

RESPONDING TO DIVERSITY: A REVIEW OF RECENT EDUCATION POLICY & THE  
LANGUAGE CURRICULUM REFORM IN ONTARIO

by

Devon Franklin, BA, University of Toronto, 2014

A Major Research Paper  
presented to Ryerson University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Masters of Arts  
in the Program of  
Immigration and Settlement Studies

Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 2016

© Devon Franklin 2016

**Author's Declaration Page**

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this MRP. This is a true copy of the MRP, including any required final revisions.

I authorize Ryerson University to lend this MRP to other institutions or individuals for the purpose of scholarly research

I further authorize Ryerson University to reproduce this MRP by photocopying or by other means, in total or in part, at the request of other institutions or individuals for the purpose of scholarly research.

I understand that my MRP may be made electronically available to the public.

Devon Franklin

# RESPONDING TO DIVERSITY: A REVIEW OF RECENT EDUCATION POLICY & LANGUAGE CURRICULUM REFORM IN ONTARIO

Devon Franklin  
Masters of Arts, 2016  
Immigration and Settlement Studies  
Ryerson University

## **Abstract**

The province of Ontario continues to be the destination of more than 50 percent of all immigrants to Canada (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009). With a large visible minority population, as well as linguistic and faith-based diversity, there is increasing pressure on the education system to ensure that all students have the opportunity to thrive academically and develop personally (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009; Canadian School Boards Association, 2007; Muj & Hamdan, 2013). This study uses classical content analysis to test the 1997 and 2006 versions of the Ontario language curriculum for Grades 3 and 6 against the James Banks' model for ensuring racial, ethnic and cultural diversity is reflected in school programs. This model is essential for assessing the degree to which the curriculum document itself reflects the priorities set-out by the Ministry of Education in Ontario, and whether these priorities align with the principles of multicultural education.

**Keywords:** Multiculturalism, education policy, multicultural education, language education, diversity

## **Acknowledgements**

This paper would not have been possible without my extremely patient and encouraging supervisor, Professor Francis Hare. Thank you very much.

I would also like to thank my family, especially my parents, for their ceaseless words of encouragement, and my wonderful friends for their love and support.

Jessica, thank you for your ability to see the bigger picture and for always believing in me.

Thank you Alex for reminding me to smile, and being there for me through this process.

## **Table of Contents**

Author's Declaration Page	ii
Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Introduction	1
Brief History of Multiculturalism in Canada	5
Multicultural Education	9
Education Policy: Responding to Diversity	12
(a) Tenets of Multicultural Education	13
(b) Neoliberal Principles	16
The Case Study: Ontario Language Curriculum	20
(a) Methodology	21
(b) Presentation of Findings	25
(c) Discussion	32
Conclusion	36
References	39

## Introduction

In 1971, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau declared in the House of Commons that Canada would have two official languages, but “no official culture, no one culture [would be] more official than another” (qtd. in Kirova, 2008, p. 111). This statement ushered in the *Multiculturalism Policy* (1971), and later the revised *Multiculturalism Act* (1988), that have become emblematic of Canadian society. As a federal policy, multiculturalism has become entrenched in the national identity, and is perceived as a policy that depicts Canada’s respect for, and incorporation of, a multitude of racial and ethnic groups (Bibby, 1987). While multiculturalism maintains a privileged position at the national level, in this paper, I have sought to account for the response to Canada’s federal policy of multiculturalism at the provincial level.

A national assessment of multiculturalism across the provinces and territories is beyond the scope of this paper, and instead, this discussion will focus on Canada’s largest, and most diverse province, Ontario, which continues to be the destination of more than 50 percent of all immigrants to Canada (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009). With a large visible minority population, as well as linguistic and faith-based diversity, nearly every sector of Ontario’s public policy domain must engage with the challenges posed by diversity (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009). The large proportion of children and youth accompanying new immigrants to Canada has resulted in increased diversity in Ontario classrooms, which in turn, has resulted in increased pressure on the education system to ensure that students of all backgrounds have equal opportunities to succeed academically (Canadian School Boards Association, 2007; Muj & Hamdan, 2013). Therefore, for the purposes of this paper, I will be investigating the education system to determine the extent multiculturalism has manifested itself into recent education

policy, and subsequent curriculum documents (Canadian School Boards Association, 2007). If Ontario is to realize its potential to be a model for equity and inclusivity, the province's education system must create opportunities to engage the culturally and linguistically diverse student population so that these students have the same prospect for success as their peers. In this regard, the language program is of particular importance. A strong command of the English language has an indispensable role in students' future success and the education system has an obligation to ensure all students become fluent in core language principles and their application (Kirova, 2008; Muj & Hamdan, 2013).

In the last two decades, the Ontario Ministry of Education (OME) has responded to the diversity in the province's classrooms with two significant education reforms: the *Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity* policy (1993) and the *Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy* (2009). Importantly, these reforms emerged within a neoliberalist policy environment, which emphasizes the supremacy of the free market system, and this ideology has impacted the way in which education is given importance, namely in its connection to, and preparation for, employment (Joshee, 2009). Both policy documents will be reviewed to provide the necessary context for understanding and interpreting the revisions to *The Ontario Curriculum, Grade 1 – 8: Language, 2006 (Revised)*, also known as the *Ontario Language Curriculum* (OLC). Literacy development from Grades 1 to 8 plays a formative role in shaping students' attitudes toward reading and proficiency in English, both of which impact students' success in high school, and ultimately, their propensity for pursuing post-secondary studies (Muj & Hamdan, 2013). There is a particular emphasis on literacy development in Grade 3 and Grade 6, when provincial-wide testing occurs, and students' development and achievement is measured by their test-scores.

Therefore, the curriculum expectations for these grades will be the focus of the case study conducted. The challenge with standardized testing is that it neglects the social circumstances of the students, such as their immigrant status, or English-language proficiency, and instead holds all students to the same standard set by the Educational Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO). The responsibility for ensuring all students, regardless of background, are prepared for testing falls on teachers, who rely on the provided curriculum for guidance in instructing students. The recent education policies examined appear to take a strong stance in reaching every student, and recognizing that different strategies need to be employed to meet the needs of a diverse student population. This study seeks to uncover the ways in which the curriculum document itself reflects the priorities set-out by the Ministry of Education in Ontario, and whether these priorities align with the principles of multicultural education.

The primary purpose of this paper is to assess *The Ontario Curriculum, Grade 1 – 8: Language, 2006 (Revised)*, specifically in terms of the extent to which it promotes principles of multicultural education by exposing students to diverse narratives, and providing ample guidance for teachers to engage a diverse student population. This assessment includes a comparison of the *Ontario Language Curriculum* of 2006 with its immediate predecessor from 1997, examining Grades 3 and 6, as province-wide literacy assessments are administered at these grades. An effective evaluative model developed by James Banks aims to assess the multicultural nature of educational curricula, and will be utilized to evaluate the incorporation of multicultural education principles in the language curriculum. The secondary purpose of this paper is to demonstrate the competing economic discourse at the policy level of the Ministry of Education in Ontario that impedes the progress of a more thoroughly multicultural curriculum, primarily due to the



emphasis in policy on standardized testing and accountability. This discussion includes the presentation of the most recent education policies related to meeting the needs of a diverse student population and evidence that supports the view that large-scale assessments as an accountability measure for education is contradictory to the goals of multicultural education, and disadvantages many students, particularly immigrant students. Education, as a social institution, has the potential to turn the challenges posed by diversity into opportunities for change through education reforms, practices and curriculum revisions (Banks, 2009). Importantly, an investigation into Ontario's recent education policy initiatives, and preceding curriculum revisions, will demonstrate the missed opportunities for engaging students from marginalized communities and fostering greater understanding between students from different backgrounds.

## **A Brief History of Multiculturalism in Canada**

Prior to the Second World War, central authorities in Canada perceived cultural heterogeneity as detrimental to national interests (Dewing, 2013). An assimilationist model persisted in Canada, which assumed that individuals had to forgo their ethnic and cultural attachments, and fully adopt a Canadian identity for society to flourish (Banks, 2009). After the atrocities of the Second World War, there was increasing emphasis on an international scale for the adoption of a social justice infrastructure based on the liberal notions of human rights (Joshee, 2009). As a receiving country of a massive influx of immigrants from Europe, Canadian officials were required to rethink the status of “other ethnics” within an evolving Canadian society (Dewing, 2009). In addition, significant developments in the 1960s, such as the rise of Quebecois nationalism, and the increasing resentment emerging from ethnic minority groups regarding their place in society, led to the eventual reconfiguration of the Canadian response to diversity amongst its citizens (Dewing, 2013).

Under the leadership of Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, the landmark Multiculturalism Policy was passed in 1971, which officially designated Canada as “a multicultural nation in a bilingual framework” (Bibby, 1987, p. 158). This new policy sought to unify Canada by reconciling conflict between Francophone and Anglophone Canadians through designating both English and French as national languages, while dismissing the notion of a single dominant culture, and instead embracing the multiplicity of cultures present in Canada. The initial policy emphasized four main themes: 1) cultural groups had the right to retain and foster specific cultural identities; 2) the state had a responsibility to assist cultural groups in overcoming barriers to fully participate in Canadian society; 3) Canadian unity depended on the promotion of

intercultural exchanges; and, 4) the state would assist new immigrants in their acquisition of one of Canada's two official languages (Gerin-Lajoie, 2012). However, the primary focus following the initial inception of the *Multiculturalism Policy* (1971) was the need to remove discriminatory barriers to better facilitate the participation of cultural minority groups in all aspects of Canadian society (Dewing, 2013). While an important first step in recognizing the importance of fostering unity amongst Canada's culturally diverse citizens, the policy did more in creating a national myth, than it did in removing the barriers for minority groups. The popular metaphor of the mosaic became emblematic of Canadian society, conveying cultural pluralism as an asset and source of strength for the nation (Dewing, 2013). Meanwhile, the number of non-White immigrants continued to rise, and by the 1980s more overt forms of racism and difficulties addressing race relations placed pressure on the government to re-evaluate the multiculturalism policy (Gerin-Lajoie, 2012).

In an attempt to strengthen the adoption of multiculturalism into the national image, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982) recognized the importance of the policy, stating in Section 27 that the Charter is to "be interpreted in a manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians" (Dewing, 2013). Despite the recognition of multiculturalism as an important national policy, an extensive report released in 1987 by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Multiculturalism suggested that the policy needed to be revised, and a clearer purpose and direction instituted (Dewing, 2013). As a result, the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* was passed in 1988 making Canada the first country in the world to adopt a national multiculturalism policy into law (Gerin-Lajoie, 2012). The new policy emphasized the importance of cross-cultural understanding, and focused

on facilitating social and economic integration through the removal of barriers, and incorporation of affirmative action (Dewing, 2013). From this watershed policy, Canada emerged internationally as a country that embraced, respected and valued cultural differences, and promoted multiculturalism as Canada's strength.

Successive federal administrations, regardless of political hue, have upheld Pierre Trudeau's pluralist notion of the Canadian mosaic, and continued to promote the objectives of the *Multiculturalism Act* (1988) (Carrington & Bonnett, 1997). More recently, in 2010, the Canadian multiculturalism program was revisited, and new objectives mandated, which included: building a cohesive society, improving institutional responsiveness to diversity, and engaging internationally in discussions surrounding multiculturalism (Dewing, 2013). Despite this renewed interest in revising multiculturalism programs, budget restrictions and the onslaught of neoliberalism that persists in the public policy sphere has redirected the purpose of Canada's multiculturalism policy. An internal evaluation of the Multiculturalism Act, released in March 2012, affirmed the federal government's role in facilitating the continued importance of multicultural programming. However, the report concluded that the "broad objectives are larger than can reasonably be achieved with current resources" (Dewing, 2013). A review of the budget afforded multiculturalism corroborates the suggestion of waning resources: through the 1980s, the budget for multiculturalism was \$30 million, a figure that has since been reduced to a mere \$10 million (Jean-Pierre & Nunes, 2011). Furthermore, the Department of Canadian Heritage, which houses the federal Multiculturalism Act, demonstrates the ideological underpinnings of neoliberalism in the Department's articulation of the central goal of multiculturalism: to effectively "leverage the benefits of diversity" (Department of Canadian Heritage, 2007). These

benefits are best summarized in the policy paper, *Developing the Business Case for Multiculturalism*, where strategies for managing diversity were linked to capitalizing on international economic opportunities and ensuring national security (Joshee, 2009). Importantly, the focus of multiculturalism has shifted away from identifying and removing the systemic barriers to participation, and instead, emphasizes the economic opportunities offered by a diverse population, and the need to facilitate minority groups involvement in society as it is (Joshee, 2009). The shifting objectives of Canada's Multiculturalism Act is significant, and provides the necessary context for understanding the way in which multicultural principles have manifested in provincial education policy.

## **Multicultural Education**

In the same way that multiculturalism arose as a way to respond to the plurality of Canadian society, multicultural education arose as a response to the plurality in Canadian classrooms (Jean-Pierre & Nunes, 2011). Multicultural education is broadly understood as an approach to school reform designed to realize educational equality for all students, and assumes diversity enriches students' experiences, and the nation as a whole (Banks, 2008). While multicultural education gained popularity in the 1990s in both Canada and the United States, James Banks has maintained a prominent role as a scholar, and advocate, for the usefulness of the reform model. Multicultural education is one of the most respected models for ensuring that school programmes reflect racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity, and was developed by James Banks, the former director of the Centre for Multicultural Education at the University of Washington (1989) (Muj & Hamdan, 2013). In his more recent works, Banks has developed material intended to be used as evaluative tools to assess education systems, and provides detailed appendices to be consulted throughout the assessment process (Banks, 2008). For reviewing the most recent policy reforms put forward by the Ontario Ministry of Education, the goals and dimensions outlined below will form the basis of the assessment.

Broadly speaking, the primary goal of multicultural education reform is to help educators minimize the problems related to diversity and maximize its educational opportunities and possibilities (Banks, 2008). To fully realize the educational opportunities for integrating diversity in the classroom, reform must be perceived as essential for all students, and as promoting broad public interest (Banks, 2008). For this reason, it is important to begin with a review of the provincial policies in place that adhere to the challenges of diversity; understanding the way in

which policy grapples with diversity will inform the discussion of multicultural education principles within instructional materials, specifically, program curriculum. The specific goals and dimensions outlined in the Banks' Model are interrelated, but for the sake of clarity, they are summarized separately. There are five central goals of multicultural education that should be articulated in the policy statement, and/or objective(s), of education policy reform. Banks (2009) argues that the goal of multicultural education is to:

- (1) "help individuals gain greater self-understanding" (p.2);
- (2) "provide students with cultural, ethnic and language alternatives" (p. 2);
- (3) "provide all students with the skills, attitudes, and knowledge needed to function within their community cultures, within the mainstream culture, and within and across other ethnic cultures" (p. 2);
- (4) "reduce the pain and discrimination that members of some ethnic and racial groups experience" (p. 3); and
- (5) "restructure schools" (p. 3).

In achieving these goals, Banks (2009) describes five dimensions that must be attended to in order to effectively implement multicultural education reform. The dominant dimension, and the one most frequently cited as evidence of multicultural education, is *content integration*. This includes the incorporation of teaching material from a variety of cultures and groups, and connects to achieving the first four goals listed above. In describing the dimensions, however, Banks cautions that content integration alone is not enough to facilitate a beneficial multicultural education system. Reform must also emphasize the need for instructors to describe and deconstruct the *knowledge construction process*. In other words, teachers must be provided the guidelines and resources to help students understand how knowledge is created, and how it is influenced by race, ethnicity, gender and/or social-class. Furthermore, teachers need effective instructional tools to expose students to the way in which "cultural assumptions, frames of reference, perspectives and biases influence the way knowledge is constructed" (Banks, 2009, p.

31). There must also be a prevalent focus on *prejudice reduction* through teaching strategies and materials, which means ensuring that teaching materials depict diverse cultures and perspectives, and that ethnic and racial groups are depicted in realistic ways. The objective is to ensure that students have the resources and teaching instruction that helps them to develop positive racial attitudes (Banks, 2009). In facilitating the learning of students of all backgrounds, an *equity pedagogy* should guide education reforms, in that, there should be a clear commitment to adopting culturally responsive ways of teaching, and adjusting teaching strategies to meet the needs of the student body. Finally, in tackling the most challenging goal, restructuring schools, a commitment to creating an *empowering school culture*, and social structure, must be present in reforms (Banks, 2009). This can take the form of recruiting teachers that are reflective of the diverse population, providing spaces on campus that reflect the needs of the students, such as areas dedicated for prayer, and more pronounced encouragement of students to draw on their cultural experiences to enrich the school community.

In seeking to achieve the goals outlined, and implementing the dimensions of multicultural education to reach these goals, Banks (2008) emphasizes the long-term commitment to equality and equity for all students needed to ensure structural changes occur to facilitate the success of all students in the education system. In evaluating two important education policies implemented by the Ontario Ministry of Education, this model will be referred to as an evaluative tool, and aid in assessing the extent to which Canada's national multiculturalism policy has manifested in provincially legislated policies. Following the review of the recent education policies, a case study on the *Ontario Language Curriculum* for Grade 3 and Grade 6 will be presented utilizing four approaches developed by Banks to evaluate curriculum documents within a multicultural education model.



## **Education Policy: Responding to Diversity**

Multicultural education might be conceived as a natural outcome given the federal policy of multiculturalism, but education is a provincial responsibility, and each province mandates its own priorities (Jean-Pierre & Nunes, 2011; Segeren & Kutsyuruba, 2012). While an examination of the full range of multicultural education policy across the provinces and territories would be useful, for the purposes of this paper, the discussion will focus on Canada's largest province, Ontario. There are a number of different ministries and agencies, as well as individual school boards that impact the multicultural nature of the education system. However, the central authority, the Ministry of Education, will be the focus of discussion, specifically examining two significant education reform strategies that are related to multicultural education: the *Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity* policy (1993) and the *Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy* (2009). As Canada's most diverse province, the Ontario Ministry of Education has a responsibility to foster respect and understanding among racial, ethnic and cultural groups in the classroom. The persistence of teaching materials and strategies, as well as a school structure, developed from a Eurocentric perspective encourages some students to see themselves as "superior", and other students to see themselves as "inferior" (Mujawamariya & Hamdan, 2013). The two policies implemented by the Ministry of Education attempt to address some of these concerns, and there are direct connections to the tenets of multicultural education, as developed in the Banks' Model. However, analysis will show that the success of these policies is undermined by the competing neoliberal principles that are counter-intuitive to the goals of multicultural education. This finding inspired the chapter that follows, in which a further investigation of Ontario's curriculum documents is conducted to explore the extent to which these competing discourses at the policy level manifest themselves in the primary teaching resource: the curriculum.

## Tenets of Multicultural Education

In March 1986, the Ontario Ministry of Education hosted a conference called ‘Schooling in Ontario’s Multicultural Society’, and the focus of the conference was primarily on race and ethno-cultural relations in Ontario schools. As a result of concerns raised at the conference, an advisory committee was formed to assist in the development of race related education policies (Canadian Race Relations Foundation, 2014). Following the release of the committee’s report, *The Development of a Policy on Race and Ethnocultural Equity*, Stephen Lewis, representing the currently elected New Democratic Party (NDP), assured Ontarians that policies would be implemented to make “Ontario a model of diversity and equality” (Carrington & Bonnett, 1997, p. 416). In keeping with this promise, the *Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity* (1993) policy was implemented in support of the 1992 amendment to the Education Act. In the opening page of the policy, all of the goals of multicultural education emerge. The policy articulates the shortcomings of the current education system, in that “Ontario’s school system has been and continues to be mainly European in perspective”, and that this hinders students’ self-understanding by limiting their opportunities to benefit from a variety of perspectives (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1993, p. 5). In correcting the narrowness of the current system, the implementation of the policy highlights the importance of the second goal, suggesting that teaching materials “should reflect diverse viewpoints” (p. 12), and emphasizes the importance of “appropriate heritage language programs” (p. 19). In providing these necessary alternatives, as highlighted in the Banks’ Model, students should be equipped “with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours needed to live...in an increasingly diverse world” (p. 5). Finally, the policy objectives highlight the connectedness between reducing discrimination and restructuring the school, suggesting that through “focus[ing] on identifying and eliminating systemic

inequities and barriers to equitable education”, discriminatory practices and attitudes within the school culture will be eliminated (p. 5).

In achieving these goals, some of the dimensions, as outlined in the Banks’ Model, emerge. However, the emphasis is placed on content integration, the aspect of multicultural education that is most frequently utilized, as previously noted. This dimension reoccurs throughout the policy document, mandating that “a high priority shall be assigned to broadening the curriculum to include diverse perspectives” (p. 8), and reaffirming the need for “teaching to reflect the contributions of diverse cultures” (p. 13). In concluding, the objective is clear when the policy emphasizes that efforts will ensure “the curriculum reflects the realities of a culturally and racially diverse society” (p. 19). While content integration is one of the dimensions of multicultural education, Banks (2008) is clear that this dimension alone cannot achieve the ultimate goals of multicultural education, and, in turn, cannot reach the goals of this policy that so closely align with those outlined in the Banks’ Model. Another dimension that is prevalent, but to a lesser extent, is prejudice reduction, initially highlighted in the beginning of the document, when guidelines suggest teachers need to “encourage [students] to appreciate diversity and reject discriminatory attitudes and behaviours” (p. 5). This is corroborated in other areas of the policy, where “eliminating stereotyping” (p. 8), and ensuring that “all forms of racism are challenged and removed” (p. 13) are mandated. While the policy did not effectively incorporate all five dimensions outlined in the Banks’ Model, a concerted effort was made to incorporate important tenets of multicultural education.

Over ten years after the 1993 policy was initiated, similar concerns for equity and inclusion of racial and ethnic minority students continued to plague the Ontario education system. The continued challenges posed by diversity can be, in part, attributed to the ineffective implementation of the 1993 policy which will be discussed further in the next section. In an effort to respond to these concerns, the Ontario Ministry of Education produced a revised education reform, the *Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy*, implemented in September, 2009. While the previous policy aligned itself with all the goals articulated in the Banks' Model of multicultural education, the renewed policy emphasized discrimination reduction, and much of the policy focused on the need to "understand, identify, and eliminate the biases, barriers and power dynamics that limit our students" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 11). This sentiment was interconnected with the last goal of multicultural education, in that a "system-wide approach" was necessary for eliminating discrimination (p. 9). Despite the articulation of this goal, there is a lack of guidelines for implementing these changes, which stands in contrast to the previous policy. Instead, the emphasis on discrimination reduction is tied to student achievement, and reconfiguring the curriculum to include "training and resources...on differentiated instruction" is focused on as meeting this broad goal (p. 15). While proper credence is given to the role of discrimination and systemic barriers to the achievement of racial and ethnic minority students, there is not enough evidence to argue that this policy aligns itself with the Banks' Model of multicultural education, and is certainly less so than the previous policy. In the following section, the pervasive role of neoliberalism will emerge as a prominent factor in the ineffective implementation of the 1993 *Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity* policy, and the marketization of the 2009 *Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy*.

## Neoliberal Principles

The hallmark of neoliberalism is a belief in the superiority of the free market system and an acceptance of the market principles of individualism, privatization and decentralization as applicable to multiple sectors of society (Joshee, 2009; Basu, 2004). In the policies examined, the influence of neoliberal ideology is most evident in the dismissal of many of the multicultural education tenets of the 1993 policy in its implementation, and the explicit connection between education and preparation for employment emphasized in the 2009 education policy. While the *Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity* (1993) policy emphasized a number of central tenets of multicultural education, the NDP government that legislated the education reform was defeated in 1995 by the Progressive Conservative (PC) party that had a different set of education priorities, and a much more aggressive neoliberal agenda (Sattler, 2012). Under the leadership of Mike Harris, the PC party was elected through the slogan of ‘Common Sense Revolution’, which imposed a regime of fiscal restraint, intended to improve the efficiency of the public sector through restructuring and cost-cutting strategies (Basu, 2004; Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2011). This new regime had detrimental effects on the momentum of anti-racist and multicultural education reform, as notions of equity no longer retained a high profile in provincial education policy (Carrington & Bonnett, 1997). As a result, financial and administrative resources for antiracist and equity education programs were cut, and a “colour-blind monocultural” stance was endorsed through successive education reforms (Skerrett, 2008, p. 271). In 1998, as a cost-cutting strategy, restructuring of the education system resulted in framing students in relation to preparation for the emerging knowledge-based economy, and the goal of the newly reformed system was to “increase educational standards and improve outcomes” (Basu, 2004, p. 627). This manifested in the introduction of standardized testing, and the standardization of curriculum and

assessment procedures (Basu, 2004; Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2011). Furthermore, other school programs were lost with funding cutbacks, including English as a Second Language (ESL) programs and heritage language programs (Basu, 2004). The emphasis on the neoliberal agenda of fiscal restraint, accountability, and efficiency meant the complete repeal of the multicultural education tenets prevalent in the *Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity* policy legislated in 1993.

Unfortunately, the defeat of the PC party in 2003 by the Liberal party, and the party's re-election in 2007, did not bring about the reinstatement of the goals of the previous education equity policy (Joshee, 2009). The newly mandated *Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy* in 2009 emphasized the need to close the achievement gap that persists between racial and ethnic minority students and white students (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009). However, unlike the previous policy implemented by the NDP party, this need was justified through a neoliberal discourse that focuses on students' academic success as central to "creating a strong economy that will secure Ontario's future prosperity" (p. 5). This is reemphasized several times throughout the policy, and echoes much of the discourse of the Harris PC party, especially in the connection between student success and the economy in this policy statement: "Today's global, knowledge-based economy makes the ongoing work in our schools critical to our students' success in life and to Ontario's economic future" (p. 6). Furthermore, the core priorities guiding the policy do not mention inclusivity, notions of the equity pedagogy, or school reform. Instead, the three priorities perpetuate a neoliberalist discourse: "1) high levels of student achievement; 2) reduced gaps in student achievement; and 3) increased public confidence in publicly funded education" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 5). This emphasis reflects a standards-led reform model, which is greatly contradictory to a multicultural education reform model. In a

standards-led reform model, student expectations are set-out in the curriculum, and teachers are expected to prepare students for meeting these expectations on an administered large-scale standardized test (Adamowycz, 2008, p. 7). In Ontario, the provincial assessment program is the responsibility of the Educational Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO), and this organization sets the standards for student achievement, and students are tested against literacy and numeracy standards in Grade 3, Grade 6, and Grade 9 (Klinger, DeLuca & Miller, 2008; EQAO, 2007). These assessments do not take into account socio-demographic factors, and leads to over-emphasis on high test scores, which greatly contradicts the tenets of multicultural education, and even the notions of inclusivity and equity conveyed by the title of the Ontario Ministry of Education's policy document. Unfortunately, the policy strongly links student success with their future contribution to Ontario's economy, and the measurement of student success is driven by narrow definitions of academic achievement, namely test scores (Joshee, 2009; Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2011). Despite the appearance of an equity education policy, any tenets of multicultural education are undermined by the further reinforcement of the neoliberal accountability agenda implemented by the PC party in 1995.

There is a clear entrenchment of neoliberal features in the education policies reviewed, and this has resulted in the emphasis on improving the academic achievement of students in order to remain competitive in the global economy (Basu, 2004). This emphasis on the individual student, and achievement standards, is greatly removed from tenets of multicultural education that dictate a commitment to school reform designed to realize educational equality and equity of opportunity for all students (Banks 2008). Importantly, test scores, and decontextualized achievement data, excludes a consideration of socio-demographic factors, such as race, ethnicity,

and linguistic background, and neglects to appreciate the capacity of socio-demographic factors impact on student performance (Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2011). The review provided of the policies legislated at the provincial level for education reform in relation to multiculturalism provides the necessary context for understanding the way in which policy manifests in curriculum, the resource created for the teachers that are responsible for educating the diverse student population in Ontario.



## **The Case Study: Ontario's Language Curriculum**

The previous section outlined the way in which the provincial education policy sphere is currently being shaped by the interplay of neoliberal and multicultural education discourses (Joshee, 2009). Despite the neoliberal principles that undermine some of the multicultural tenets of the most recent education policy reforms, curriculum reform offers an important avenue for the tenets of multicultural education to be emphasized in teacher instruction. Beyond provincial policy, the instruction at the school level has the ability to enhance minority students' learning and equalize opportunities for success across racial and cultural groups of students (Taylor & Hoechsmann, 2011).

The language program is of particular importance, as proficiency in English is indispensable for students' future learning, and educational and career opportunities. The necessity to engage all students in reading and writing from an early age is crucial for the development of effective language understanding and application across disciplines (Segeren & Kutsyuruba, 2012). The imperative to engage all students, but especially immigrant students, in language studies is evident when reviewing the most recent patterns of immigrant student achievement: according to the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth, vocabulary tests showed that students of Allophone<sup>1</sup> immigrant parents are at a substantial disadvantaged compared to the locally-born students at the elementary level (qtd. in Broomes, 2013). Furthermore, schools with a high proportion of students enrolled in the English as a Second Language program (ESL) are consistently ranked lowest in test scores within the province (Volante, 2007). Curriculum reform that embodies the principles of multicultural education

---

<sup>1</sup> Allophone: Mother tongue is neither English or French, Canada's two official languages

would effectively reverse what many studies have already argued: many students lack interest in the knowledge and skills privileged by the elite because the curriculum does not relate to or connect with their lives or identities (Giroux, 1981; Muj & Hamdan, 2013; Mujawamariya, Hujleh, & Lima-Kerckhoff, 2014). These studies also confirm that members of racial and cultural minority groups are among those most marginalized from the learning process, and that this marginalization stems from a sense of alienation produced by the curriculum content itself (Muj & Hamdan, 2013). Therefore, this case study seeks to assess *The Ontario Curriculum, Grade 1 – 8: Language, 2006 (Revised)*, specifically in terms of the extent to which it promotes principles of multicultural education by exposing students to diverse narratives, and providing ample guidance for teachers to engage a diverse student population. This assessment includes a comparison of the *Ontario Language Curriculum (OLC)* of 2006 with its immediate predecessor from 1997, examining Grades 3 and 6, as province-wide literacy assessments are administered at these grades.

## Methodology

### *Assessment Criteria for the Language Curriculum*

The assessment of any curriculum document requires the application of an evaluative measure. As previously described, I am interested in assessing how and to what extent, the OLC exposes students to diverse narratives, perspectives, and teaching strategies. In keeping with multicultural education reform, the vision is that every student be represented in what he or she is learning.

As previously described in relation to the Ontario Ministry of Education policy reforms, the Banks Model of multicultural education reform is one of the most respected models for ensuring that school programmes reflect racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity (Muj & Hamdan,

2013). The previous discussion emphasized the broad goals and dimensions of multicultural education as depicted in policy reform. For the purposes of evaluating curricula, Banks defined four general approaches for integrating racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity into school programmes. These are the “Contributions Approach”, the “Additive Approach”, the “Transformation Approach”, and the “Social Action Approach”. The Contributions Approach is applied when

"teachers insert isolated facts about ethnic and cultural group heroes and heroines into the curriculum without changing the structure of their lesson plans and units. Often when this approach is used, lessons about ethnic minorities are limited primarily to ethnic holidays and celebrations" (Banks, 1997, p. 13)

The Contributions Approach represents a very minimal attempt at incorporating diversity into the curriculum. The Additive Approach, while very similar, is distinguished by adding supplementary units about ethnic and cultural groups into the school curriculum, going beyond the mere insertion of “isolated facts”. Indeed,

"in this approach, the organization and structure of the curriculum remains unchanged. Special units on ethnic and cultural groups are added to the curriculum, such as units on African Americans in the [American] West, Indian Removal, and the internment of Japanese Americans" (Banks, 1997, p. 14)

While the first two approaches are very similar, the Transformation Approach represents a much greater investment in the integration of racial, ethnic and cultural diversity through altering the core content of the curriculum. This approach,

"brings content about ethnic and cultural groups from the margin to the center of the curriculum. It helps students to understand how knowledge is constructed and how it reflects the experiences, values, and perspectives of its creators. In this approach, the structure, assumptions, and perspectives of the curriculum are changed so that the concepts, events and issues taught are viewed from the perspectives and experiences of a range of racial, ethnic, and cultural groups. The center of the curriculum no longer focuses on mainstream and dominant groups, but on an event, issue, or concept that is viewed from many different perspectives and points of view" (Banks, 1997, p. 15)

The Social Action approach, along with the Transformation Approach, represents the way in which effective reform can foster greater understanding and respect among racial, ethnic and cultural group through positive action. This approach provides,

"Opportunities for action [which] help students develop a sense of personal and civic efficacy, faith in their ability to make changes in the institutions in which they live, and situations to apply knowledge they have learned... Action activities and projects should be tuned to the cognitive and moral development levels of students. Practicality and feasibility should also be important considerations" (Banks, 1997a, p. 15)

In the section that follows, these four approaches are applied as an evaluative tool for the 1997 and 2006 (Revised) versions of *The Ontario Language Curriculum* for Grade 3 and Grade 6.

#### *Classical Content Analysis of the Language Curriculum*

This study explores the extent to which the 1997 OLC reflected the implementation of the *Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity* policy (1993), and the degree to which the revised version of the 2006 OLC, through the claims made by the Ontario Ministry of Education in its 2009 strategy aimed at fostering equity through the elimination of discrimination and barriers to student success and inclusivity in all instructional materials, is in fact inclusive and anti-discriminatory. The underlying premise of this study reflects the sentiments articulated in the multicultural education reform model developed by James Banks: the language curriculum should reflect, and be relevant to, the multiracial, multiethnic and multicultural character of Ontario's students (Banks, 2009). This means that the language curriculum should be inclusive of ethnicity (for example, Anglo-Saxon, French, Aboriginal, African, East Asian, South Asian, Middle Eastern, Hispanic/Latino and Portuguese), gender (male and female), social class, and people with special needs.

These features were examined through a classical content analysis (CCA) of the two OLC documents (1997 and 2006). In a similar case study, Mujawamariya and Hamdan (2013) used CCA as text interpretation method to review the extent racial and ethnic diversity was present in Ontario's Science and Technology Curriculum for Grades 1 to 8. Similarly, CCA was chosen to provide an appropriate method to gain a sense of the scope of anti-discriminatory messages, representations of diversity and any non-Western examples or units integrated into the 1997 and 2006 versions of the OLC. Importantly, when analyzing the curriculum documents, I blended the analysis of manifest content, "those elements that are physically present", such as the examples tabulated in Table 1, and latent content, "an interpretive reading of the symbolism underlying the physical data", which is incorporated in the brief discussion following Table 1, that describes the aspects of neoliberalism that emerged within the curriculum documents (Berg, 2001, p. 352).

In performing my analysis on the curriculum document, and to ensure my sample was thorough, the document was analyzed in two parts: 1) an initial analysis of the individual curriculum exercises to eliminate exercises that unequivocally did not meet any of the Banks Model approaches; and 2) a more thorough analysis of the remaining exercises against examples provided by Banks (1997), and as demonstrated in a similar case study. The curriculum exercises were separated by grade and by instructional strand (i.e. oral, writing, or reading) and each exercise was labelled numerically. The exercises in each curriculum document were inputted into a spreadsheet, and each exercise analyzed individually against the four approaches outlined by the Banks Model. This initial step eliminated the majority of exercises, as more often than not, the exercise could not be argued to have any relation to diversity, inclusivity, or equity. For example, exercises that emphasized the understanding of semantics, text patterns and elements of

style did not specify specific learning materials, or articulate any appreciation for the diverse learning needs of students. After this initial elimination, the exercises remaining for more careful review and categorization were more closely analyzed against examples provided in the Banks Model to assist in determining the extent to which an exercise met one of the four approaches. In addition, the similar case study conducted by Mujawamariya and Hamdan (2013) was a great asset in comparing their categorization of exercises found in Ontario's Science and Technology Curriculum for Grades 1 to 8. I am confident that the careful analysis performed on each exercise individually, and then the subsequent analysis conducted against numerous examples provided in the Banks Model and a similar case study, has resulted in an unbiased selection of every example of content within each curriculum that meets the criteria specified in the four Banks Model approaches.

The following discussion provides ample examples drawn from the 1997 and 2006 version of the OLC, and the degree, or lack thereof, to which the approaches described above are present in the documents.

### Presentation of Findings

The following table sets out extracts from the 1997 and 2006 versions of *The Ontario Curriculum, Grade 1-8: Language*, with a specific focus on Grades 3 and 6. The table includes all the parts of the two versions of the OLC that can be considered to satisfy one or more of the Banks-based assessment criteria. The table includes only the instructional material for Grade 3 and Grade 6; the table is followed by a brief overview of some of the most notable extracts, as well as extracts from introductory sections of the curriculum, not included in the table.

As can be seen in the table, my analysis of the 1997 version of the OLC for Grades 3 and 6 contained no statements that might be interpreted as promoting diversity. Instead, opening remarks in the Introduction echo much of the neoliberalist discourse articulated by the 1995 Progressive Conservative (PC) party that was in power at the time of this documents development. The goal of the 1997 OLC is to provide consistent and challenging programming for students to prepare them with the “knowledge and skills that will help them compete in a global economy” (p. 3). This emphasis on economic preparation is repeated throughout the curriculum document, and language acquisition for newcomer students demonstrates the over-emphasis on economic contribution goals. In the section following the Introduction, teachers are provided a brief description for preparing lesson plans with students that are English-language learners. Firstly, these students are understood within a deficit-oriented discourse, in that non-English speaking students are inherently “lacking the necessary language skills” (OLC, 1997, p. 7). This sentiment directly challenges the principles of multicultural education that perceives linguistic diversity as an enrichment to students’ individual learning experience, and the classroom as a whole (Banks, 2008). However, most troublesome is the emphasis that teachers are expected to engage students, and interest them in language learning, by “helping students understand that language skills are employability skills that are important in many careers” (OLC, 1997, p. 7).

**Table 1:** Extracts from the OLC 1997 and 2006 that Satisfy Banks' Principles of Multicultural Education

Grade Level	Extract from OLC 1997	Banks-based Criterion	Extract from OLC 2006	Banks-based Criterion
Grade 3	None	N/A	1.6 extend understanding of oral texts by connecting the ideas in them to their own knowledge and experience; to other familiar texts, including print and visual texts; and to the world around them (e.g.[...] compare oral texts with similar themes from different cultures) (OLC, 2006, p. 65)	Contributions
			2.5 identify some vocal effects, including tone, pace, pitch, and volume, and use them appropriately, and with sensitivity towards cultural differences (OLC, 2006, p. 65)	Contributions
			2.6 identify some non-verbal cues, including facial expression, gestures, and eye contact, and use them in oral communications, appropriately and with sensitivity towards cultural differences (OLC, 2006, p. 65)	Contributions
			1.1 read a variety of literary texts (e.g. [...] traditional Aboriginal stories) (OLC, 2006, p. 67)	Contributions
			1.4 describe how different audiences might respond to specific media texts (e.g. [...] responses of different age groups or of children from different countries to the magazine) (OLC, 2006, p. 73)	Contributions



Grade Level	Extract from OLC 1997	Banks-based Criterion	Extract from OLC 2006	Banks-based Criterion
Grade 6	None	N/A	2.4 use appropriate words and phrases from the full range of their vocabulary including inclusive and non-discriminatory language [...] (OLC, 2006, p. 109)	Contributions
			2.5 identify a range of vocal effects, including tone, pace, pitch, and volume, and use them appropriately, and with sensitivity towards cultural differences (OLC, 2006, p. 109)	Contributions
			2.6 identify some non-verbal cues, including facial expression, gestures, and eye contact, and use them in oral communications, appropriately and with sensitivity towards cultural differences (OLC, 2006, p. 109)	Contributions
			1.1 identify the topic, purpose, and audience for a variety of writing forms (e.g. an original poem, with an invented structure or based on a model such as a haiku, about a topic of personal interest, to share with the class) (OLC, 2006, p. 114)	Additive
			2.5 identify their point of view and other possible points of view [...] adjust their thinking and expression if appropriate (e.g. revise writing focusing on the use of inclusive language) (OLC, 2006, p. 115)	Contributions
			2.7 make revisions to improve the content, clarity and interest of their written work, using a variety of strategies (e.g. [...] check that language is inclusive and non-discriminatory) (OLC, 2006, p. 115)	Contributions
			1.4 explain why difference audiences (e.g. boys, girls, adults, seniors, various cultural groups) might have different responses to media texts (OLC, 2006, p. 117)	Contributions

Grade Level	Extract from OLC 1997	Banks-based Criterion	Extract from OLC 2006	Banks-based Criterion
Grade 6	None	N/A	1.5 identify whose point of view is presented in a media text, identify missing or alternative points of view [...] (e.g.[...] evaluate the portrayal of Aboriginal people in the media)	Additive
			<p><i>Teacher prompt:</i> What bias or stereotypes can you detect in this advertisement? [...] Are there different portrayals of Aboriginal people in the media? How are they different? Why are they different? Which ones are most accurate? (OLC, 2006, p. 118)</p> <hr/> <p>3.4 produce a variety of media texts for specific purposes and audiences [...] (e.g.[...] a travelogue illustrating the journey of an early Canadian explorer, including contacts with First Nations peoples) (OLC, 2006, p. 119)</p>	Contributions

Beyond the economic contribution trope throughout the document, large-scale assessment and high achievement is another prominent theme. In reviewing the introductory instructions for teachers, there is no mention of ensuring that every student is reflected, or that diverse perspectives are offered in teaching resources. In contrast, teachers are expected to “challenge students to read and respond thoughtfully to works of classic literature” (OLC, 1997, p. 3). Classic literature is predominantly written by, and reflective of, white Western culture. The influence of the PC party goals to “increase educational standards and improve outcomes” (Basu, 2004, p. 627), is evident by the emphasis that this curriculum document “will ensure consistency across the province, and will facilitate province-wide testing” (OLC, 1997, p. 3). In attaining the skills necessary for the workplace, the Introduction very clearly highlights the priority to ensure “high achievement...for all students” (OLC, 1997, p. 4). The over-emphasis throughout the document of employability as the ultimate goal of learning and high achievement as essential to student success, demonstrates the neoliberalist discourse that is prominent within the 1997 OLC at the expense of any notion of multicultural education.

The 2006 OLC replaced the 1997 document, and was revised following the implementation of the *Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy* in September, 2009. The Grade 3 and Grade 6 components of the 2006 OLC yielded no more than 14 statements that might be considered as satisfying one of the above Banks criteria. While this would appear to represent a very large improvement over the 1997 version in terms of the number of diversity-related statements, in terms of their substance, this only represents a modest improvement over the previous version. Many of the extracts included in the above table are expressed at high levels of generality without supporting details or instructions. For example, in the Oral Communication

strand for both Grade 3 and Grade 6, students are expected to communicate “appropriately, and with sensitivity towards cultural differences” (OLC, 2006, p. 65; p. 109). This sentiment accounts for 4 of the 14 statements yielded in this evaluation, and yet, there are no further instructions as to what this actually means, and how teachers would ensure, or make students aware, of cultural sensitivity in oral communication. In many instances, the sentiments that qualify as meeting the Banks-based criteria is found in brackets as a suggestion, or as a ‘Teacher Prompt’, rather than imbedded in the instructional material itself as a mandatory expectation. In the Grade 6 section, for example, the suggestion to use, or revise written work to include, inclusive language is repeated in three different expectations (2.4, 2.5, and 2.7). However, it is framed as a suggestion, and no further information is provided to help students understand the nature of inclusive language, and how to revise written work so that it reflects inclusivity.

In an important contrast, and improvement, to the 1997 OLC, the section on Program Planning Considerations in the 2006 OLC is much more extensive, and emphasizes the importance of incorporating and engaging English-language learners in the classroom. Teachers are encouraged to appreciate the “rich diversity of background knowledge and experience” these students bring to the classroom, and the way in which “students’ linguistic and cultural backgrounds...become a cultural asset in the classroom community” (OLC, 2006, p. 26). Nevertheless, the onus for creating opportunities to engage English-language learners in their language acquisition, and the classroom environment, falls on the teacher, and there is no provision of strategies, or appendix provided with resources, to assist teachers in this responsibility. The high generality of expectations, without any supporting details or instructions, gives the impression that these notions of inclusivity, and integrating diversity into student

expectations are merely recommendations, and up to the teachers' discretion, rather than mandatory principles to be implemented.

Finally, while there is a recognizable decrease in direct neoliberalist sentiments in this document, particularly in relation to language learning as a direct influence on employability, there remains an emphasis on student achievement. Similar to the discussion presented in the 2009 *Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy*, the emphasis on the implementation of antidiscriminatory principles is to “promote a school climate that encourages all students to work to high standards” (OLC, 2006, p. 28). This expectation follows the conclusion of the section that highlighted the assessment and evaluation measures for student achievement, which emphasizes that the curriculum is meant to prepare students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in applicable assessment measures. For Grade 3 and Grade 6, teachers are instructed that students will be “provided with varied opportunities to demonstrate the full extent of their achievement of curriculum expectations through the admission of province-wide assessment testing” (OLC, 2006, p. 19). The emphasis on student achievement measured by standardized testing leads to teachers “teaching to test” rather than for students’ engagement and learning progress (Adamowycz, 2008, p.10).

## Discussion

In comparing the 2006 OLC with its immediate predecessor (1997), it is evident a concerted effort was made to convey the impression that Ontario’s diversity was recognized, and the authors attempted to advance the principles of multicultural and anti-discriminatory education. This is most clear in the Introduction of the OLC (2006), when the authors argue,

supporting my own claim, that “if [students] see themselves and others in the text they read and the oral and media works they engage in, they are able to feel that the works are genuinely for and about them, and they come to appreciate the nature and value of a diverse, multicultural society” (p. 4). Furthermore, the very basis of the language curriculum is argued to be founded “on the understanding that students learn best when they can identify themselves and their own experiences in the material they read and study at school” (OLC, 2006, p. 5). Despite this very clear priority to ensure the language curriculum is more inclusive of diverse texts, narratives and oral and media studies materials, the 2006 OLC does not deliver on its improved, multicultural-based, expectations. While these expectations echo the *Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy* (2009), like a number of other studies have shown, developed policies from the provincial level have only had minor impacts on the educational practices that take place in the school-level, particularly in regard to curriculum reform, and implementation (Segeren & Kutsyuruba, 2012; Muj & Hamdan, 2013; Mujawamariya, Hujleh, & Lima-Kerckhoff, 2014).

There are a number of reasons why a provincially legislated policy that appears grounded in the priority to provide equitable and inclusive measures to reach every student has failed to transcend into adequate curriculum reform. The first, and most important reason, is that multicultural and anti-discriminatory education principles cannot be perceived as recommendations; they must be mandatory, and have a substantial place in the curriculum. The most critical aspect of multicultural curriculum reform model, as evident in the four approaches provided by the Banks Model, is the provision of clear instructions and concrete examples for teachers (Banks, 2008; Muj & Hamdan, 2013). Only if the curriculum provides appropriate guidance to teachers, including explicit examples and efficient resources that depict the diversity of Ontario’s classrooms, will all students benefit from the exposure to diverse texts and

narratives for elementary literacy development. Effective curriculum reform that embodies the principles of multicultural education would effectively reverse what many studies have already argued: many students lack interest in the knowledge and skills that privilege their white Western peers because the curriculum does not reflect their experiences or identities (Giroux, 1981; Muj & Hamdan, 2013; Mujawamariya, Hujleh, & Lima-Kerckhoff, 2014). The 2006 OLC confirmed this argument in its own introduction, arguing that “students learn best when they can identify themselves and their own experiences in the material they read and study at school” (OLC, 2006, p. 5). When racial and cultural minority students are left out of the teaching materials, when their experiences are so far removed from the perspectives offered in class instruction, and when their cultural and linguistic difference is not incorporated into their learning, they are in turn marginalized from the learning process itself (Muj & Hamdan, 2013).

Another important reason the tenets of multicultural education reform have not adequately been implemented at the curriculum level is similar to the effects of neoliberalist discourse at the policy level: issues surrounding equity and diversity are subordinated under the appeal of standardization and student achievement (Segeren & Kutsyruba, 2012; Adamowycz, 2008). The provincial assessment program in Ontario is the responsibility of the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO), which is a third party organization created under the PC government in 1995 as an accountability measure for the public education system (Klinger, DeLuca & Miller, 2008). The EQAO annually administers three provincial-wide assessment tests: Literary and Numeracy Assessment for Grade 3 and Grade 6, the Grade 9 Numeracy Assessment and the Ontario Secondary School Literacy test (EQAO, 2007). The data collected from these assessments are intended to assist planning and target setting for the following cohort, and improve teaching standards through curriculum development (EQAO, 2007). This form of

reasoning leads to the taken-for-granted assumption that external testing will lead to system improvement, in that poor test-scores will provoke curriculum redevelopment, and improved standards of education, which in turn, will improve test scores (Volante, 2007). Unfortunately, the standards are set by educational ministries and statisticians, not by students' peers, and these standards do not account for the diverse social factors that impact student learning (Adamowycz, 2008). The attainment of student achievement rests on test-scores, and the standard of teaching instruction is measured by high achieving students. This leads to an over-emphasis on test-scores, and teachers planning lessons that prepare students for testing (Adamowycz, 2008). This has a logical correlation to the Ministry of Education's *Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy* (2009), in which one of the central priorities is closing the achievement gap through measure-driven literacy testing (Skerrett, 2008). While on the surface, policy strategies identify equity and inclusivity as the mechanism for improving education quality, but in practice, standardized testing continues to drive curriculum and teaching instruction, limiting any genuine implementation of multicultural education standards.



## Conclusion

In this paper, I have attempted to demonstrate the way in which the federal policy of multiculturalism, that has become so emblematic of Canadian culture, has manifested in recent provincial education policy, and in provincially developed and mandated curriculum. While multiculturalism remains a valued idea at the national level, and arguably so at the provincial level, the entrenchment of neoliberalist values at both levels of government have restrained the progress of multicultural reform.

Following the brief overview of multiculturalism in Canada, an examination of the policy response from the Ontario Ministry of Education in relation to diversity demonstrated the entrenchment of neoliberal features in the education reform strategies, which has resulted in the emphasis on improving the academic achievement of students, and adjusting the curriculum in order to remain competitive in the global economy (Basu, 2004). This emphasis on the individual student, and achievement standards, is greatly removed from tenets of multicultural education that dictate a commitment to school reform designed to realize educational equality and equity of opportunity for all students (Banks 2008). The overwhelming presence of neoliberal discourse in the education policies examined, the *Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity* policy (1993) and the *Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy* (2009), transcended the most recent versions of the *Ontario Language Curriculum* that were examined. While the most recent education reform strategy presented an official discourse of inclusivity and equity, the vague implementation measures in the policy document are prevalent in the curriculum which boasts understanding and recognition about the diverse student population and need to engage all students, however, largely lacks that practical applications to accomplish true inclusivity.

Furthermore, the curriculum emphasizes the need to prepare students for assessment, and in doing so, emphasizes test scores as the measure of student achievement. Large-scale assessment is the measure of accountability, and provides decontextualized achievement data, excluding a consideration of socio-demographic factors, such as race, ethnicity, and linguistic background, and neglects to appreciate the capacity of socio-demographic factors impact on student performance, that forms the basis for curriculum reform (Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2011).

In concluding, it is necessary to recognize that the goal to close the achievement gap is not dichotomous with a goal to foster equity and inclusivity in Ontario's classrooms. Rather, the current education policy initiatives, and preceding curriculum revisions, have missed the opportunity to pursue an avenue that has the propensity to meet both goals: multicultural education reform would engage students of all backgrounds, leading to greater inclusivity in the classroom and a student population with equitable opportunities to succeed; in turn, the achievement gap would be diminished as students currently alienated from the learning process would be engaged, seeing themselves reflected in the classroom experience. Instead, the current strategy has emphasized a standards-led reform model, which maintains a privileged position for standardized testing, and draws important resources and teacher attention away from student needs. Importantly, this study does not account for the numerous teachers that are able to foster an inclusive learning environment, and that have successfully managed to integrate diverse teaching materials and strategies into their classrooms, while meeting the expectations of the curriculum. Instead, this study has demonstrated that the Ontario Ministry of Education has failed to meaningfully implement the principles of multicultural education in the revised language curriculum, despite the sentiments articulated in recent education policies that emphasize an understanding for the need to have the diversity in the classroom reflected in

teaching materials and addressed in teaching strategies. This failure represents a missed opportunity for engaging students from marginalized communities, and fostering greater understanding between students from different backgrounds.

## References

- Adamowycz, R. (2008). Reforming education: Is inclusion in standardization possible?.  
*Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy*, 68, 1-23.
- Banks, J. (1997) *Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives*. New York, NY: John Wiley.
- Banks, J.A. (2008). *An introduction to multicultural education* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston: Pearson/Allyn and Bacon.
- Banks, J.A. (2009). Multicultural education: Dimensions and paradigms. In J.A. Banks (Ed.),  
*The Routledge international companion to multicultural education* (p. 9-32). New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis.
- Basu, R. (2004). The rationalization of neoliberalism in Ontario's public education system, 1995-2000. *Geoforum*, 35, 621-634.
- Berg, B. (2001). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Bibby, R. W. (1987). Bilingualism and multiculturalism: A national reading. In L. Driedger (Ed.), *Ethnic Canada* (pp. 158-169). Toronto: Copp Clark Pitmann Ltd.
- Broomes, O.P. (2013). More than a new country: Effects of immigration and home language on elementary students' academic achievement overtime. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 21(48), 1-17.
- Canadian Race Relations Foundation. (2014). *Resources – The development of a policy on race and ethnocultural equity*. Retrieved from: <http://crr.ca/en/library-a->

[clearinghouse/bibliographic-search-2/25-multiculturalism/23130-the-development-of-a-policy-on-race-and-ethnocultural-equity?view=item](http://clearinghouse/bibliographic-search-2/25-multiculturalism/23130-the-development-of-a-policy-on-race-and-ethnocultural-equity?view=item)

Canadian School Boards Association. (2007). *Consultation paper: Meeting the language learning and settlement needs of immigrant children and youth in Canada's school system*.

Retrieved from:

[http://www.opsba.org/index.php?q=system/files/CSBA\\_Draft\\_Consultation\\_SLL.pdf](http://www.opsba.org/index.php?q=system/files/CSBA_Draft_Consultation_SLL.pdf)

Carrington, B. & Bonnett, A. (1997). The other Canadian 'mosaic' – 'race' equity education in Ontario and British Columbia. *Comparative Education*, 33(3), 411-431.

DeLuca, C. (2013). Toward an interdisciplinary framework for educational inclusivity. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 36(1), 305-348.

Department of Canadian Heritage. (2007). *Departmental performance report, 2006-07, Canadian Heritage*. Retrieved from Archived – Canadian Heritage: <http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/dpr-rmr/2006-2007/inst/pch/pch01-eng.asp>

Dewing, M. (2013). *Canadian multiculturalism* (Report No. 2009-20-E). Retrieved from the Library of Parliament Research Publications:

<http://www.parl.gc.ca/Content/LOP/ResearchPublications/2009-20-e.htm#a4>

Educational Quality and Accountability Office. (2007). Retrieved September 7, 2015 from <http://www.eqao.com>

Gerin-Lajoie, D. (2012). Racial and ethnic diversity in schools: The case of English-Canada. *Prospects*, 42(2), 205-220.

Giroux, H. (1981). *Ideology, culture and the process of schooling*. London, UK: Falmer Press.

- Jean-Pierre, J. & Nunes, F. (2011). Multicultural education before and after the federal multiculturalism policy: A case study of the board of education of the city of Toronto. *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 43(1), 153-174.
- Joshee, R. (2009). Multicultural education policy in Canada: Competing ideologies, interconnected discourses. In J.A. Banks (Ed.), *The Routledge international companion to multicultural education* (p. 96-108). New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis.
- Kirova, A. (2008). Critical and emerging discourses in multicultural education literature: A review. *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 40(1), 101-124.
- Klinger, D.A., DeLuca, C. & Miller, T. (2008). The evolving culture of large-scale assessments in Canadian education. *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy*, 76, 1-33.
- Martino, W. & Rezai-Rashti, G. (2011). Neoliberal accountability and the politics of boys' underachievement: Steering policy by numbers in the Ontario context. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 16(4), 423-440.
- Miller, F.A. & Alvarado, K. (2005). Incorporating documents into qualitative nursing research. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, 37, 348-353.
- Mujawamariya, D. & Hamdan, A. (2013). Appropriately diverse? The Ontario science and technology curriculum tested against the Banks model. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 36(4), 416-448.

- Mujawamariya, D., Hujleh, F., & Lima-Kerckhoff, A. (2014). A re-examination of Ontario's science curriculum: Toward a more inclusive multicultural science education?. *Canadian Journal of Science, Mathematics and Technology Education*, 14(3), 269-283
- Ontario Ministry of Education (1993). *Antiracism and ethnocultural equity in school boards*. Retrieved from: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/curricul/antiraci/antire.pdf>
- Ontario Ministry of Education (2009). *Realizing the promise of diversity: Ontario's equity and inclusive education strategy*. Retrieved from: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/equity.pdf>
- Partridge, K.E. (2014). Schooling for colonization and white supremacy: Failures of multicultural inclusivity. *Proquest*, UMI 1561984.
- Prior, L. (2003). *Using documents in social research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Sattler, P. (2012). Education governance reform in Ontario: Neoliberalism in context. *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy*, 128, 1-28.
- Segeren, A. & Kutsyuruba, B. (2012). Twenty years and counting: An examination of the development of equity and inclusive education policy in Ontario (1990-2010). *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy*, 136, 1-37.
- Skerrett, A. (2008). Racializing educational change: Melting pot and mosaic influences on educational policy and practice. *Journal of Education Change*, 9, 261-280.
- Statistics Canada. (2003). *Canada's ethnocultural portrait: The changing mosaic*. Retrieved from:

<http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/products/analytic/companion/etoimm/pdf/96F0030XIE2001008.pdf>

Statistics Canada. (2008). *Canada's ethnocultural mosaic, 2006 census*. Retrieved from:

<http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/as-sa/97-562/pdf/97-562-XIE2006001.pdf>

Taylor, L.K. & Hoechsmann, M. (2011). Beyond intellectual insularity: Multicultural literacy as a measure of respect. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 34(2), 219-238.

Volante, L. (2007). Educational quality and accountability in Ontario: Past, present, and future. *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy*, 58, 1-21.