (1987) entitled *Psychiatry Inside Out, Selected writings of Franco Basaglia*, focuses upon a critical disability perspective. Basaglia's work reflects the contradictions and methods he found while working in an asylum through a psychiatrists perspective in Italy in the 70's and 80's. Finally, the main critical pedagogy tools will be taken from Aronowitz and Giroux's (1985) *Education Under Siege: The Conservative, Liberal and Radical Debate over Schooling*. This literature provides critical education tools from political backgrounds, critical thinking discourses and highlights from some of the main problematic features of the current education system.

Although these texts were written in different time frames, political and geographical climates and with authors from varied educational and political perspectives, the texts discuss similar themes that allow for multiple tools on specific topics. These include; Dialectical

methods of liberation, critical education and structural conditions of power and language of traditional roles and responsibilities.

Dialectical methods of liberation. One of the significant contributors to the concept of dialectics is Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. In attempt to explain the process of truth and reality, Hegel's theory claims there is a thesis, which is the perfect ideal form of an object, and an anti-thesis, which is the imperfect form (Lukács, 1971). In an attempt to create the thesis from the anti-thesis, Hegel claims that a synthesis is produced which then becomes the new anti-thesis (Lukács, 1971). However, Karl Marx argues Hegel's conception of truth through dialectics is incorrect and claims, "the ideal is nothing else but the material world reflected by the human mind and translated into forms of thought" (Marx & Engels, 1885, p.1). Marx uses the term dialectical materialism to explain the process of understanding truth. He states that scientific dialectical concepts should reflect the real world rather than Hegel's idealist constructions (Lukács, 1971). Therefore with dialectical materialism, the synthesis does not fall into the anti-thesis as with Hegel's theory, instead the synthesis turns into the new thesis that produces a new anti-thesis (Lukács, 1971). All things, according to Marx, contain within themselves internal dialectical contradictions, which are the main cause of change, motion and development in the world (Sherman, 1976).

This tool of dialectical materialism becomes evident in radical oppressive, critical disability and critical pedagogy literature. It is used in order to open up and relate diverse constructions. Although used in various forms and methods, the dialectical discourses provide researchers and educationalists unique opportunities for critical analysis.

Freire's (2008) work in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* uses dialogical and antialogical matrices in order to argue for appropriate theories of cultural action for individuals who are

oppressed. He explains in order to have a cultural revolution with the people and not for the people, the revolution must consist of dialogical cultural action. This process is created through a true praxis in which the status of humans as objects is forgotten and the replacement with historical subjects becomes necessary (Freire, 2008). The dialogical process becomes possible through the dialogical theory of action where subjects meet in cooperation in order to transform the current oppressed situations. Through cooperation, the dialogical process allows the subjects to analyze their reality in the form of a proposed problem that challenges them dialectically and critically through discussing solutions. Freire (2008) argues this type of dialogue should be present within the education system, “Without dialogue there is no communication, and without communication there can be no true education” (p. 92-93). Thus, dialogical cultural action is a tool that can be used to deconstruct oppression present in the curriculum.

Similar to Freire's perspective on implementing dialogical elements into the curriculum, *Psychiatry Inside Out* applies a dialectical process to the community as a whole. Through a dialectical method, Basaglia's (1987) work proposed a series of paradoxes to reveal the contradictions underlying traditional practices and logic, “When you point out contradictions you are opening up a crack” (p. 17). He suggests that the dialectical process is able to confront contradictions presented within any institution. The Italian assemblea³ was an opportunity for these contradictions to be dialectically expressed that became a collective opportunity for responsibility.⁴

³ The assemblea was a meeting that was open to the doctors, nurses, patients and the public. It was location for patients who have been voiceless to voice their opinions, confrontations and expressions. From the assemblea emerged new relationships between patient and doctors, an open door policy between the hospital and the community and the beginning of new methods of psychiatry.

⁴ Discussions of the assemblea will be conceptualized through an approach which focuses upon the process and interconnections between individuals and not the final solution of the community of psychiatry.

Basaglia (1987) further discusses his dialectical analysis by arguing the “norm” is created by the dominant class and reinforced by the collective society. Therefore an individual’s subjectivity is limited by the subjectivity of the other. Thus, in order to alter this process, he suggests having a dialectical relationship between the organic body and the social body. The organic body refers to the subject who responds organically to the needs of the individual and the group, whereas the social body represents the needs of social structures reflecting upon their own organization and needs (Basaglia, 1987). The dialectical process in this instance requires reflections between the oppressed individual’s organic self and group self.

Finally, Aronowitz and Giroux (1985) link the shifting of dialectical methods in the 21st century with the changing of critical thinking in school settings. They argue that in North America, a new “visual culture” has risen and has been increasingly replacing traditional forms of communication like verbal and written. As this culture becomes progressively more accepted, the authors claim that there is a risk of losing traditional liberal critical thinking processes which they argue is a fundamental aspect of citizenry. This shift would also have a large impact on democratic social, cultural and political forms due to the advancement of technology and the transformation of the school system. Thus, education institutions become opportunities for change in which Aronowitz and Giroux (1985) assert, through dialectical and written engagement in critical interrogation of mass culture, a reconstruction of critical thinking could emerge within the school system.

Critical education. One main component of the dialectical, according to Aronowitz and Giroux (1985), is the utilization of critical elements such as critical thinking, critical analysis and critical dialectics. They claim that these three areas are inadequately represented within the education system. Although the term “critical thinking” has not been entirely removed from the

curriculum discourse, they argue that it is not a major concept influencing the curriculum. Freire (2008) furthers the debate by claiming true dialectic may only occur when there is more than one option. Only when there is an alternative can critical dialects appear. This concept is present in Aronowitz and Giroux's (1985) work when they defend the significance of critical thinking within the education system,

Critical education remembers that students, especially working-class and third world kids, have been voiceless in this culture ... Voicelessness presupposes powerlessness, but it does not follow that learning environment of schools may either abdicate to students or impose standards from without. If the objective of education is to empower students intellectually and, to some extent emotionally, their voice must receive validation (p.66).

Therefore, Aronowitz and Giroux's (1985) suggest that education systems take into consideration the history of voicelessness when curriculum reforms are being created.

The absence of critical thinking within the education system is a concern highlighted in Freire's (2008) work. He claims that appropriate dialogue between oppressed and oppressors cannot exist until the individuals engage in critical thinking, which he describes as;

Thinking which discerns an indivisible solidarity between the world and the people and admits of no dichotomy between them—thinking which perceives reality as process, as transformation, rather than as a static entity—thinking which does not separate itself from action, but constantly immerse itself in temporality without fear of the risks involved (p. 92).

Critical thinking from Freire's (2008) perspective, requires the person attempting to analyze the phenomena to understand both the people who are involved and the reality in which they are

immersed. Thematic investigation becomes a common method in achieving this search for reality where the research is based on “reciprocity of action” where teacher-student and students-teachers combine learning and discussions together (p.107). He continues to argue that this research process must not be mechanical, instead it is required that this method include a concern for relationships between and within themes, then proposing these themes as problems and finally awareness for their historical-cultural context (Freire, 2008).

Freire's (2008) work emphasizes the critical research process as the beginning point for a revised educational program that he outlines as, “problem-posing education” (p.79). This method of learning proposes the problems of humans with their relationship to the world. It focuses on acts of cognition where everyone educates themselves and each other through dialectical interactions. This educational program is bidirectional in which everyone brings essential elements to the learning process (Freire, 2008). Problem-posing education is Freire's (2008) solution to traditional educational programs (what he calls the banking concept of education) that does not allow for consciousness and critical thought to be the core of the teaching methods. The banking concept of education focuses on memorization, obedience and regurgitation. Freire (2008) explains this traditional process through students being containers in which knowledge is deposited from teachers. This system resists teaching students the reality of their actual situations or any creativity in transforming that situation. By educating students through the problem-posing education style, students and teachers are able to continually engage in analysis and re-analysis of the knowledge. By allowing students to critically engage in the material and through constantly challenging previously held assumptions, students become committed to the process of learning (Freire, 2008).

Similar to Freire's suggested methods on critical thinking within the education process, Basaglia (1987) highlights a radical method involving critical dialect to decrease institutional oppression. This process began with a daily meeting called "assemblea" in which a gathering of patients, doctors, nurses and community members met. The assemblea was a place for confrontation, expressions of personal views and discussion of issues involved in the community. For many individuals, this meeting was the first opportunity they had to express their opinions. Basaglia (1987) highlights a transformation from a location for personal expression to a location where political and collective action was discussed. In conjunction with the assemblea, Basaglia (1987) proposed paradoxes to reveal any underlying contradictions present within the institution. This process led to an "open door policy" in which individuals from the institution joined the community and the community was encouraged to enter the institution. These meetings turned the paradoxes and discussions into a community assemblea. Basaglia argued though opening up the institution dialectically, a new and unique community arose, "When these contradictions are dialectically confronted instead of ignored or covered up, and when the technique of finding scapegoats is dialectically discussed instead of accepted as inevitable, the community may be called therapeutic" (p.75). Thus a community of education was created in which individuals inside and out of the institution dialectically taught each other.

Structural conditions of power and language of traditional roles and responsibilities.

Methods of changing dialectical methods and critical thinking components of the education system are strongly suggested in the outlined literature. However, these major shifts would also produce alterations in the power and language structures currently present. Furthermore, these adaptations provide an opportunity to discuss dialectical contradictions that were highlighted in the texts through their use of dialectical theories and critical thinking processes.

A major problematic element affecting the education students are receiving, as discussed by Aronowitz and Giroux (1985) is the disempowerment of teachers. They argue that many of the suggested and implemented educational reforms appear to reduce the intellectual requirement of teachers into, “low level employees or civil servants” who follow direct orders from individuals higher on the hierarchy (i.e. experts and administration) (p.23). The traditional back-to-basics education system (education which solely focuses upon reading, writing and math skills, and traditional hierarchy is present in the classroom) supports this notion of rigidly following the curriculum requirements and expectations that are provided for the teachers by the administration. Additionally, this pedagogy drastically affects the type of knowledge as a method of reinforcing subordinate knowledge as a form of methodology, while teaching is technicized and standardized in order to reinforce knowledge as method of control. They argue that this educational practice removes teachers from the curricula production and critical thinking in order to support standardizing education.

Thus, Aronowitz and Giroux (1985) propose that in order to reconstruct the teacher's role within the school system, it is imperative to view teachers as intellectuals. This process would support a solution to the current disconnect between conceptualization, planning, implementation and execution of the curriculum. Aronowitz and Giroux (1985) suggest four types of intellectuals: the transformative intellectual, critical intellectuals, accommodating intellectuals and hegemonic intellectuals. The transformative intellectual is emphasized as the best form of intellectual for the educational teacher since it suggest that the discourse of self-criticism be utilized in order to emphasise a critical pedagogy while illuminating the links and relationships to students and the greater society.

Thus, education becomes an important process that operates through a dialectical relationship between individuals, groups, students and teachers (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985). Potentially this process enables new forms of structure and power within culture, social practices and communication to be simulated in the classroom and in society (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985).

Questioning and challenging the roles currently available within the education field is also present in Freire's (2008) work as he argues for new teacher-student relationships, "Man is not allowed to understand and transform the reality that encircles him when education is simply a method used to adapt him to this reality" (Freire, 2008, p.88). Freire suggests that people who are oppressed are forced to morph into a pre-existing reality of society instead of creating their own reality. In order for an individual to learn, understand and transform their reality, he argues for dialects to be created between teacher and students since words, actions and reflections support created realities. This concept highlighted by Freire (2008) suggests a radical transformation from the traditional roles and relationships present between teachers and students. He argues that within the banking concept of education, the student-teacher relationship is fundamentally a narrative in which the teachers are the narrating subject and the students are the listening objects. As highlighted above, the banking concept forces the students to mechanically memorize the teacher's narrated content. Freire (2008) acknowledges that this student-teacher educational relationship produces contradictions that simulate oppressive methods, "the teacher knows everything and the students know nothing...the teacher chooses the program content, and the students adapt to it...the teacher thinks and the students are thought about" (p.73). These reinforcing features of oppression in the banking concept of education is why Freire (2008) argues that the solution to this educational dilemma is not to forcefully integrate the students into the current structures of oppressive education, but to transform the structure so the students can

produce their own reality. Freire (2008) suggests that it is important to change the teacher-student relationship from “the teacher-of-the-students” to “teacher-student with student-teachers” (p.80). In this relationship the teacher is no longer the only one who teaches, as the students dialectically teach the teacher, which allows for a new concept of educational responsibility to arise. Through the new roles created by the new educational relationships, radical language and power dynamics will be produced which will begin to alter the state of traditional oppressive educational practices.

Freire (2008) extends this new dialogical relationship to the community and suggests using language that is familiar to the individual since it is important to integrate oneself into the life of the person you are attempting to communicate with. Therefore, the liberation of the oppressed cannot be achieved by the consumption of the existing ideas that circulate between people. Instead new ideas need to be constructed in order to transform them, “through the praxis and horizontal communication” (p.109).

Through Basaglia's (1987) work, a consistent emphasis on re-constructing dialogue between patients, doctors and community members is highlighted. He argued that a relationship with any individual must eliminate labels in which a person can be defined. Therefore, the relationship between two individuals is based upon who they are, not how they are traditionally constructed. Basaglia (1987) suggests a practical utopia in which new means of responding to the needs of the patients are created. This utopia consists of abolishing a difference between inside the asylum and out through redefining and re-socializing the institution through dialogue as previously outlined as the “assemblea”. However, this transformation of dialogue initially created conflict and uncertainty for both the workers and the patients. By bracketing traditional labels, clinicians were left without any language in which to work with. Similarly, many patients found it

extremely difficult to voice their opinions as they had never had a forum for discussion before. Basaglia (1987) recognized these limitations, however he argued that in order to re-define the patient, the asylum and psychiatry, an open dialogue that brackets traditional language in which producing subjects as individuals is the primary goal.⁵

Textual Perspective

Each of these texts will provide strong methodologies and tools that can be used in a critical analysis approach. The texts will be compared and analyzed against the curriculum's discourses based on the suggested methodologies. This process will allow a deeper exploration of the curriculum discourses as the texts will provide different perspectives. Finally, this project intends to investigate if the texts can present new approaches or challenges to the current curriculum which support the students with disabilities. By allowing the texts to be employed as a further critical analysis to the discourses analysis, the discourses presented will be more deeply examined.

Rational and Purpose

For the 290,800 students who receive special education services in Ontario, the focus of their support and services is to learn the traditional curriculum (Bennett, Dworet & Zahos, 2008). Thus, using the curriculum documents as the primary text will allow for an in-depth analysis of the current expectation model based curriculum. Furthermore, the literature on Ontario's curriculum with regards to disabilities is mainly based upon program evaluation research. Bennett, Dworet and Zahos (2008) argue that this style of research is most prominent due to the education systems emphasis on demonstrable outcome measures that are focused upon improving student's academic success. Additionally, the education system's emphasis on results,

⁵ Re-defining patients, students and disabilities is not what this research project is interested in. Instead, determining the elements that are working and are not working in today's society and discussing some potential possibilities and unique connections is where this project will be focusing.

end products and tangible measurable outcomes not only drives research, but also has a profound effect upon policy and teaching methods (Ryndak & Alper, 1996). Although research in Ontario's education for individuals with disabilities is limited, there is an even smaller amount of research that critically analysis's this population. Thus, this gap in the literature and the overwhelming amount of students requiring special needs services in Ontario provides an opportunity for a unique radical perspective to highlight some discursive practices.

Therefore, the proposed study aims to analyze the province of Ontario's curriculum by critically analyzing the dominate disability discourses that are present in Ontario's education system by beginning with the base measures through discourses of disabilities.

Thesis Statement and Justification

The current research study proposes to critically analyze the discourses, conceptions and support methods of behavioural, communicational, intellectual and physical disabilities in the Ontario elementary school curriculum. The first objective is to determine which disability discourses are present in the curriculum text. The second is to critically analyze the discourses in order to open up and create new relationships between the discourses from a critical perspective utilizing the previously mentioned critical pedagogy and critical disability texts. Therefore, the current study's research question is:

What can a textual discourse analysis of the Ontario elementary school curriculum with literature support from critical pedagogy and critical disabilities, do to inform our understanding of discourses of individuals with disabilities within the Ontario curriculum?

Methodology

Critical Analysis

Kincheloe and McLaren (2002) explain that in the 1960's, many academics were drawn to critical theory as it provided a method of freeing academic work from forms of social power. These researchers used critical theory's dialectical concern in combination with social constructs, "they came to view their disciplines as manifestations of the discourses and power relations of the social and historical contexts that produced them" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002, p.21). Today, it is challenging to define critical theory as there are a many different types of critical theories that continue to change and evolve through time. Critical social theory is concerned with issues of power and justice and the ways that, "the economy; matters of race, class, and gender; ideologies; discourse; education; religion and other social institutions; and cultural dynamics interact to construct a social system" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002, p.21). Critical social research starts from the life problems of social agents (individuals, groups or classes) that are oppressed by a form of social processes which they maintain and/or create, but do not control (Comstock, 1982). Thus, in this research study, the social agents are students with disabilities who are currently being oppressed by the current curriculum support system.

As a critical dialectical researcher, I am interested in beginning my investigation from the subjective understanding students with disabilities within the school system and those who objectify them within the schools. Thus, my first step in this research project is to acknowledge and further explore the discourses that Kincheloe and McLaren (2002) argue reproduce the social and historical contexts surrounding them. Secondly, I plan to explore these disability discourses further through the use of the aforementioned texts in order to integrate alternative perspectives and methods on the current disability support system.

Research Design

The aim of this research project is to open the current discourses surrounding disabilities in the Ontario elementary school curriculum. Therefore, the proposed study will be employing a textual discourse analysis. According to Denzin (1994), methodologically, deconstructionism⁶ is directly related to the analysis of texts. Furthermore, he argues that deconstruction of texts attempts to dismantle and expose, “the underlying meanings, biases and preconceptions that structure the way text conceptualizes its relation to what it describes” (Denzin, 1994 p.82).

According to Macleod (2002), when using discourses as your base structure for research, “there is no definitive method of discourse analysis [as it] is in a constant state of re-appraisal and re-working” (p.4). However, discourses themselves can be considered constructive since they describe the world but also are the method in which reality emerges (Macleod, 2002). Therefore, the proposed study aims to deconstruct these hegemonic and ideological constructions. By analysing discourses that are realized in text, I will explore the texts as a discourse that is about objects, contains subjects, is a coherent subject of meaning, refers to other discourses, reflects on its own way of speaking and is historically located. These goals will be completed through a discursive textual analysis as outlined by Parker (1992).

Measures. The primary mode of analysis will be Parker’s (1992) seven criteria for distinguishing discourses. His method outlines diverse levels of conceptions, theoretical frameworks and significant questions the researcher should be aware of throughout the research process. Parker’s (1992) criteria focus on a system of statements that could be useful in identifying and engaging in discourses. He cautions against employing these criteria sequentially and wholly as he suggests each text analysis will require unique interrelated use of the criteria.

⁶ While deconstructionism is primarily known as a postmodern methodology I am going to use critically to unpack the hegemonic and ideological formations of discourse in disability and pedagogy.

Parker's (1992) analysis method will enable this research project to develop a strong collection of textual data overseeing the current discourses within the curriculum. His method is as follows:

1. Discourses are realized in texts. He argues that this concept contains two preliminary steps. The first is treating the objects of study as text that are described, put into words. The second is to explore the implications.

2. Discourses are about objects and this step requires the researcher to work through two levels of objectification. The first acknowledges that objects are constituted through discourse. This level proposes that research talk about the language as if it were an object. The second level is where a discourse refers to itself or other discourses as if they were objects. He claims that language brings phenomena into being, and the method in which it is referenced, i.e. the simple use of a noun, gives that object a meaning or reality. Thus, Parker (1992) suggests the researcher to analyze what objects are referred to, and how they are being described.

3. Discourses contain subjects. Thus the researcher is coding in order to discuss how these discourses allow space for a specific type of self address. This process is done in either one of two ways, interactive positioning through one person positions another within a discourse, or through reflexive positioning where a person positions him/herself. More specifically, Parker (1992) suggests two major questions to look at to support these positioning. The first, what types of people are talked about in this discourse? Second, what can they say in the discourse, what could you say if you identified with them?

4. Discourses present a coherent system of meaning. Parker (1992) suggested employing culturally available understandings as to what constitutes a topic or theme, while comprehending that different cultures will give different perspectives on the discourse. This step includes who benefits from the discourse and who does it oppress. The researcher should open up ways in

which the discourse creates a map of the world including ways of dealing with objections to that perspective. Further, working out how a text, using the discourse, would deal with objections to the terminology should be included.

5. A discourse refers to other discourses through the systematic description of a discourse that includes a systematic articulation with other discourses. Therefore, Parker (1992) proposes two steps for analysis. The first is to reflect upon contrasting ways of speaking about the discourses and the different objects they are associated with. Secondly, he suggests identifying points where these discourses overlap and where they look similar in different ways.

6. Discourse reflects on its own a way of speaking. This section uses language to discuss specific terms used within the discourse as well as terms not present. Parker (1992) suggests that the analysis could refer to other texts in order to extend and elaborate on the discourse. This process requires a reflection upon the terms used to describe the discourse.

7. That discourses are historically located is the last criterion. A discourse is not timeless, it is created and supported through discourses of the past. Thus this section analyzes limits and transformations of the discourse through analysis of where and how the discourses emerged. Further, a description of how the discourses have transformed over time.

The secondary modes of analysis, as suggested by Parker (1992), recommends the researcher to incorporate three more aspects of a discourse in order to further address discourses; institutions, power and ideology.

1. Discourses support institutions. Parker (1992) argues that the utilization of a discourse is also often a practice which reproduces the material basis of the institution. Thus, he claims that researchers should identify the institutions that are reinforced and identify the institutions that are subverted when the discourses is used.

2. Discourses reproduce power relations. Discourses produce and reduce power relations, thus analysing ways in which people gain and lose from the employment of the discourse should be discussed. Also, it is important to analyze who would want to and who does promote this discourse.

3. Discourses have ideological effects. Finally, Parker (1992) claims that ideology tends to be discussed incorrectly as an object or evaluated for its content. He provides an alternative in which ideology could be perceived as a set of relationships and effects, which should be used to describe relationships at a particular place and historical period. Therefore, he suggests analyzing how a discourse connects with other discourses which endorse oppression and how the discourse allow dominant groups to tell their narratives about the past in order to justify the present.

Parkers (1992) method for distinguishing discourses provides this research project with a relevant research method for determining and deconstructing institutions, power and ideology present in the texts. For the purposes of this research project the following alterations were made to accommodate for the unique text.

Criteria 1: Parker (1992) makes reference to the researcher putting the text into words. However, the text for this project has already been placed into words from the Ministry of Education. Therefore, for this criterion this project will be analyzing from an outside perspective on language and text choice, instead of the suggested inside perspective.

Criteria 2: This section makes a suggestion to “talk about the talk as if it were an object” (Parker, 1992, p.9). Due to the text for this project not being a verbal, but a written document, this section will talk about the text as if it were an object.

Criteria 4: Parker (1992) suggests analyzing the texts from different cultural perspective in order to determine significant alterations in the discourses. However, since the focus of this

research project is to determine the discourses present in the Ontario curriculum, the focus will be upon that geographical area. It is acknowledged that due to the significant diversity present in Ontario, this section will require covering a variety of cultural, social economic status, environment and historical elements.

Criteria 5: This section will be completed last in the data collection process as the other criteria along with current discourse research will help to inform and support the discourses found in the text.

Criteria 6: This section requires a reflection of other texts to elaborate upon the discourse. As previously mentioned, this research project's main focus will be upon Aronowitz and Giroux's (1985) *Education under Siege*, work from Franco Basaglia, edited by Scheper-Hughes and Lovell (1987) *Psychiatry Inside Out*, and *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, written by Paulo Freire (2008). These three texts, along with other supplementary work will provide the second section of methodology for this project, which is elaborated upon below.

Criteria 7: In order to show the transition of the discourses, I will be using Poplin's (1988) four historical discourses. By placing these against the current text, I intend on discussing the current presence in the curriculum and how this may or may not affect the current discourses.

Procedure. The first step on the analysis process will be to determine the discourses and conceptions of disabilities provided by the Ontario curriculum. Parker's (1992) method outlined above will focus on highlighting the current discursive practices emphasised by in the curriculum along with supporting institutional, power and ideology influences. The data collection will follow Parker's (1992) method with the specific exceptions as outlined above through a thematic coding of discourses. The second process will be to use these discourses to provide a starting point to open up cracks and relationships in the curriculum through the use of three critical

disability, critical pedagogy and radical oppressive texts. Specifically, this section of data collection will focus upon Parker's (1992) sixth criteria: discourse reflects on its own a way of speaking. Through the discourses and power relations analyzed in the first step, along with the three main textual tools for analysis, this section intends on examining contradictions between the texts. Through the unique conceptions and theoretical suggestions, the texts on critical disabilities, critical pedagogy and radical oppression, could suggest unique perspectives on the traditional discursive practices of disabilities present in the curriculum.

Ethical Considerations

The proposed study does not involve research on humans and will not have any contact with participants. Therefore, there is no possibility of risk to participants ethically. However, there are many foreseeable benefits of this textual discourse analysis. The results of this section of the proposed study will benefit specific individuals within the disability community.

Similarly, the results will influence children and adolescence with disabilities, their parents, teachers and tutors by highlighting some problematic features of the current discourses of disabilities. Furthermore, the proposed study will benefit curriculum and educational policy by stressing the importance of creating new conceptions of disabilities. Finally, this section of the study will advance the current state of knowledge on this topic by deconstructing disabilities within Ontario by suggesting a radical shift in discourses.

Tools of Analysis

The study will be focusing on four major texts. The primary work will consist of all the primary curriculum documents provided to elementary teachers and schools. These texts will include all subjects; Mathematics, language, the arts, French as a second language, health and physical education, native languages, science and technology and social studies. More

specifically, most of the analysis will focus on the sections within the curriculum documents entitled, Planning [title of subject] Programs for Exceptional Students (Ministry of Education, 2005).

The second text which will be used in the analysis portion of the thesis will be from Aronowitz and Giroux's (1985) *Education Under Siege*. This critical pedagogy text will support the thesis through arguing for an increased amount of critical thinking within the education system, re-thinking the nature of the intellectual through roles and responsibilities and through supporting the claim that individuals with disabilities in the education system are oppressed through their lack of power. Aronowitz and Giroux's (1985) critical pedagogy perspective will provide a challenging perspective on the current education system.

The third tool of analysis will be literature from a critical disabilities perspective. More specifically, the study will be using the work from Franco Basaglia, edited by Scheper-Hughes and Lovell (1987). By using the text *Psychiatry Inside Out*, an analysis of the language presented in the curriculum will be able to be connected to the deconstruction of language barriers as discussed by Basaglia. Furthermore, as support for the authors political positioning, this text will be utilized to analysis the hierarchy that is present in traditional classrooms.

Finally, the last tool will be a text from a radical oppressive perspective; *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, written by Paulo Freire (2008). This text will enable the study to examine concepts from educational research from the perspective of people who are oppressed. It will focus on the dialogicity in order to support students with understanding and transforming their own reality. An analysis of the current education system by comparing it to Freire's banking concept of education will also be present.

Thus, these texts will provide this research project with a variety of unique and potentially contradicting perspectives which will enable a complex textual analysis of the discourses found in the curriculum.

Analysis and Discussion

Discourses Present in the PPSSSEN

Discourses are realized in texts and discourses are about objects. In order to discuss the discourses present in the text, Parker (1992) suggests focusing upon the objects of study (the students who require extra support) and the connotations placed upon these objects. The primary objects discussed in the PPSSSEN are the students who need supports (modifications and/or accommodations). These objects are written about from a third person perspective allowing the assumption that this work is not written for the students, "Classroom teachers are key educators for a student's literacy and numeracy development" (p.31). This narration is present throughout the entire text placing the student as the primary object. There are two major prepositions frequently used described the students, "to" and "for". For example, the text describes the teachers' role in planning the curriculum, "In planning science and technology programs for students with special education needs" (p.31). By using the terms "to" and "for" to dictate the relationship between the object (the student) and the action in the sentence, the emphasis of the student's role in the PPSSSEN is highlighted as dependence upon the teacher and helplessness as the students are restricted in their opportunities to support themselves.

While analyzing the objects, Parker (1992) proposes discussing the types of representations that appear in the text. This process produces a large variety of intercepting, supporting and contradicting perceptions of individuals with disabilities. Students as a flexible entity, is one of the major themes created through the PPSSSEN. Although the general conception

of modifications to the curriculum implies the PPSSSEN is the flexible and changeable factor.

These modifications consist of usually continuing with the outlined curriculum with the option of fewer expectations or simpler expectations. Thus, the student becomes the changeable unit in order to achieve the curriculum's requirements.

When analyzing the method in which the students' abilities are described, a contradiction occurs. By the outlining of processes and discussions of students' development of abilities, often themes of diversity and individualism are present, "Teachers plan programs that recognize this diversity and give students performance tasks that respect their particular abilities so that all students can derive the greatest possible benefit from the teaching and learning process" (p.31). Conversely, when generalizations of large groups of students who require supports or topics surrounding curriculum expectations, universal connotations are present, "All students can succeed" (p.31). Although the universal discourse is not as predominant as the individualism discourse, some elements regarding abilities and planning conjoin both terms, "Universal design and differentiated instruction are effective and interconnected means of meeting the learning or productivity needs of any group of students" (p.31). This quote produces a universal discourse through the understanding of the program design as well as creating the assumption that this plan will allow every student's abilities to be supported. However, individualism is present with the explanation of specified lesson programming. This interesting contradiction is further revealed throughout the analysis and discussion section.

Another representation appears when analyzing the audience which Parker (1992) claims enable the researcher to situate some connotations present in the text. The PPSSSEN is intended for the use of teachers. Although these documents are available for any reader online, the language presented emphasizes practical and procedural methods for teachers. Thus, this leaves

out the students, principals, recourse workers, parents and community members as the direct audience of this text. Although, the language presented for the audience is not complex or extremely technical, there are implications and procedural methods that require previous knowledge or the ability to have the supplementary information. This constraint is seen predominately with the outlines of IEP's. "The IEP box on the student's Provincial Report Card will not be checked, and no information on the provision of accommodations will be included" (p.32). This language reinforces the requirement of specific education or supplementary recourses required, reinforcing teachers as the primary audience.

Discourses contain subjects. The PPSSSEN discusses four main subjects; the educator, the student, the disabled student and the institution. The educator can be seen as being produced as the addressee of the text. As previously discussed, the text is written for the teachers to be the implementers of the programming. I would argue that the educators play the role of the mediator between the institution and students, which creates the duality of object and objectifier. For example, the institution uses the teacher subjects as objects as the teachers are expected to follow the curriculum expectations without any direct input. Similarly, the students are also required to follow the teacher's outlined expectations without any personal contribution to the program accommodations and modifications supporting the teacher as objectifier. This duality of both the teacher as object and objectifier presents a unique perspective on the rights of the teachers to speak about the disability discourse. Teachers are required to use medical disability language such as diagnosis disability terms, mediations and research based supports, "successful instructional practices are found on evidence-based research" (p.31). Further, the right to speak in educational language is granted to teachers. The PPSSSEN also represents teachers as having the right to implement and control the use of methods of instructions based on each teacher's

personal choice. However, educators do not have the right to deviate from the outlined curriculum and PPSSSEN. This limitation is in direct conflict with the perception of the teacher's rights to support all students through any method. Through terms similar to, "teacher will, teacher plans, teacher implements, teacher assesses," (p.30-33) the text shows the language used places the teacher as the main agent in the students education in which the teachers have the right to speak for the students.

The student and the disabled student are two subjects in the PPSSSEN text that are similar in their perceptions, relationship to addressor and rights of speech. The addressor (the institution) does not directly address the student's, however the PPSSSEN does discuss them as a third person. The text uses the term "students" to represent all students in the education system. Whereas they use the term, "students with special education needs" for a comparison to the average "student". Therefore, the addressor uses both subjects as objects for comparison, discussions and assessment. This relationship within the text limits the student's rights of speaking into more passive positions. The students have the rights to be spoken about, listen to the experts and to receive support. They also have the right to be a number (through assessments and grade point average).

Finally, the last subject addressed in the text is the institution of education, the addresser. This position can also be referred to as the researcher, the politician or the knowledgeable source. All these titles help to create the curriculum along with the writing and designing of the text. The institution's relationship with the addressee (the teachers) is one of higher power. As previously discussed, the institution only addresses teachers in the text, which reinforces the hierarchy where the institution is at the top. This position allows the institution the right to speak

from a scientific research perspective, thus allowing them the right to control processes, definitions, norms and expectations.

Discourses present a coherent system of meaning. Parker (1992) suggests the first step in analyzing different perspectives of the same text, is to identify and metaphors, analogies or pictures and any recurring system of terms used. The PPSSSEN contains no metaphors, analogies or pictures as the text is more concerned with outlining facts and procedures. However, when directly addressing the teachers or students, a few significant systems of terms are revealed. Predominantly, when the text is describing a student teacher interaction, a unidirectional relationship is present. This unidirectional requirement is placed upon the teacher's actions towards their students, "Classroom teachers are key educators for a student's literacy and numeracy development" (p.31). In most cases, the text does not outline a bidirectional relationship where a student's actions are for the teacher.

Further, there are reoccurring themes when categorizing open-ended and close-ended statements. Frequently, open-ended sentences which use terms such as: may, suggested and should, tend to be placed when discussing the curriculum as a whole, program planning and students skills, "Providing accommodations to students with special education needs should be the first option considered in program planning" (p.32). It appears that open-ended statements allow for teachers to have control over some elements in the curriculum in order to individually support each of their students based on their abilities and learning processes. Close-ended sentences which use terms like: must, needs to, and will be, are mostly present when discussing IEP's, grades, assessments and report cards. "Modified expectations must indicate the knowledge and/or skills the student is expected to demonstrate and have assessed in each reporting period"

(p.32). Since the curriculum is a legal binding document, the close-ended sentences tend to reinforce a legal discourse.

Parker's (1992) work recommends that textual analysis should focus on ways in which the system of meaning creates a discourse and in which ways does the discourse deals with objections to their terminology. By continuing with the legal discourse, it is evident through the institution as the top of the hierarchy, any contradictions to the PPSSSEN are worked out through a legal process. While highlighting the IEP process, the PPSSSEN exemplifies this legal reinforcement, "The students learning expectations must be reviewed in relation to the students progress at least once every reporting period, and must be updated as necessary" (p.32). Therefore, if the teacher, student or parent has any concerns or challenges to this process, the PPSSSEN very specifically outlines when and how these questions may occur, through the IEP process, not the curriculum document itself. This allows the institution a location and time frame in which challenges to their discourses may occur in order to protect their methods.

Discourses are historically located. Parker (1992) recommends that analyzing some of the historical discourses that may influence some of the current discourses present in the text. Thus placing Poplin's (1988) historical disability discourses creates an opening into further analysis of the PPSSSEN.

The medical model, as cited by Poplin (1988) was not used primarily in schools, however evidence of diagnosis and the use of medication is seen in classrooms. Interestingly, there is no mention of any elements of the medical models within the PPSSSEN. Although diagnoses are assumed to be present with the majority of the students who require accommodations or modifications, specific support based on the medical model is not present. However, one of the underlying assumptions of this model is that there is a "cure" for individuals with disabilities.

This assumption could also be linked as a major underlying element in the PPSSSEN as the outlined supports are put in place to assist the students with learning the curriculum similar to the students without disabilities.

Poplin's (1988) psychological model is seen frequently throughout the PPSSSEN section of the curriculum. This model focuses on the teaching of prerequisites to academic learning that can be strongly correlated to the expectation model of the Ontario curriculum. Through the expectations outlined in the curriculum, the PPSSSEN provides an opportunity for students who need support in order to learn the curriculum expectations. This is predominately seen in the modified expectation section in which the numbers of expectations are reduced or the complexity of the expectations is altered. Yet, these students are still required to learn the outlined prerequisites based on the regular grade level, which can be directly linked to the psychological model assumptions. However, this model does not allow for integration of students with disabilities into the regular classroom which is not a belief found in the PPSSSEN.

The behavioural model, as outlined by Poplin (1988), focuses upon academic achievement based on behavioural reinforcements. The primary emphasis of the PPSSSEN is academics as seen through the modifications and accommodations of the curriculum expectations. However the text does not directly mention any behavioural elements (intervention, supports or appropriateness). This model also advanced inclusive practices of students with disabilities into regular education classrooms. Although the PPSSSEN does not directly mention inclusive classrooms, an underlying assumption can be made that the accommodations and modifications to the curriculum are set in place in order to support students within a variety of classrooms, mainly inclusive settings. The text describes a set of beliefs which teachers should follow when program planning. These beliefs can be seen through an inclusive perspective, "All

students can succeed... Universal design and differentiated instruction are effective and interconnected means of meeting the learning or productivity needs of any group of students” (p.31). Thus, although the text does not reinforce the behavioural models underlying assumptions, the effects of this model upon the PPSSSEN is evident.

Finally, the cognitive learning strategy model emphasizes knowing how students know, and teaching based on individual thinking processes. Although Poplin (1988) argues that this model is deemed unsuccessful and used less often than the other models, the PPSSSEN text clearly uses this model's underlying assumptions most often. This text frequently refers to unique individualized learning processes, “Each student has his or her own unique patterns of learning” (p.31). Reoccurring themes such as individualism and diversity are terms and concepts emphasized in the text.

Overall, this text is not written as a generalization to all students, rather it allows for unique and specialized programming for each student depending upon their abilities. However, when analyzing individualism and diversity, two contradictions are highlighted. The first, as previously discussed, the individual discourse is positioned against the dependency discourse and is emphasized when using the cognitive and learning strategy discourse model. Furthermore, the diversity discourse has contradicting sections that focus upon universalism. The discourse of universalism directly rejects the cognitive learning stage model as universal program planning eliminates the student's personal learning style. Yet, the universal discourse is clearly present in the text when discussions of the teachers program plan is outlined, “Universal design and differentiated instruction are effective and interconnected means of meeting the learning or productivity needs of ant group of students” (p.31). Interestingly, many of the sections in the PPSSSEN where the universal discourse is present, conceptions of diversity are also observed.

Therefore, elements of the cognitive learning model are used along side with universal elements of the medical and psychological models.

Discourses support institutions, reproduce power relations and have ideological affects. Parker's (1992) discourse analysis also encourages an investigation into how discourses are linked to institutions. Also, in what ways do these institutions affect the power and ideology associated with the discourses? The following analysis and discussions will focus on these aspects along with the discourses previously discussed in the PPSSSEN.

The main institution associated with the PPSSSEN and the curriculum as a whole is the institution of education. Although education is a large construct that is extremely diverse depending upon the location, finances and underlying educational assumptions, it can be argued that all educational institutions are reinforced by the material that is taught and methods of teaching. Therefore, many of the discourses present in the PPSSSEN reinforce the institution of education. The legal discourse is a prime example of this, as sections of the PPSSSEN appear to be written as a protection of the institution, "The IEP box on the student's Provincial Report Card will not be checked, and no information on the provision of accommodations will be included" (p.32). Many of the close ended statements are connected with the legal discourse which emphasizes the lack of student and teacher's agency in some areas of the PPSSSEN as a preventative measure for the education institution.

Within most institutions, Parker (1992) claims, "the employment of discourses is also often a practice which reproduces the material basis of the institution" (p.17). He therefore argues that discursive practices refer to the people and actions that reproduce institutions. The educational institution utilizes a diverse population of people to reinforce their beliefs. Principals, teachers and resource teachers are day-to-day supporters and sustainers of educational

practices. The PPSSSEN is a primary example of this concept as teachers are obligated to follow the outlined curriculum accommodations and modifications highlighted by the text. There is also evidence of curriculum creators including administration, scientists and medical perspectives that represent the top of the hierarchy of the institution. These groups of educationalist are a part of the population who are most likely to promote the beliefs and practices of the institution.

Parents play an interesting role when analyzing the educational intuition. For the majority of parents, it can be assumed that they are neither for nor against the institution, as many parents primary objective is to support their child's learning. Therefore, there are parents who strongly support the system by participating in the rules and regulations outlined by the school boards. For students who have a disability, these parents apply for funding through diagnosis, find extra support within the classrooms and fight for all the possible ways the systems could support their child's learning. These parents reinforce the institution by following the school boards methods of in school supports. However, there are also advocate parents of students with disabilities who fight against the education institutions policies and practices. These parents tend to find their children's education is not supporting them in the most effective manner and thus try to work towards reformation of the system. The advocate parents therefore would be negatively impacted by many of the discourses employed by the education institution and the discourses present in the PPSSSEN.

Finally, Parker (1992) suggests textual analysis research should analyze ideological affects that are reinforced through discourses to sanction oppression. Interestingly, the PPSSSEN as a text is a form of ideology, as the processes outlined appear to be the solution for all students with disabilities in the education system. The PPSSSEN claims that their process allows for every student to be supported, "all students can succeed... Universal design and differentiated

instruction are effective and interconnected means of meeting the learning or productivity needs of any group of students” (p.31). However as previously discussed in the literature, the Ontario school boards are not providing every student with appropriate educational supports. Thus, the PPSSSEN ideological process hinders the acknowledgement that improvements to the supports for students with disabilities are a fluid and continual process. Perhaps this lack of recognition could account for the missing discussion of disabilities. In the PPSSSEN, there is no mention of disabilities, definitions of disabilities or supports that are empirically found in research to be supportive for specific disabilities (for example ABA). Although it can be argued that these discussions are provided elsewhere in the supplementary curriculum resources, it could be questioned how a teacher can plan an expectation based program and accurately complete an IEP without the Ministry's support specifically in the planning aspects for these individuals with all the primary and supplementary documents? Even though the PPSSSEN does not directly discuss disabilities, the text does reinforce discourses that reinforce ideological beliefs. The scientific discourse is used often through the text to prove to the audience the outlined process is the most accurate, “Successful instructional practices are founded on evidence-based research” (p.31). This discourse reinforces the ideological disability beliefs that the practices of education institution are the most effective tool in supporting students with disabilities.

Discourses refer to other discourses. The primary step in collecting data for this section requires the researcher to explore discourses that are present in the text. Therefore, through the previously discussed stages and current disability research, five major discourses were discovered with two constituting contradicting frameworks.

Dependence disability discourse. In the PPSSSEN, there are three types of accommodations; instructional, environmental and assessment. All three of these

accommodations are based on the students need to depend upon the teacher to support these changes. The instructional accommodations require the teacher to adjust their teaching strategies for the student. These changes could include, “style of presentation, methods or organization, or use of technology and multimedia” (p.32). Therefore, the responsibility of this accommodation is placed upon the teacher with no personal changes from the student. The environment accommodation outlines the requirement of making adjustments to the students surrounding such as their seating arrangement or specialized lighting. These changes require the teacher to determine what environment works best for the student and apply these accommodations within the school. Similarly, the assessment accommodation requires the teacher to alter their methods of assessment in regards to allowing the student to demonstrate their learning in a manner that works best with their learning style. It is recognized that in order for the teacher to make the necessary accommodations, continuous discussions with the student regarding the success and failure of the alterations is likely to occur. However, the onus is placed upon the teachers to discover the most effective accommodations for each individual student and to continually be applying these accommodations.

Within the modified expectations section, the dependency disability discourse does not appear as frequently. This section requires the teachers to work with the students to modify the curriculum expectations. However, the text does not indicate specifically how this process occurs which could help to determine if this section reinforces the dependent discourse or the independent discourse.

Independence disability discourse. As a direct contradiction to the dependent discourse, there is also evidence of an independence disability discourse throughout the PPSSSEN. Although this discourse does not appear often in the text, most of the sentences that link to independence

also contain elements of dependence. The first indication of this discourse appears when the text is describing the teacher's roles while planning lessons, "They commit to assisting every student to prepare for living with the highest degree of independence possible" (p.30). The term assisting directly contradicts the term independence as independence is defined as, "not subject to control by others, not requiring or relying on something else, [and] not looking to others for one's opinions or for guidance in conduct" (Merriam-Webster, 2010). Thus, by requiring the support of a teacher, the student rejects the concept of independence in turn for a dependence status. This opposing sentence reoccurs twice within the text, "Some students with special education needs are able, with certain accommodations, to participate in the regular curriculum and to demonstrate learning independently" (p.32) and "Modified expectations must represent specific, realistic, observable, and measureable achievements, and must describe specific knowledge and/or skills that the student can demonstrate independently, given the appropriate assessment accommodations" (p.32). Both these quotes require the student to perform tasks outlined by the curriculum with support from the teachers. Although the term "independently," in these instances, is used correctly in order to describe a process in which the students are able to show their knowledge, the implication is still one of dependence upon the teachers.

Legal disability discourse. The legal discourse is not a common discourse present in disability literature. However, within the PPSSSEN there are numerous references to the disabled student following legal procedures in terms of their modifications and accommodations. As previously discussed, several of the close-ended statements are used to legally protect the education system and not the student who requires support. This protection can be seen as the terms used in the legal discourse reflect a legally binding document, rather than an educational support document, "If the student requires either accommodations or modified expectations, or

both, the relevant information, as described in the following paragraphs, must be recorded in his or her Individual Education Plan (IEP)” (p.31). This procedure ideologically places a false perspective of student support rather than the actual institution defense. Thus, the legalities in this document create a legal disability discourse in which the students are perceived through processes, requirements and legally binding documents (the curriculum and IEP's).

Agency disability discourse. The agency discourse is extremely common in disability research within the past decade (Bowker & Tuffin, 2002; Charlton, 2006; Luck & D’Inverno, 1995). As defined by Luck and D’Inverno, (1995), agency refers to “one who, or that which, exerts power or produces an effect” (p.256). Thus, the agency disability discourse would refer to students having the power to be in control of their own education. Although the large amount of literature would suggest that this discourse should appear in the PPSSSEN as this document is directly addressing students with disabilities education, the agency discourse only appears once. In the first section outlining the beliefs that should be used to guide teacher’s program planning, it says, “All students can succeed” (p.31). This statement is the only representation of the student with a disability’s agency towards their own education. Therefore the question arises, why is there not more agency discourse representations in the PPSSSEN? This will be further explored throughout.

Scientific disability discourse (also known as the normative disability discourse). In the PPSSSEN, there are frequent references to research, achievement, expectations and assessment procedures to support the curriculum. These conceptions can be directly linked to the scientific disability discourse as the student’s are measured, tested and placed on the normative range scale to determine their progress on the curriculums expectations. The PPSSSEN highlights research as one of the overarching planning program beliefs and claims the curriculum is based on,

“evidence-based research” (p.31). This discourse is clearly evident in the modified expectations section as the changes in the expectations must be, “specific, realistic, observable, and measureable achievements, and must describe specific knowledge and/or skills that the student can demonstrate independently” (p.32). These criteria resemble the scientific research approach with the difference of the discourse being placed upon the students with disabilities. Similarly, this discourse is also present in the assessment accommodation section as the text describes the non-negotiable requirements, “assessment and evaluation of his or her achievement will be based on the appropriate grade-level curriculum expectations and the achievement levels outlined in this document” (p.32). By placing the expectations through a grade-level assessment, the students are still being evaluated on a normative scale similar to the rest of the curriculum. This process reinforces the scientific discourse that is the discourse that defined these students as having a disability in the first place.

Relationships and Contradictions Present through the Literature Tools of Analysis

Discourse reflects on its own a way of speaking. In Parker’s (1992) textual discourse analysis questions, he suggests that alternative texts outside of the discourse allow the researcher to be able to reflect upon the discourse. However, this research project takes Parker’s (1992) point further by placing some methods and processes upon the PPSSSEN to reveal relationships and contradictions present in the text and in the text’s discourses. The follow sections will use *Education Under Siege*, *Psychiatry Inside Out* and *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* methods and concepts to reflect upon the discourses in the PPSSSEN.

Dialectics. In the PPSSSEN, there is little to no mention of dialectical methods in the text. There is no reference to dialectical discussions from student to teacher or from teacher to institution. However, the text does reflect Hegel’s conception of truth and reality. The PPSSSEN

attempts to support individual learners in order to allow students the maximum opportunity to succeed into the ideal student (the thesis). This perfect ideal form is strongly represented in the accommodations section of the text as these changes in instruction, environment and assessment are put in place so the student with the disability can learn the same material as the rest of their age-group.

When analyzing the discourses through a dialectical perspective, there is the challenge of recognizing the discourses presented in the text against the discourses from their ideal form. For example, one of the dependent discourse's underlying assumptions is that if the student is relying upon the teacher, there would be an interaction between the student and the teacher in order for the teacher to determine the most effective method of support. However, within the text, there is no specific mention of the means in which the teacher determines the accommodations or modifications. The assumption is present that a dialectical interaction must occur, but this is not present in the text. By using the independent definition against the independent discourse as previously outlined in the discourse section, a contradiction occurs between the definition and the use of the term. Therefore, the definition would assume that there is no dialectical interaction whereas the use of the term in the text, similar to the dependent discourse, contains the assumption that an interaction must occur. Both the scientific and legal discourses reinforce the ideology of the institution's beliefs. Thus, the lack of dialect for these discourses is shown through their close-ended factual statements. Finally, the discourse that would most closely link to the dialect is the agency discourse as it encourages the student's ability to voice their opinions. Yet, this discourse is not frequently referred to in the PPSSSEN. Overall, dialectical relationships and methods are not specifically present in the text. Although the dependent and independent

discourses contain the assumption of a dialectical relationship, the text does not speak directly to this process.

Dialectical cultural action theory. In Freire's (2008) work, he highlights characteristics of dialogical theory of liberation. He named this processes dialogical cultural action theory in which there are four main elements; cooperation, unity for liberation, organization and cultural synthesis. In this theory, cooperation allows subjects to meet together in order to transform the world. "Cooperation leads dialogical Subjects to focus their attention on the reality which mediates them and which—posed as a problem—challenges them" (Freire, 2008, p.168). Unity for liberation focuses upon the leaders and asserts that they must create unity between themselves and the oppressed in order to fight together for change. Freire (2008) emphasizes the understanding of organization is significantly different than manipulation. He argues organization is required to acknowledge that oppression is a common occurrence and not an isolated event (as this is how oppression is often portrayed). Finally, cultural synthesis is a mode of action for confronting culture through an analysis of the structure. Thus, Freire (2008) argues that cultural action is historical action.

Within the PPSSSEN, Freire's (2008) dialectical cultural action theory is not present and I would argue this is due to the curriculum's lack of interest in liberating action towards individuals who are oppressed. However the cultural action theory process in combination with the PPSSSEN, could create new and diverse methods for supporting individuals who require extra support. As Freire (2008) stressed in his work, liberating action cannot occur until both the oppressed and oppressor dialectically together discover potential solutions. Thus within the schools, both the teachers and the students must feel comfortable to verbally express opinions and ideas as well as listen to others without the fear of ramifications or power confrontations.

This process is not present in the PPSSSEN as it currently does not present space for the teachers and the students to have the opportunity to dialectically communicate regarding their educational process. However, there is room within the PPSSSEN for students and teachers to create individual plans based on personal abilities (mainly through the IEP's), unfortunately there is a lack of explanation on which stages the teachers and students to engage in this processes together.

The assemblea and the community. Within the institution of psychiatry, Basaglia (1987) became the father of deinstitutionalization for his work in transforming institutions for individuals with disabilities. One method he used in his goal of decreasing institutional oppression, was through the assemblea which was a process which attempted to reduce power hierarchy and open up critical dialect among the patients, nurses, care workers, doctors and community members (Basaglia, 1987). Within the assemblea, open communication was encouraged in an attempt to reveal relationships, contradictions, concerns and feedback on issues surrounding their institution. Through this process of allowing for free and open dialect, the assemblea represented a location for voices to be given power and alterations to be made within the institution and community (Basaglia, 1987).

The process of the assemblea provides a unique method to analyze the PPSSSEN processes with as it allows for a critical perspective on power relationships and voicelessness in an institution. One of Basaglia's main contributions to disability discourses is the process of integration. Through the assemblea and community involvement, the positive outcomes of incorporating all groups of individuals in jobs, volunteering, living at home with your family and learning opportunities were acknowledged. Thus, the PPSSSEN section of the curriculum is based on Basaglia's historical works that lead to inclusive practices in the education system. However,

I would suggest that the education institution could take Basaglia's methods one step further through utilizing some of the assemblea's underlying assumptions. Currently, the challenging of hierarchical power through open and restriction free dialectics discussions with everyone involved in the education process is not outlined in the PPSSSEN. There is a small sentence on incorporating community for support. Unfortunately there is a lack of expansion or suggestions on methods for this interaction. There is also a similar void in the parental roles and responsibilities when it comes to issues of the PPSSSEN. It is acknowledged that further support for parents is provided in the IEP process's, however I believe that PPSSSEN should also incorporate open dialectical discussions with parents as well as the students in order to allow for a stronger link from the students to the curriculum.

As highlighted in the discourse analysis section, the students who require support from the curriculum are considered the objects of the text that deters their ability to be active agents in their education process. Although the PPSSSEN is directed towards teachers, the absence of the student's role in determining the modifications or accommodations reveals the institution's placement of the importance of the student's dialect. As seen through the challenging process of determining the student's role in the presented discourses, the PPSSSEN does not articulate the methods, emphasis or weight of dialectical communication between teachers and students in any section of the text. Communication is assumed for teachers to discover which modification or accommodations work most effectively for each student, however the space for these interactions is not outlined. Thus, the method of the assemblea historically provided support for incorporating inclusive practices for the classroom. Taking Basaglia's practice further, critical dialectical communication between individuals involved in the education process could produce new methods of support.

Critical Education. When analyzing the PPSSSEN, it is interesting to note that there is no discussion of critical thinking, critical dialogue or critical analysis. Specifically within the dependence discourse, there is no room for individual thinking processes or critical thinking. As this discourse forces the students to rely on the discretion of teachers, the implication is that the teachers have the space within the PPSSSEN for critical thinking. However, I would argue that the discourse of dependence is an ideology presented by the institution since teachers are restricted in their allowance of critical thinking based on their requirements of following the curriculum. Aronowitz and Giroux (1985) support this argument as they claim that teacher's intellectual abilities have been removed from education and replaced with disempowered servants. Therefore, the opposing discourse of independence should ideally represent an opening for students to individually think and using critical elements in their education. However as previously highlighted, the PPSSSEN does not accurately use the independent discourse to represent true definition of independence. Thus, the independent discourse also restricts the critical thinking availability for the students. The legal and scientific discourses both control the use of critical thinking of students as well as the teachers by using close-ended statements that are mandatory to follow. The use of facts and statements in these discourses reinforce the limits to the thinking processes. Finally, the agency discourse does allow for free choices, personal educations and critical thinking for each individual student. Yet the PPSSSEN does not contain any strong links to the agency discourse in comparison to the current discourses in the literature.

Problem-posing education. Freire's (2008) work outlines an alternative education method that encourages students to critically engage in the educational material. He argues that, "Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each

other” (Freire, 2008, p.72). It is challenging to place the critical thinking aspects of problem-posing education only upon the PPSSSEN since Freire’s concept addresses the learning process as a whole. As previously noted, there are no critical thinking elements within the PPSSSEN section of the curriculum. However the critical aspects of problem-posing education can be placed upon the discourses the PPSSSEN reinforces, as the discourses overarching assumptions allow for Freire’s (2008) critical thinking constructions to be analyzed.

Neither the dependent or independent discourses allow space for problem-posing education within their frameworks. The dependent discourse, as outlined in the PPSSSEN, only allow for a unidirectional relationship where the student relies on their teacher. This process limits the student’s abilities to reflect upon the knowledge, relationships and structures the education system is providing. Similarly both the traditional definition and the PPSSSEN’s independent discourses work against problem-posing education practices. The traditional definition of independence reflects individuals not relying on someone else nor looking for others opinions for guidance (Merriam-Webster, 2010). Thus, this process restricts the students and teachers ability to learn from each other. Similarly the independent discourse that is present in the PPSSSEN focuses upon the student’s ability to show their knowledge in methods outlined by the institution. However Freire’s (2008) suggested education opposes the PPSSSEN’s independent and dependent discourses as his method focuses more upon how the students gain and reflect upon the knowledge.

Structural Conditions of Power and Language of Traditional Roles and Responsibilities. According to Parker (1992), discourses support, reinforce and reproduce the structure of institutions. Thus an analysis of the relationship between students, teachers and the institution allows for a deeper comprehension of the effects of discourses. All of the discourses

found in the PPSSSEN are extremely supportive in reproducing the institutions ideological procedures. One method used to reinforce the institutions processes is through academically supporting the traditional roles of students and teachers through discourses. The most effective reproductive discourses are the legal and scientific discourses. These both use experts as superior to the teachers and students, close-ended statements to produce an inability to alter their claims and terms and resources to ideologically support their perspectives. The independent and agency discourses support the institution's perceptions by not accurately reflecting the traditional discourses definitions and roles in education. Arguably, the most significant and effective reinforcing discourse is the dependent discourse. This discourse removes the freedom of choice, of critical thinking and reproduces an ideological dependent relationship in which the students believe that they need the teachers and the education process in order to become successful at life. All these discourses are produced and used in order to structurally support the institution.

Transformative Intellectual. Aronowitz and Giroux's (1985) work discusses multiple types of intellectuals that offer unique implications on politics and pedagogy. They suggest by placing the conception of transformative intellectual upon teachers, a diverse critical pedagogy is revealed which requires the pedagogical to be more political and the political to be more pedagogical. Through a critical awareness, the education system creates points of contradictions out of dialectical relationships between groups, "In short, the language of critique unites with the language of possibility when it points to the conditions necessary for new forms of culture, alternative social practices, new modes of communication, and a practical vision for the future" (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1985, p.37).

As previously discussed, there is a duality placed upon the teachers roles within the classroom; they are both the object and the objectifier. Teachers are objected to the institutions

procedures and requirements as seen through the PPSSSEN. Teachers are obligated to follow the guidelines provided. However by following these methods, teachers also become the objectifier of the students. Thus teachers are placed in a position of reproducing the ideology produced by the institution through objectification. By analyzing the conception of the transformative intellectual, the PPSSSEN does contain some overarching elements. The methods discussed in the PPSSSEN provide a few locations for teacher's agency and voice. When planning programs, teachers are encouraged to make an informed decision on the style of modifications or accommodations the students will require, "teachers should begin by examining both the curriculum expectations for the appropriate grade level of the individual student and his or her strengths and learning needs to determine which of the following options is appropriate for the student" (p.31). Thus, the teacher is encouraged to make intellectually informed decisions. However, this process does not follow the transformative intellectual exactly as there is a lack of interaction between the student and the teacher. I would argue that in order for teachers to be transformative intellectuals and not, "low-level employees or civil servants" as Aronowitz and Giroux (1985, p.23) claim teachers are today, teachers need the abilities to openly discuss the policies, power and oppressive issues with everyone involved in the education process. Currently, the PPSSSEN does not provide a location for these discourses to take place. Thus by allowing a new relationship between teachers and students, an alternative method may be presented for teachers to become transformative intellectuals.

Teacher-Student Relationship. Freire's (2008) work offers an alternative approach to the traditional teacher-student dynamic through his problem-posing education. By changing the current interactions from the teacher-of-the student into the problem-posing relationship of teacher-student with student-teachers, the change in power dynamics may encourage students to

be responsible for their own education. In the problem-posing relationship, arguments are always cognitive and support by authority is no longer valid. Students and teachers have an opportunity to dialectically teach each other through reflections, critical thinking and constant reevaluation of truths (Freire, 2008).

Through analyzing the PPSSSEN, the traditional teacher-student relationship is clearly present. The text emphasizes the teacher's responsibility for supporting the students without any indication of the student's roles. Also the students are discussed as objects that reduce their abilities to actively participate in the planning curriculum aspects of education. However through placing the concept of the problem-posing teacher-student relationship upon the PPSSSEN, some unique challenges to the discourses occur. The dependent and independent discourses both create a unidirectional relationship where the student either only relies on the teacher, or the student relies solely on themselves. These discourses remove the teacher-student with student-teachers relationship leaving no room for this bidirectional interaction to occur. Perhaps this dilemma is one reason for the incorrect use of the independent discourse in the PPSSSEN. Similarly, the legal and scientific discourses reduce the possibility for a different teacher-student relationship as these discourses are strong reinforces a hierarchical institutional process. Since Freire's (2008) student-teacher relationship requires the institution to resign some power and allow the students and teachers to negotiate through the education process, I believe this process is challenging to adopt. It would require the education process to remove their standardized processes and allow for diverse methods to be used in every situation. Although it could be argued that IEP's already produce this variance in education, Freire's (2008) education relationship could take the IEP process further by providing more spaces for bidirectional dialectical interactions to occur.

Conclusion

The current body of disability literature specific to Ontario education is largely focused on assessing current programs in order to most effectively support students with disabilities in the classroom (Davis, 2006). There is currently a lack of research that investigates the education systems core principals, major underlying assumptions and ideological influences. Further there is even less research conducted which focuses specifically on the Ontario school board and their disability policies and procedures. Thus, this research project aimed to analyze some of the current disability discourses produced by the PPSSSEN section of the curriculum in order to begin a discussion of the effects of these discourses on students with disabilities. By taking the discourses a step further, this project employed critical pedagogy, critical disability and radical oppressive literature. This process enabled an analysis of the discourses against some unique process suggested by the texts. Overall, five main disability discourses emerged from the PPSSSEN text; Dependent disability discourse, Independent disability discourse, Legal disability discourse, Scientific (or normative) disability discourse and Agency disability discourse. By placing these discourses on the previously mentioned literature, some interesting processes occurred.

It's important to keep the fluid, continual and growing nature of the education process open in order to continually move forward towards a stronger and successful system. By analyzing the discourses created by the current processes, it enables educationalists to think about and challenge the outcomes of the current processes. The discourses presented all contain positive and negative implications for students with disabilities, and through acknowledging them, these discourses can provide insight into the implications of the support processes currently in place. However, this project found that many of the discourses ignored and

attempted to cover up the open fluid nature of disabilities in the education system. The close ended sentence (strongly emphasized in the legal discourse) and the lack of room for alternative options than the ones provided, shows the audience that the current curriculum process is the “correct” or “only” method of creating support in the curriculum. Thus, I would suggest reworking some of the elements of the PPSSSEN to encourage and assist teachers and students to dialectically create their own methods of supports outside of the current accommodation and modification regulations. Through acknowledging this process as continually changing and growing, teachers and students who feel stigmatized by the current options will have more flexibility to explore alternative opportunities.

One of the most significant relationships discussed is the dependent student teacher interaction. Currently, this unidirectional relationship restricts a dialectical interaction and reinforces and rewards dependent actions, thoughts and teaching strategies. However, all three texts discuss and support open bidirectional interactions, yet there was a lack of bidirectional discourses presented in the PPSSSEN. Even the agency discourse, which is interestingly missing from the text, reproduces a unidirectional relationship that contradicts the student individually creating their own agency.

One of the main concerns I found with the PPSSSEN section of the curriculum is the lack of space for student involvement in the planning processes of the curriculum. Although the PPSSSEN contains implications in that communication between the teacher and student could occur, there is not one sentence which makes a direct reference to this process. Thus, by employing specific locations for interactions between teachers and students, there is a potential to invoke new discourses, new methods of support and a change in the current education process.

Implications

Curriculum Development. In order to continually advance the Ontario education system, curriculum developers place a large emphasis upon research to help guide and direct new curriculum methods and supports. Thus, this research project contains a few results in which developers could take into consideration. The first is the lack of space for a true dialectical relationship to occur between teachers and students in the curriculum process. The current unidirectional interaction restricts the ability for teachers and students to create new individualized supports outside of the current structure. By reducing the amount of close-ended statements and specifically creating open spaces for bidirectional communications, an opportunity for innovative methods arises.

Secondly, developers should take into consideration the discourses highlighted in the analysis section. These discourses consist of contradictions and inconsistent perspective of disabilities that could present students with disabilities inconsistent methods of support. It is acknowledge that students with disabilities are a diverse group and have diverse strengths and weaknesses, thus producing a variety of discourses. However, the contraction of the close ended statements, legal and scientific discourses do not allow for this diversity to occur. Thus I argue that developers should take the discourses created by the PPSSSEN and determine if these conceptions of disabilities match their inclusive education goals.

Teachers. One of the most unexpected results of this research project is the amount of discussions relating to teachers. Therefore, I strongly suggest teachers use the results of this research project to begin to acknowledge their own limitations set forth by the institution and highlighted by the disability discourses. This process may allow for a deeper understanding of some implications and contractions students with disabilities are confronted with. From there, the

teachers in the Ontario system can continually learn new and modified methods to supporting all their student's diverse needs.

Principals. The results of this study have significant implications for principals of elementary schools. Principals have the space to create supports, training sessions and guidelines for teachers. Thus, from a top down hierarchy, if the principals assist teachers more effectively, openly and liberally, then the teachers can offer more unique assistance to their students. Through exploration of diverse methods of creating, implementing and diversifying the curriculum for students with disabilities, the continual free communication of principals and teachers could begin to open more spaces for dialect between teachers and students with disabilities. Thus, I would suggest that the principal teacher relationship be examined further.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

In order to conduct effective research, it is important to acknowledge the limitations associated with the research project. One limitation of the current study was the exclusion of IEP's as a text for analysis. IEP's are one of the main support systems in place for students with disabilities in the classroom, thus an extremely important element of disabilities as a whole in the education process. By providing research that solely focuses on the PPSSSEN, this research project has provided a first step in analyzing Ontario's disability discourses. Thus, there is a need to continue this line of research by extending this study's methodology on IEP's and other supplementary information provided to support individuals with disabilities. These educational texts could further offer an understanding of alternative discourses placed upon students with disabilities. They could also reveal more contradictory or consistent discourses as outlined by this project. A further limitation of this study is the predominant focus upon the elementary school curriculum processes. Future research should engage in analyzing the discourses and

processes provided for students with disabilities in the high school stream. High school supports are extremely diverse in comparison to elementary school and thus could be researched with different results.

These changes based on the disability discourses cannot only be for students with disabilities as they are not the only people who are oppressed within the education system. Thus the discourses found in the PPSSSEN may also be present throughout the curriculum for all students of all varying abilities. Therefore, this topic should be a consideration for future research on the curriculum as a whole for all students in the education process.

Final Thoughts

I would like to again take the opportunity to reinforce that the intention of this research project is not to claim that the disability discourses presented are the only discourses available in the PPSSSEN or are the discussions to be used as overarching solutions. The purpose of this research is to begin to question and analyze the Ontario curriculum's disability procedures in order to continually challenge and therefore advance the supports currently employed for students with disabilities. Thus by utilizing a variety of research methods and texts, Ontario's elementary education system, new discourses, supports and radical processes have the potential to create a more supportive educational environment.

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