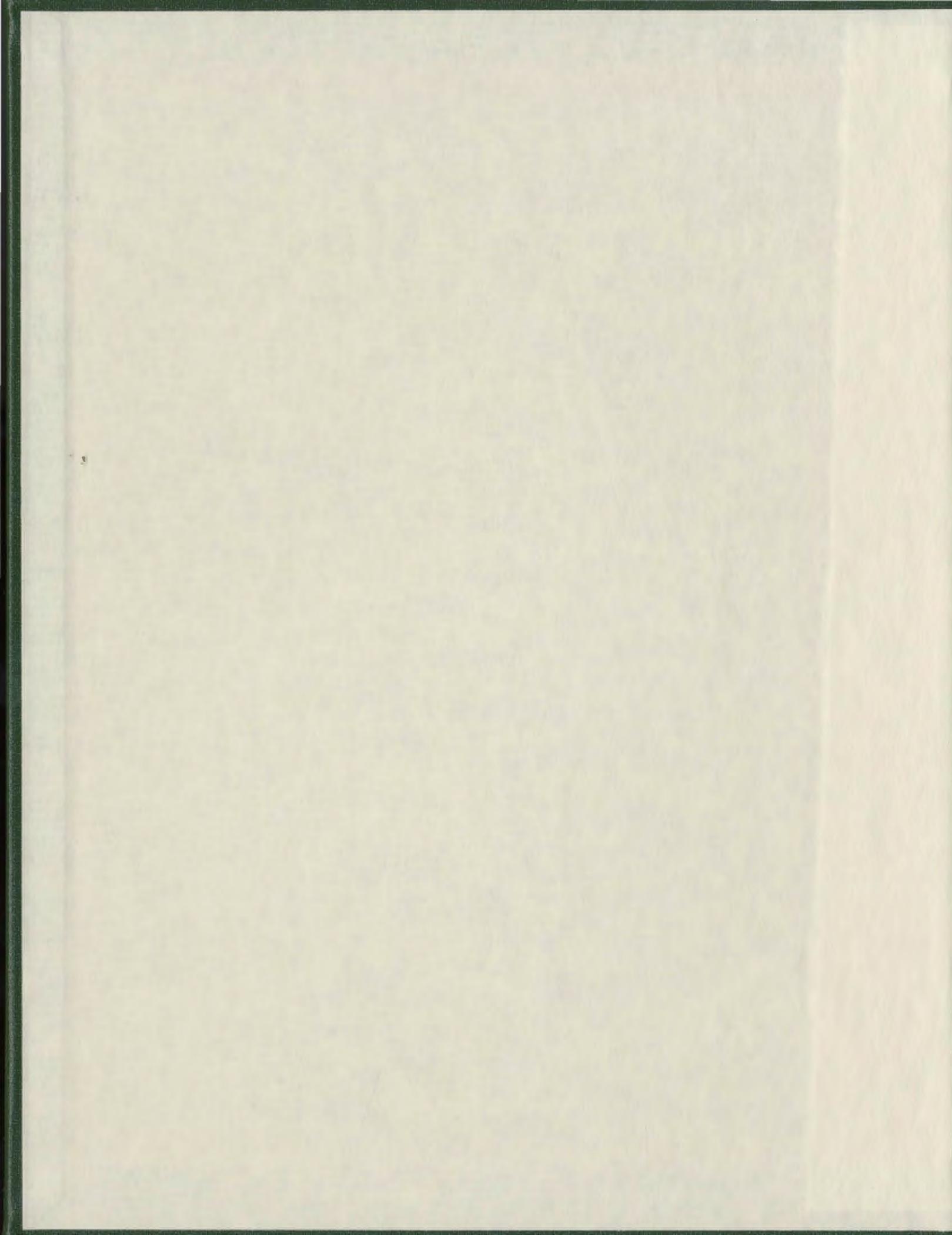


NEGOTIATING THE POLITICAL MINEFIELD OF
ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS:
A CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE

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**Negotiating the Political Minefield of English Language Arts:
A Critical Perspective**

BY

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ABSTRACT

In 2001, senior high English Language Arts (ELA) teachers in Newfoundland and Labrador witnessed the introduction of a new ELA curriculum that, to many, was viewed as a dramatic shift in theory, content, and methodology. However, a review of the history of education and the teaching of English (in Newfoundland and Labrador as well as globally) reveals that, while much remains the same, there have been continual reformulations of ELA programs since the inception of English as a subject in the nineteenth century. To better understand the most recent incarnation of the ELA program, it may be beneficial for teachers not only to review the history of English as a subject (see Chapter One) and of education in Newfoundland and Labrador (see Chapter Two) which reveal the political and ideological nature of “English teaching”, but also to consider the diverse cultural, economic, and social dynamics that exist in Newfoundland and Labrador (see Chapter Three) which may provide insight about where our students are coming from, what they need, and where they hope to go. From here, an examination of current ELA Foundation and curriculum documents (see Chapter Four), which reflect the most recent modifications to the delivery of ELA programs, will uncover the remnants of earlier formulations of the subject as well as the existence of contending, and often contradictory, ideological forces that continue to influence and be influenced by the study of ELA. There are no simple answers (nor should there be) to the overwhelming problems of attempting to resolve the contradictions in the curriculum documents; to meet the needs of our students’ diverse, complex, and hybrid identities; and to reconcile the contending ideological forces that pervade our classrooms. Yet, we must not concede helplessness nor plead ignorance. Facilitating awareness, in ourselves and our students,

becomes the first step in meeting these challenges head on and working towards an ELA program that is more democratic and beneficial to all our students (see Chapter Five).

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CHAPTER ONE

THE POLITICAL HISTORY OF EDUCATION AND ENGLISH AS A SUBJECT

Chapter Overview

The prominent position of English Language Arts (ELA) in Newfoundland and Labrador's current educational system may seem odd when one realizes that English – as a subject – is relatively young. However, in less than two hundred years, the study of English and the concept of literacy have assumed a number of stances and taken a variety of forms. At different times, advocates have promoted English as a subject as one of the following: the study of grammar; the study of canonical literature; the study of communication or work-related skills; the study of English as language; the study of English as critical literacy; or the study of English as an element of a multi-disciplinary approach to cultural studies. The emerging notions of the forms and the duties of English as a discipline reflect the historical, social, cultural, political, and economic contexts in which they continue to struggle to gain prominence. At the heart of many of these changes are conflicts among competing political ideologies, contending views of student needs, and contradictory concepts of what constitutes knowledge and learning. The longevity of these conflicts and contradictions is evident in the history of educational development in Newfoundland and Labrador (see Chapter Two); in the complex and dynamic expectations placed upon education by the province's evolving economic, social, and cultural contexts (see Chapter Three); and in the simultaneous existence of intersecting and often conflicting ideologies and objectives promoted in current educational and curriculum documents (see Chapter Four). Consequently, the focus of

English courses has fluctuated among the interests of the state, the individual, and various collectives. However, it is important to note that alterations in the concept of English and literacy do not constitute a complete break from earlier perceptions of the subject.

Remnants of earlier ideologies remain while perceptions of the role of English and how it should be taught sometimes return to previously challenged ideals. The continuing challenge for teachers is to achieve a balance among the contending ideologies and the reformulations of the subject English while striving to achieve educational goals that address the diverse and hybrid needs and interests of our students (see Chapter Five). It may be helpful to note that through all the changes, some things have remained constant: the study of English reflects a conscious or unconscious reverence for the power of discourse; the study of English is ideological; and the study of English is political. Indeed, the political clout of the subject is apparent in the Newfoundland and Labrador educational system. Amazingly, a subject, little more than a century old and once considered fit for only “women, workers and those wishing to impress the natives” (Eagleton, 2001, p. 2248), has achieved dominant status in this province (as elsewhere). Today Newfoundland and Labrador students are expected to successfully complete English courses to achieve graduation status – even at the university level (Memorial, 2006). Why does English warrant such status?

The History of an Ideology

The humble beginnings of English as a school subject did not indicate the prominence it holds in today’s institutionalized educational system. However, a review

of the history of the subject clearly reveals that, from the beginning, English was ideological and a key element in various contests to achieve and maintain political power. Indeed, Ball, Kenny, and Gardiner (1990) assert,

English teaching, the definition of what is to count as English, has been a matter of struggle and conflict between contending interests. In particular, at various points, governments have attempted to intervene in the field of English teaching in order to discipline practitioners and rectify 'unacceptable' deviations from that version of English which best suits the interests of dominant political elites. (p. 47)

Until well into the nineteenth century, English was not considered worthy of acceptance as a course of serious study. Scholars studied Classics, a course of learning largely "[focused] on great books and the Western tradition as originating in ancient Greece and Rome" (Kalantzis and Cope, 1993, p. 43). Through the written texts of the classical canon, elite intellectuals studied logic, rhetoric, mathematics, and grammar. A knowledge of Latin and/or Greek was required as the study of grammar consisted of "no more than learning the grammars of Latin and Greek" (Kalantzis and Cope, 1993, p. 38). Initially, English or the vernacular was not recognized as a legitimate subject for scholarly pursuits. In fact, as a school subject, English was first employed by imperial England as a tool to indoctrinate colonial people to recognize and accept the superiority of the mother country's values. Years passed before the subject was introduced in England; however, it was initially relegated to "Mechanics' Institutes, working men's colleges and extension lecturing circuits. English was literally the poor man's Classics" (Eagleton, 2001, p. 2247). Yet, the status of English literature – as an institution – was

elevated as the influence of religious ideology declined, and the subject's appeal was enhanced during times of social, political, and economic change or unrest. Moreover, modifications to the views of literacy often occurred as a result of shifts in the balance of power among competing social, political, or economic interest groups. These competing interests still exist today, and although some things have changed, much remains the same. English is a political entity over which various interest groups struggle for control because it is recognized as a powerful tool in controlling discourse as well as in creating and reinforcing ideologies.

The Imperial Ideal

The ideological and political nature of English is reflected in its creation. Interestingly, Willinsky (2000) indicates that English, as a subject, originated in India. In 1835, “[t]he English Education Act made English the language of instruction in the Indian schools under British colonial control” (p. 3). Language proved to be a powerful means of conquest. By consciously proliferating its language throughout the world, England has imposed a lingering and pervasive mark upon global identities. Cope and Kalantzis (2000) note, “[n]ow one billion people speak that difficult and messy little language, English, spoken four centuries ago by only about a million or so people in the vicinity of London” (p. 3). Even when allowing for population growth over four centuries, these numbers speak volumes. However, imperial England employed more than grammar and syntax to establish its authority; English literature was also engaged. Its introduction in India was partially the result of a pompous attitude that Indian

literature was so inferior that the British were being benevolent in exposing the colony to English literature – to illustrate the “highest form” of human achievement (Willinsky, 2000, p. 4). However, it was soon acknowledged that, by exposing the Indians to British literature at an early age, their attitudes and values could be molded in a way that best served imperial interests.

Following the success of the English Education Act, similar policies were imposed on other parts of the British Empire. Achebe (2001) charges that the racist portrayal of Africans in the literary canon is a deliberate and calculated product of the colonial or imperialist traditions of Europe. Achebe specifically refers to Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* and accuses Conrad of providing an inaccurate, offensive, and damaging portrait of Africa and Africans. Achebe insists that the misrepresentation of Africa is more than the result of mere ignorance; “it is the desire – one might say the need – in Western psychology to set Africa up as a foil to Europe, as a place of negations at once remote and vaguely familiar, in comparison with which Europe’s own state of spiritual grace will be manifest” (p.1784). Achebe effectively cites passages from *Heart of Darkness* to illustrate Conrad’s attempt to represent Africans as inferior or inhuman. Africans are granted the ability to speak only twice in the novel. At other times, they babble or grunt. Conrad describes Africans as “the black and incomprehensible frenzy” (cited in Achebe, 2001, p. 1786). In addition, he compares an African who works as a fireman at a boiler to a dog “walking on his hind legs” (cited in Achebe, 2001, p. 1786). Furthermore, Conrad contrasts specific European and African individuals – obviously presenting the Europeans in a more favourable light. He juxtaposes two women: an African woman and a European woman. According to Achebe (2001) asserts that the

African woman is presented as “a savage counterpart to the refined, European woman who will step forth to end the story” (p. 1787). Such examples of contrast between representatives of imperial nations and the “other” representatives of colonial territories are common in the narratives of the traditional literary canon and serve as authoritative frames through which readers identify themselves and others. Therefore, control of the literary canon is necessary for the survival and propagation of the imperial ideology.

Said (1993) states, “[t]he power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism”, and culture “is a source of identity” (p. xiii). Thus, “educating” colonial people, not only in the grammatical rules and regulations of standard English language, but also through the ideological tool of the great British literary tradition, legitimizes the perceived superiority of the identity of inhabitants of the imperial power while negating the value of the identity of colonial people. Such forms of educational imperialism are so effective that oppressed people, rather than seeing the elite or imperialistic people as oppressors, view them as the ideal. Therefore, as Friere (1970) notes,

the oppressed, instead of striving for liberation, tend themselves to become oppressor, or ‘sub-oppressors.’ . . . Their ideal is to be men; but for them, to be men is to be oppressors. This is their model of humanity . . . This does not necessarily mean that the oppressed are unaware that they are downtrodden. But their perception of themselves as oppressed is impaired by their submersion in the reality of oppression. At this level, their perception of themselves as opposites of the oppressor does not yet signify engagement in a struggle to overcome the contradiction; the one

pole aspires not to liberation, but to identification with its opposite pole.
(pp. 29-30)

This reflects the subversive power of literary imperialism, the remnants of which are still evident today. Achebe (2001) notes that Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* is still part of the established reading list in many university English courses.

Such imperialistic policies in the teaching of English were pervasive in colonial territories throughout the world. Indeed, Walker (1990) notes that from 1894 to 1932, even the composition and the grading of formal examinations, administered to Newfoundland students, were conducted in England. Therefore, "it is hardly surprising that the grammatical knowledge demanded by the Newfoundland examination was also of the same kind taught and examined in British schools at the same time" (Shayer cited in Walker, 1990, p. 163). The desire to employ English teaching as a means of reinforcing the glory of the mother country is also reflected in Newfoundland's *Report and Syllabus for 1912* of the Council of Higher Education. One of the assigned composition topics for Newfoundland students was "O! to be in England, Now that April's there" (cited in Walker, 1990, p. 163). Furthermore, besides the instruction of English grammar and the assignment of "Empire-friendly" composition topics, mass schooling facilitated the proliferation of British literature. Willinsky (2000) writes, "[f]rom India to Canada, . . . students were to be infused with this civilizing testament to the mother country's natural moral and literary greatness" (p. 5). Even in the post-colonial era, the formal education system and the instruction of English in former British colonies reflect substantial remnants of the imperialist agenda. Students of English still study "the classics" as well as the issues and morals they depict. In colonial

Newfoundland and in provincial Newfoundland and Labrador, the situation is similar.

Kelly (1993) recalls her schooling in Newfoundland after Confederation:

As a female child in a small Newfoundland community, school was a place where I was subjected to history, knowledge, language and culture as imperialism. I absorbed residue curriculum and instruction from an English (British) system of schooling as indifference, belittlement, homogenization and service to God, nation and men. (p. 58)

Furthermore, a quick look at the prescribed reading lists in the Newfoundland and Labrador senior high English Language Arts academic curriculum reveals the staying power of the traditional canon with the study of a Shakespearean play being the one compulsory, specific, content requirement in English 3201 (Newfoundland, June 2003, p.62).¹ The ideological power of formal education and of English as a separate discipline, not only to promote hegemony and an unquestioning allegiance to the mother country, but also to endorse a specific set of moral values was to become a valuable tool at home as well as abroad.

The Moral Ideal

The subliminal usefulness and the ideological success of the study of English literature in the colonies was quickly recognized and repeated in the motherland itself as “[w]hat proved fit for the improvement of native children in colonial schools was then thought suitable for the industrial classes of Great Britain” (Willinsky, 2000, p. 4).

¹ Although the curriculum guides for English 1201, 2201 and 3201 indicate that other plays and novels are to be studied, the choices are optional. Shakespeare, however, is a must in each course.

Morgan (1990) writes,

[s]ignificantly the birth of English studies [in Great Britain] coincided with the rise of an industrial bourgeoisie and the need felt by ruling class groups for new ways of forming 'free', moral, and affective subjectivity in the drastically altered social and economic circumstances of the late nineteenth century. (p. 199)

Indeed, English, as a school subject, was to be a safeguard against the declining moral values of and the growing possibility of social challenges from the emerging urban working class. The concern for declining values also coincided with the waning influence of religion during the Victorian era. However, literature provided an effective ideological replacement to religion. Eagleton (2001) suggests that literature – a “similar discourse” – like religion and other successful ideologies, “works much less by explicit concepts or formulated doctrines than by image, symbol, habit, ritual and mythology” (p. 2244). While the parallels Eagleton notes are true, it may be argued that the promotion of morality through the study of literature is even less explicit than the preaching of religious values in an institutionalized church. The pleasurable aspect of reading literature makes its purpose subliminal. Through a seemingly indirect and delightful route, literature was to civilize, to enlighten, and to instruct “the great unwashed” by initiating them into a great cultural heritage of “the best that is known and thought” (Arnold cited in Leitch, 2001, p.1877). The delivery of literature in England mirrored the elitist and condescending practice in the colonies. Eagleton refers to Arnold’s nineteenth century notion that literature could “cultivate the philistine middle class, who have proved unable to underpin their political and economic power with a suitably rich and

subtle ideology”(2001, p. 2245). At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Davis, Sumara, and Luce-Kapler (2000) observe, “formal education has to do with one group’s desires – conscious and not conscious – to have another group *see* things in the same way” (p. 3). Clearly this is not a new revelation. Practically from their inception, mass public education and English as a subject were acknowledged ideological tools, effective in imposing the values of some upon others. This connection between formal schooling, the teaching of literature, and the imposition of “morals” or religious values has been evident in Newfoundland and Labrador.

In this province, the early funding of education by churches and religious organizations as well as the maintenance of a denominational system into the 1990s (see Chapter Two) clearly reflects the ideological link between school and religion. However, state funding of education and the demise of the denominational system have not detracted from education’s – and literature’s – perceived moral imperative. Willinsky (2000) suggests that though “we have long since secularized literature teaching, our tendency is still to focus on the ethical and moral dilemmas raised by literary works, which continues the civilizing mission” (p.5).

The Civic and Economic Ideal

Closely related to education’s aim of maintaining moral values were the goals of instilling an acceptance of the social status quo as well as providing technical skills for the growing working class. To sustain the existing social hierarchy and to fulfill the labour needs of English society in the late nineteenth century, the working class needed

to recognize the legitimacy of the system and accept its role in supporting it. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that this period witnessed the development of a mass public school system in Great Britain. Like Eagleton, Althusser (2001) asserts that the school replaced the church as the *dominant*² Ideological State Apparatus (ISA). Althusser goes beyond critiquing institutionalized education as a professed moral instrument; he exposes formal schooling as an ideological apparatus that subversively maintains society's reproductive forces as well as the existing inequitable relations of production. The school, which is often represented "as a neutral environment purged of ideology", is, in fact, the predominant ISA in which "the relations of the exploited to exploiters and exploiters to exploited, are largely reproduced" (Althusser, 2001, p. 1495). The goal of formal schooling is not only to produce a skilled labour force, but also to create an environment to support and nurture its reproduction. Therefore, the task of education is to teach students the various skills they need to fulfill their roles in society (manual workers, technicians, engineers, management, etc.). Indeed, education's traditional function of producing a skilled workforce is reinforced in the current Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation document for English Language Arts (referred to hereafter as *APEF ELA Foundation*) which stresses the need to "[broaden] our concept of literacy" because "[t]o participate fully in today's society and function competently in the workplace, students need to read and use a range of texts" (Atlantic, 1996, p. 1). In addition, Althusser (2001) charges that schools teach children "the rules" to behave within the "order established by class domination" (p. 1485). Therefore, literacy is employed to instill "punctuality, respect, discipline, [and] subordination" as a means of creating "a controllable, docile and respectful workforce, willing and able to follow orders" (Graff cited in Kalantzis and

² Emphasis is mine.

Cope, 1993, p. 44). Thus, schools basically “ensure *subjection to the ruling ideology*”³ (Althusser, 2001, p. 1485), and the study of literature is a significant instrument in reproducing this subjugation.

Within the formal school system, literature was especially effective in dealing with a burgeoning nineteenth century, industrial middle class that was seen as a potentially dangerous source of political unrest and social rebellion. Eagleton (2001) describes literature as possessing an emotional power and having a pacifying influence on those who may feel subjugated or marginalized. Its civic agenda was to instruct individuals to conform – thereby, maintaining the health of a nation by preventing unhealthy unrest. He writes “[i]f the masses are not thrown a few novels, they may react by throwing up a few barricades” (p. 2245). Again, the subversive nature of literary study is reflected; it distracts the masses from challenging social inequities and indoctrinates them to unconsciously assimilate the “truths” of the ruling class. Furthermore, the “‘experiential’ nature of literature was ideologically convenient” as it provided “a kind of vicarious self-fulfillment” (Eagleton, 2001, p. 2246). For example, those who cannot afford to travel can be appeased by literature – by becoming armchair tourists through reading about places they wish to go. This delightful diversion prevents the oppressed from dwelling upon their own exploitation. This is just one example of how any potential social discontent or any impetus toward social improvement can be manipulated or subverted by literature. Somewhat sarcastically, Eagleton claims that, “[l]iterature would rehearse the masses in the habits of pluralistic thought and feelings persuading them to acknowledge that more than one viewpoint than theirs existed – namely that of their masters” (p. 2245-2246). Not surprisingly, the viewpoint of “their

³ Italics in the original

masters” supported the existing, exploitative, social and economic hierarchy and discouraged any questioning of the status quo. The molding of the form and the perceived duties of English to respond to changes in the work place or to concerns of social unrest is a pattern that has been repeated.

The National Ideal

The status of English as a school subject was enhanced during times of social or political upheaval or change. This was evident when literature became an effective instrument of imperial nations striving to assimilate colonial subjects and of elite social classes seeking to defuse the potential economic and social resistance of the late nineteenth century working classes. Yet, at the university level, “[f]or a long time [English literature] remained largely a women’s course, English being considered a ‘women’s subject’ unsuited to the masculine intelligence. As late as the Great War, ‘English’ still carried such connotations” (Doyle, 1982, p. 24). However, the Great War would change this. In fact, Ball *et al.* (1990) propose that the

period immediately following the First World War could be said to be the one during which English became firmly established as *a*, if not yet *the*, major subject on the school curriculum; and it was increasingly considered as a subject suitable for study by the enlightened intellectual. (p. 52)

Eagleton (2001) suggests the reason for the subject’s improved standing:

England’s victory over Germany meant a renewal of national pride, an upsurge of patriotism which could only aid English’s cause; but at the

same time the deep trauma of the war, its almost intolerable questioning of every previously held cultural assumption, gave rise to a 'spiritual hungering', as one contemporary commentator described it, for which poetry seemed to provide an answer. (p. 2249)

Literature's potential to respond to the "trauma of the war" and to satiate "spiritual hungering" harkens back to its connection to religion. However, from this point, literature would not only offer moral or spiritual guidance; it would now provide readers with a sense of a national identity. Furthermore, it would no longer be focused primarily on the traditionally economically, socially, or politically suppressed groups. The ideological focus of English was broadened to encompass the intellectual and social elite: "English Literature rode to power on the back of wartime nationalism; but it also represented a search for spiritual solutions on the part of an English ruling class whose sense of *identity*⁴ had been profoundly shaken" (Eagleton, 2001, p. 2249).

Armed with the heightened responsibility of shaping a national identity, English studies became established as a major subject in the school curriculum and in university. Moreover, it became the focus of the Newbolt Committee Report published in 1921. The report advocated "that a new patriotism could be fostered through a knowledge of a 'cultural heritage' and a disinterested pursuit of literary culture" (Ball *et al.*, 1990, p. 52). While an explicitly stated "disinterested pursuit of literary culture" suggests that the study of English is neutral, its emphasis on the proliferation of "standard English" and its imposed duty to promote patriotism by exposing students to universal truths of a value-laden, non-negotiated literary canon reflects anything but neutrality. Furthermore, literature could still be utilized to distract the masses from recognizing or challenging

⁴ Emphasis is mine.

existing inequities, as it was to restore national unity “based not on social equality but on ‘everyone forgetting that classes existed’” (Ball *et al.*, 1990, p. 52). The true ideological nature of literature and its potential as a means of wielding power is indicated by the existence of the Newbolt Committee itself. Ball *et al.* (1990) argue, “[t]here can be little doubt now that the report of the Newbolt Committee was one of the first attempts to discipline and police the development of English teaching” (p. 53). However, other attempts to regiment the English curriculum had already occurred in Newfoundland.⁵

Walker (1990) indicates that, as early as 1894⁶, there were attempts to police the curriculum in the colony of Newfoundland. A Council of Higher Education was established by the colonial government “to prescribe syllabuses and textbooks and to organize examinations for Newfoundland secondary school in an attempt to bring some uniformity to the curriculum” as well as to “[provide] standards to guide teachers, students and the public” (p. 163).⁷ In the curriculum, established as a result of the Council of Higher Education, “grammar was the predominant component of the loose aggregation of topics related to English studies” (Walker, 1990, p. 164). Similar to the professed position of the Newbolt Report that English consists of a “disinterested pursuit of literary culture”, the study of grammar in the colony was offered as an objective and beneficial component of a learning program based upon a mental discipline theory of

⁵ The omission of Labrador here is intentional. At this time, education in Labrador was left in the hands of the Moravian missionaries while the International Grenfell Association – which would also offer educational services to Labradorians – was yet to be established. Any official attempts to regulate education were limited to the island.

⁶ Sources vary as to the date of the establishment of the Council of Higher Education. For example, McCann (1998) cites 1893 (p. 3 of 5) while Rowe (1980) cites 1895 (p. 289). Though there is disagreement about the date of its inception, Walker, McCann, and Rowe agree upon the fundamental goals and practices of the Council of Higher Education.

⁷ Walker (1990) also makes reference to other instances in which the curriculum in Newfoundland came under scrutiny, such as the 1934 Commission of Enquiry into the curriculum (p. 166). Furthermore, the establishment of the Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation in the 1990s is evidence of the continuing efforts to police and to standardize teaching and learning practices in English Language Arts programs.

learning. According to Walker (1990), such a theory views “the human mind as consisting of a hierarchy of several faculties” including memory and reason; therefore, grammar, which was “sometimes called ‘the logic of the common schools’, was particularly well suited, as a complex but systematic and coherent classification of knowledge about language, to the exercise of the memory and the reason” (p. 164). Furthermore, an adherence to the fundamentalist ideology of language, which was prevalent in the early days of formal schooling in Newfoundland, suggested

that there exists outside human beings a body of rules and definitions that are stable and fixed. These definitions and rules establish the true forms of language (Standard English for example). They define the language world that individuals seek to enter, and they can be enshrined in authoritative textbooks. (Walker, 1990, p. 169)⁸

Though the study of grammar was presented as an objective and logical study of “a body of rules and definitions that are stable and fixed”, the study of English in the colony was no more neutral than it was in the mother country. One of the primary goals of the study of standard English grammar in Newfoundland (and in Canada) was to defend “the mother tongue against the corrosions of the colonial vernaculars” (Walker, 1990, p. 171) and to counteract the emergence of diverse local dialects, particularly in isolated communities throughout Newfoundland. In this way, “[s]tandard English, . . . , which grammar teaching was assumed to develop, could be considered as a kind of ‘experience’ or ‘identity’ in [Robert] Morgan’s terms, which schools sought to legitimate at the expense of other more local, more colloquial, more vernacular forms of language

⁸ This view of knowledge and learning is consistent with what is classified as a “complicated” theory of teaching and learning. This will be discussed more fully in Chapter Five.

experiences and identities” (Walker, 1990, p. 177). Indeed, the emphasis that continued to be placed upon the teaching of standardized English grammar reflects the hegemonic intent of such a curriculum that reinforced a unified national identity. Currently, the emphasis on a common curriculum, reflected in the *APEF ELA Foundation* and curriculum documents (to be discussed in Chapter Four), echoes earlier attempts to employ English studies to reinforce a national or regional identity.

The Individual Ideal

Ball *et al.* (1990) credit F. R. Leavis and his Cambridge School for building on “[t]he missionary passion” of the 1921 Newbolt report (p.53) and for “removing any lingering doubts about the seriousness of English as an academic discipline” (p. 54). Again, concerns of a fragmented, culturally impoverished, and morally degenerate society were the catalyst for a modification of English. Yet, rather than concern for the utilitarian, skills-oriented, or civic forms of literacy, Leavis’s interests were in the moral, cultural, and intellectual growth of the individual. However, his was not an egalitarian notion. Though his stance was individualistic, it retained the conservative and elitist bent of earlier conceptions of education and literacy. He advocated an orthodox approach to the dissemination of English, with a narrowed literary canon administered by an intellectual and moral elite:

His realignment of the ‘Great Tradition’ of English literature, and resolute purging of this canon, had a profound influence, embodying in specific readings of chosen texts the literature-centred, value-laden ideology of

English as he saw it. The English teacher could be equipped with a moral vision, a canon of texts which embodied it, a technique for discrimination with which to fight against the evils of the cultural impoverishment brought about by mass industrial society. (Ball *et al.*, 1990, p. 54)

Ball *et al.* (1990) point out that, “in the drawing up of the literary heritage, and the pedagogic strategies that accompanied it”, Leavis and the Cambridge School “effectively rounded off the policing of the language” begun by their predecessors “and ensured that its adherent teachers were to become custodians of a discourse of orthodoxy” (p. 55). In turn, rather than promoting the development of unique individuals, Leavis’s view of the individual ideal, paradoxically, seemed to facilitate the reproduction of “individuals” that adopt the orthodox values that maintain society’s status quo.

More recently, in Canada, educational documents that attempt to outline the goals of ELA studies also contain a professed desire to encourage individual or personal growth. Morgan (1990) notes that “[a]ccording to the 1979 Ontario *Guideline* [intermediate English curriculum], . . . English studies is chiefly in the business of ‘personal growth’, developing ‘personal values’, and helping students articulate their ‘personal aims and goals’” (p. 199). This document also clearly states, “English is above all a personal discipline, concerned with personal behaviour and personal choices and tastes” (cited in Morgan, 1990, p.200). In addition, the *APEF ELA Foundation* (1996) suggests an acknowledgement of the individual when it states that “[t]his curriculum recognizes that students develop and learn at different rates and in different ways and that the time frame for literacy development will vary” (Atlantic, p. 2). Furthermore, it outlines that the ELA’s general curriculum outcomes include the expectations that

“[s]tudents will be able to communicate information and ideas effectively and clearly, and to respond *personally*⁹ and critically” (p. 18) and that “[s]tudents will be able to respond *personally*¹⁰ to a range of texts” (p. 26). Indeed, the *APEF ELA Foundation* (1996) states, as one of the “principles underlying the English Language Arts curriculum”, that “[l]anguage learning is personal and intimately connected to individuality” (Atlantic, p. 37). Though current curriculum documents endorse the importance of the individual in the study of English Language Arts, remnants of the national ideal also exist in these documents.

Morgan (1990) notes the clashing goals within English studies: “ministry documents appear untroubled by the contradictory claims they advance, fostering a conception of English as at once a political and a non-political practice. The most severely individualizing approaches sit side by side with assertions about its nation-building properties” (p.200). This same, apparent inconsistency exists within the *APEF ELA Foundation* (1996) document that, while promoting individualism, imposes a common curriculum as well as prescribed curriculum guides for teachers. While advocating personal development as one of its essential graduation learnings,¹¹ it also includes citizenship in the same list (Atlantic, p. 5). However, the simultaneous inclusion of competing ideologies in educational documents is not unusual (and attempts to reconcile these contending objectives will be discussed in Chapter Five). New ideologies rarely eradicate previous ideologies. In many instances, new paradigms build upon previous ones while new ideologies, in turn, often act as catalysts for further

⁹ Emphasis is mine.

¹⁰ Emphasis is mine.

¹¹ The *APEF ELA Foundation* (1996) document defines essential graduation learnings as “statements describing the knowledge, skills and attitudes expected of all students who graduate from high school” and state that they “serve as a framework for the curriculum development process” (p. 5).

developments. Therefore, the recognition of an individual ideal seems to provide fertile ground for the development of the progressive view of education and of ELA curriculum development.

The Progressive Ideal

Though the influence of Leavis and the Cambridge School was prominent in the 1940s and 1950s, another paradigm, a progressive pedagogy with its emphasis on student experience and the future rather than the cultural legacy of the past, was gaining momentum. Again, such changing notions of knowledge, teaching, and learning coincided with transformations in the political and social context. According to Willinsky (2000), the early twentieth century shift in thought was the result of “a political commitment to expanding democratic participation” (p. 6). Therefore, progressivism in education was instrumental in political and social reform. Moreover, progressive education, as espoused by John Dewey, indicated a significant shift in the concepts of teaching and learning and “was a direct response to the inappropriateness of traditional curriculum which imposed knowledge from above and outside” (Kalantzis & Cope, 1993, p. 45). Recognizing the complexity of knowledge and of the learning process, Dewey “argued that a typical method of traditional curriculum, simplification or making logical, removed the thought-provoking nature of a more problematic reality, a world which is much more messy than a simplifying curriculum and its textbooks might have us believe” (Kalantzis & Cope, 1993, p. 46). Furthermore, progressive theories question the validity of the factual knowledge being transferred through texts to passive readers and challenge

the traditionally accepted notion of literacy as the ability to decode written texts to ascertain the one right answer. Therefore, a progressive ideology has significant ramifications for the teaching of English and, according to Willinsky (1991), “[w]hat progressive educators could draw from John Dewey by way of broad and inspired educational urges, they could take from [Louise] Rosenblatt on specific literary ones” (p. 118). For Rosenblatt, “reading” consisted of more than a simple absorption of static facts or truths found in an authoritative text; “reading” was more of a “meaning-making” process resulting from the interaction of reader and text. Her view of literature and literacy “hinged on a respect for the integrity of the individual’s response to the text” (Willinsky, 1991, p. 120). Rosenblatt insists, “[t]he reading of any work of literature is, of necessity, an individual and unique occurrence involving the mind and emotions of some particular reader” (cited in Willinsky, 1991, p. 120). Progressive notions of the purpose of education, of what constitutes literacy, and of the desired practices of English teaching mark a significant paradigm shift from previous theories. However, progressive ideologies do not signal a complete break with the past.

There are similarities between the concepts of English language, literacy, and teaching promoted by Dewey and Rosenblatt and those championed by the supporters of the classical tradition. For example, though Dewey “regarded language as social and purposeful rather than abstract and formal” and advocated the necessity of contextualized learning, “he retained a singular end to teaching – the ‘correct’ acquisition of the standard English which served a practical purpose in industrial society” (Kalantzis and Cope, 1993, p. 47). Grammar, though no longer taught in an isolated or fragmented way, was still a valued part of the progressive classroom. Furthermore, though progressive theory

reflects a seemingly inclusive child-centred ideology that recognizes education's need to utilize "the child's capacities, interests, and habits" (Dewey, 2004, p. 18), its emphasis on assimilating a child into "the cultural pattern" of his/her society (Rosenblatt cited in Willinsky, 1991, p. 119) suggests progressivism is not as open as it appears. In progressive theory, literature remains complicit as a tool to initiate students into a valued common culture. Rosenblatt asserts, "[b]ooks are a means of getting outside the particular *limited*¹² cultural group into which the individual was born" (cited in Willinsky, 1991, p. 119). Her comments are in keeping with Dewey's statements that it is through public schooling that "the centrifugal forces set up by the juxtaposition of different groups within one and the same political unit be counteracted" and that a "[c]ommon subject matter" is required to "[accustom] all to a unity of outlook upon a broader horizon than is visible to members of any group while it is isolated" (cited in Kalantzis and Cope, 1993, p. 47). Furthermore, though progressive theories are labeled child-centred, Dewey "did not believe that there would be parity between adult and child in educational decision making – after all, the teacher did know more" (Education, 2002).

Clearly, although the progressive ideal indicated a major reform in the concepts of literacy and English teaching, stressing the context of the individual and the importance of relevance, it retained some of the features of the traditional curriculum of the "classical canon" with its allegiance to the authority of "standard English" and to the desire for a unified culture. Similarly, the *APEF ELA Foundation* (1996) reflects an adherence to contending ideologies as it states that one of the "primary purposes for collaborating in curriculum development" is to "meet the needs of both students and society" (Atlantic, p.3). However, the needs of students and society are not always compatible. Moreover,

¹² Emphasis is mine.

while the curriculum “emphasizes the importance of students’ active participation in all aspects of their learning” (p. 2) and asserts that “students need opportunities to . . . use their own voices to understand, shape and share their worlds” (p. 42), the stated “[e]ssential graduation learnings and curriculum outcomes” that “provide a consistent vision for the development of a rigorous and relevant core curriculum” (p. 3) are prescribed by others. Consequently, though students voices are to be respected, a prescribed set of outcomes, a “consistent vision”, and a “relevant core curriculum” are imposed upon students by those that “after all, . . . know more”. Though a progressive ideology led to a reformulation of the approach to teaching English as a subject, it did not mark a radical break from the past. Furthermore, this pattern of qualified change was to continue.

The Pluralist Ideal

Building upon the assumptions of the “progressivist pedagogy of modernism and experience”, a “progressivist pedagogy of postmodernism and difference”¹³ took shape. Kalantzis and Cope (1993) note,

[w]hile the progressivist pedagogy of postmodernism and difference has its roots in modernist progressivism and shares many of its most basic assumptions – about student activity, motivation and experience, for example – it diverges in some very important ways. Instead of the singular culture of industrial modernity, the new pedagogy emphasizes

¹³ As classified by Cope and Kalantzis (1993).

difference, discontinuity, rupture and irreversible cultural and linguistic fragmentation. (p. 48)

Once more, social upheaval corresponded with a shift in ideology. In the wake of the Second World War and the exposure of the horrors of the Holocaust, there was a renewed commitment to human rights. The time was ripe for the promotion of a pluralistic theory. Willinsky (2000) notes, that following World War II, a series of “isms”¹⁴ emerged to confront existing exclusionary ideologies. These social challenges were mirrored in the educational system when accepted views on the nature of knowledge, learning, and literacy were questioned. The emerging paradigm retained the progressive modernist epistemological belief that learning is an experiential, meaning-making process conducted by the learner. However, rather than merely attempting to harness individual experience to enable students to attain common objective knowledge, the progressive pedagogy of postmodernism and difference insists that there is no absolute, fixed body of knowledge. Knowledge is fluid and relative, based on the student’s particular context and experience. Therefore, a progressive pedagogy of postmodernism and difference (or a pluralist ideology) challenges the dominance of English as literature and advocates the significance of an individual’s experience and how it relates to language and meaning-making.

Postmodernism signals a more explicit break from the ideology of the traditional adherence to the classical canon and the reverence given to universal, objective truths. Ball *et al.* (1990) identify five distinctive trends in this “new English movement”¹⁵, and it

¹⁴ Willinsky specifically names feminism, nationalism and multiculturalism.

¹⁵ Though Ball *et al.* (1990) do not specifically refer to this “new English movement” by Kalantzis and Cope’s (1993) category of “progressivist pedagogy of modernism and experience”, their description of the progressive movement of the sixties and seventies is comparable.

is significant to note that each of these trends is reflected in the *APEF ELA Foundation* (1996) document. The first trend is a broadened acceptance of various forms of expression; standard English is no longer the only “correct” or ultimately desired form. In accordance with this, the *APEF ELA Foundation* (1996) states, “[s]ince language is the primary means by which people express their personal and cultural values, it is critical that educators and students be sensitive to personal and cultural differences, respecting, understanding and appreciating differences in aspects of communication” (Atlantic, p. 2). In addition, the “new English movement” celebrates the value of different cultures without imposing a hierarchical structure upon them. Likewise, the *APEF ELA Foundation* (1996) advocates that “[a]ll students are entitled to have their personal experiences and their racial and ethnocultural heritage valued within an environment that upholds the rights of each student and requires students to respect the rights of others” (p. 42). Furthermore, Ball *et al* (1990) note that another trend consists of an expanded view of literature beyond the concept of the written text and the “Great Tradition”. This enhanced definition of literature shifts the emphasis from the values and cultural heritage reflected in the grand narratives of written texts to an examination of various forms of discourse and language. These include multimedia, multimodal, and multicultural texts. Similarly, the *APEF ELA Foundation* (1996) acknowledges that “what it means to be literate will continue to change” and that “the term text is used to describe any language event, whether oral, written, or visual” (Atlantic, p. 1). The evolving concept of literature coincides with postmodernism’s reformulated methodology for teaching and learning. Situated in mixed-ability (rather than streamed classrooms), teachers and students participate in a gamut of learning experiences that give more autonomy to the student and

place increased emphasis on oracy. Again, the *APEF ELA Foundation* (1996) mirrors these trends, stating that “[l]earning contexts should be adapted to meet the needs of students with different backgrounds, interests and abilities” (Atlantic, p. 2), that students “must have choice” (p. 44), that students “need to take increasing responsibility for their own learning and should organize their learning tasks” (p. 44), and that it “is important that students use talk to explore, extend, clarify and reflect on their thoughts feelings and experiences” (p. 13). The final trend that Ball *et al.* (1990) highlight is the progressive movement’s

explicit engagement with social issues ‘relevant’ to the pupils’ lives and experiences outside school, particularly the use of projects and themes - war, poverty, old age, pollution, the family. In some schools this was part of a move to ‘integrated studies’, English being taught in relation to history, geography, social studies and religious education. (p. 59)

Likewise, the *APEF ELA Foundation* (1996) recognizes the importance of encouraging students to “[address] and [grapple] with problems that are important to them” (Atlantic, p. 44) and presents the essential graduation learnings as a “[confirmation] that students need to make connections and develop abilities across subject boundaries” (p. 5). The five governing principles of this progressive postmodern approach to teaching and learning and their inclusion in recent curriculum documents seem to possess the potential to counteract the early attempts to employ education and the study of English as hegemonic imperialistic, civic, and/or nationalistic tools. However, there are those who, though they agree with many of the assumptions of the progressivist pedagogy of

modernism and experience, criticize this pluralist ideology's relativistic stance and seemingly unquestioning tolerance of difference.

The Critical Ideal

The climate of the civil rights movement and political activism that marked the 1960s and 1970s was conducive to the growth of more oppositional or counter-hegemonic concepts of education and literacy. Concerns arose that, although tolerance and a celebration of difference appear to promote democratic ideals, unbridled acceptance of an infinite number of perceptions or frames through which people view the world may actually contribute to the maintenance of discriminatory ideologies such as racism or sexism. If plurality is merely viewed as a neutral stance leveling the playing field by advocating that there are multiple realities and “[n]o one’s real world is the best; it is just what we know. No one’s culture is the best; it is just what we know. No one’s language is the best; it is just what we know” (Wink, 2005, p. 3), there is a danger in accepting the legitimacy of unjust frames. How can an unjust ideology, which supports inequitable power relations, be challenged if multiple realities, values, and cultures are accepted indiscriminately as relative to the learner’s situatedness, experience, and perspective? The answer may lie in Peter McLaren’s (1989) statements:

Truth is not *relative* (in the sense of “truths” proclaimed by various individuals and societies are all equal in their effect) but is *relational* (statements considered “true” are dependent upon history, cultural context, and relations of power operative in a given society, discipline, institution,

etc.). The crucial question here is that if truth is *relational* and not *absolute*, what criteria can we use to guide our action in the world? Critical educators argue that *praxis* (informed actions) must be guided by *phronesis* (the disposition to act truly and rightly). This means, in critical terms, that actions and knowledge must be directed at eliminating pain, oppression, and inequality, and at promoting justice and freedom. (p. 182)

Therefore, though there are no best or absolute frames of knowledge or reality, perhaps as Davis *et al.* (2000) note, “[s]ome frames . . . are better than others” (p. 39). Accepting this statement means acknowledging the limitations of uncritical, pluralist ideologies and the partiality of reality-shaping, educational institutions that are anything but neutral. Indeed, to foster an emancipatory pedagogy, formal schooling must provide the environment for students to critique and challenge inequities. Thus, a primary goal of education includes what Freire (1970) calls a methodology of *conscientização*¹⁶ and the empowerment of students.

Perhaps the major premise of what Kalantzis and Cope (1993) refer to as “an explicit pedagogy for inclusion and access” is that a morally just education consists of a political pursuit of equity and freedom, in which teachers, students, and the world are transformed. Peter McLaren (cited in Wink, 2005) defines critical pedagogy as “a way of thinking about, negotiating, and transforming the relationship among classroom teaching, the production of knowledge, the institutional structures of the school, and the social and material relationships of the wider community, society and nation state” (p. 26).

Therefore, McLaren (1989) asserts that education should “empower the powerless and

¹⁶ Freire’s *conscientização* refers to a methodology of investigation and reflection which introduces the individual to a form of critical thinking and awareness about his/her world. This awareness prepares the person for the next necessary step in an emancipatory pedagogy: action or *praxis*.

transform existing social inequalities and injustices” (p. 160). Advocates of critical pedagogy believe these things are possible if educators expose and challenge the inequitable power relations that hinder an equal opportunity education for all students. In fact, education is only possible when students are free to challenge existing knowledge.

This paradigm shift has ramifications for the study of English and the concept of literacy. A critical pedagogy not only rejects equating difference with deficit and promotes the celebration of diversity, but it also takes a critical stance to investigate the causes of inequities and endorses agency. Aronowitz and Giroux explain that this form of critical literacy

responds to the cultural capital of a specific group or class and looks at the way in which it can be confirmed, and also at the ways in which the dominant society disconfirms students by either ignoring or denigrating the knowledge and experiences that characterize their everyday lives. The unit of analysis here is social, and the key concern is not [sic] individual interest but with the individual and collective empowerment. (cited in *Ball et al.*, 1990, p. 61)

For example, building upon feminist theory, “[t]he English classroom [can] now become a place to challenge having to learn to read like a man. It [is] a place to challenge what it [means] to find oneself written by gender and genre” (Willinsky, 2000, p.9). For critical educators, the examination of language is a central element of its emancipatory curriculum. Wink (2005) writes, “language and thought are the same thing. He who controls our language controls our thought” (pp. 2-3). Therefore, a study of language may reveal whose voices are heard and whose are silenced. Critical theory charges that

the curriculum of traditional education has taught a “*theme of silence*”, which “suggests a structure of mutism in the face of the overwhelming force of the limit-situations” (Freire, 1970, p. 97). However, Freire insists that a socially just educational system eliminates limit-situations by providing a forum in which “[t]hose who have been denied their primordial right to speak their word [may] . . . reclaim this right and prevent the continuation of this dehumanizing aggression” (1970, pp. 76-77). Critical pedagogy’s dual emphasis on language content and critical methodology is reflected in Freire’s (1970) words. He writes, “the essence of dialogue [is] the word”, and

[w]ithin the word we find . . . reflection and action, in such radical interaction that if one is sacrificed – even in part – the other immediately suffers. There is no true word that is not at the same time a praxis. Thus to speak a true word is to transform the world. (p. 75)

In addition, critical literacy calls into question long held assumptions about what it is to be literate. Moving beyond the traditional notion of literacy as the mastery of the “3 Rs”, critical educators recognize various forms of meaning-making and communication as valid. Freire calls for educators to aid students in understanding a broadened concept of text and literacy as students are encouraged to “read the world”. In their expanded concept of literacy, Kalantzis and Cope (1993) call into question whether “a person who gets a job through a network of oral contacts and who follows the signs in the street” can be considered less literate than “someone else who read job advertisements and has a written curriculum vitae” (p. 52). Furthermore, Davis *et al.*

(2000) state:

It is important to note . . . that no clear division can be made between oral or literate practices or sensibilities. Similarly, it cannot be said that some cultures are oral and some are literate. No matter how steeped in literacy a society might be, oral practices of exchange and interpretation remain.

Conversely, in societies (past and present) that might be considered oral, there tend to be pictographic and other representation practices. (p. 214)

Cope and Kalantzis (2000) make a similar observation. Recognizing that “[m]eaning is made in ways that are increasingly multimodal – in which written-linguistic modes of meaning are part and parcel of visual, audio, and spatial patterns of meaning”, they promote a “pedagogy of Multiliteracies” which “focuses on modes of representation much broader than language alone” (p. 5) and “[includes] negotiating a multiplicity of discourses” (p. 9).

Clearly, the critical ideology – with its blatant opposition to the reified knowledge of the dominant classes, its open literary canon, and its concept of multiliteracies – constitutes a profound break from the ideals of English and the conceived forms of literacy that had been advocated to promote the imperialist ideology at the inception of English as a subject. Furthermore, principles of a critical pedagogy are clearly advocated in the *APEF ELA Foundation* (1996), which outlines the need for students “to explore, respond to, and appreciate the power of language and literature and other texts and the contexts [historical, social, cultural, political, and economic] in which language is used” (Atlantic, p. 11); to “examine how texts work to reveal and produce ideologies, identities and positions” (p. 29); to “examine ways in which language and images are able to

create, reinforce and perpetuate gender, cultural and other forms of stereotyping and biases” (p. 42); and to “challenge prejudice and discrimination which result in unequal opportunities for some members of society” (p. 42). However, while the influence of a critical ideology is apparent in new curriculum documents, old habits die hard. Although ideologies may change, concrete practices are often slow to follow suit. Furthermore, ideologies that challenge the status quo and its existing hierarchy of power relations often face resistance and counter attacks. Indeed, the constant conflicts among and the lasting influence of the various ideologies are evident in the current *APEF ELA Foundation* (1996) document, which simultaneously promotes the principles of these often contradictory ideologies (see Chapter Four). Therefore, when considering the various principles and objectives stated in curriculum documents, ELA teachers may find it interesting to consider exactly what is being attacked or defended in terms of the interests, the content, the methodologies, and the goals surrounding the study of English as a subject.

Versions of English and Forms of Literacy

A review of the history of English as a subject clearly illustrates its political importance as an ideological tool and supports the view that alterations in political and social power relations influence paradigm shifts within the subject. The reformulations of English as a subject correspond with political struggles for autonomy or control and highlight the nature of the relationship between the student and the state by endorsing a particular version of English and a form of literacy. Ball *et al.* (1990) identify four forms

of English, each with its embedded form of literacy: “English as skills”; “English as the Great Literary Tradition”; “Progressive English”; and “English as Critical Literacy” (p. 76). To this list may be added English as a component of what Morgan (2000) refers to as “Cultural Studies”. Each form mirrors its own epistemological view, concept of literacy, and ideal of the purpose for the study of English.

English as Skills

The “English as skills” version is primarily linked to what, in this chapter, has been labeled the “civic and economic ideal”. In accordance with this ideal, the fundamental goal in the study of English is to ensure that students develop the skills required to enter the workforce. English becomes instrumental in maintaining the very reproductive forces that propagate inequitable power relations. The needs of industry and the state take precedence over individual interests, needs, or desires. Social mobility is not an educational goal because individuality is subordinate to the “well-being” of society. The aim of English study is to provide students with the skills necessary to become efficient and productive members of an industrial, capitalist system.

The type of curriculum development consistent with this form of English is well reflected in the words of Franklin Bobbitt (2004). He writes that the first task of the “curriculum discoverer”, “in ascertaining the education appropriate for any *special class*¹⁷ is to discover the total range of habits, skills, abilities, forms of thought, valuations, ambitions, etc., that its members need for the effective performance of their vocational labours” (p. 12). Like Bobbitt, educators who promote English as skills

¹⁷ Emphasis is mine.

believe that students enter school in a deficit state. In response, the duty of the English teacher is to transmit the appropriate knowledge to passive students. Knowledge is believed to be external, fixed, objective, universal, and fragmented. Because of the perceived fragmented quality of knowledge, proponents of English as skills believe that desirable information can be listed as a series of identifiable, isolated, and specific curriculum outcomes. Likewise, the conception of the mind as linear and compartmentalized facilitates the belief that knowledge can be transmitted to the student quite simply. Through a transmission or “banking” methodology, teachers funnel the necessary skills into the student vessels in an attempt to meet the targets established by pre-specified outcomes and standardized assessments, which provide the benchmarks of functional utility. Students learn through a series of drills, often involving repetition, rote memorization, and recitation. A prescribed “teacher proof” curriculum with clearly specified content, educational objectives, and methodologies produce a literate, technically able, and obedient workforce, with a “theirs not to reason why” mentality.

English as the Great Literary Tradition

The English as “Great Literature” form has been employed to promote ideologies such as “the imperial”, “the moral”, “the national”, and “the individual” ideals discussed earlier in this chapter. Conforming to the tenets of each of these ideologies, the primary goal of this form of English is the creation of a hegemonic identity. The frame of this identity (its morals, its values, and its desired stance) is designed by the dominant class ideology. The relationship between student and state remains hierarchical, with the

ideology and the needs of the imperial power or the nation state taking precedence. Even when the professed goal is moralistic or individualistic, socialization through the development of hegemonic consent is the central aim. The morals that are fostered have the “function of instilling respect for received truths, discipline and stable hierarchy” (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993, p. 83), and the goal is the refinement of individuals based on elitist standards by introducing them to what Arnold felt was “the spirit of the great classical works” (cited in Leitch, 2001, p. 803). Arnold asserts that a “unity and profoundness of moral impression” can be evoked from the study of “their intense significance, their noble simplicity, and their calm pathos” (cited in Leitch, 2001, p. 803).

Again, students who do not fit the mold are seen as deficient, and the state or “church of state” schools remedy this deficiency by initiating students into a great literary heritage that elevates and validates the morals and values to be indoctrinated. The content of this great literary heritage is nonnegotiable, fixed, and unassailable. The exclusionary nature of the traditional literary canon is supported by the likes of Matthew Arnold who “felt that [a] failure to evoke the best in European moral value was shared generally by modern literature” (Leitch, 2001, p. 803). Therefore, this version of English is “closed to non-canonical knowledge”, and “[t]he language that is the object of schooling is described by traditional grammar and embodied in the classical literacy canon” (Cope and Kalantzis, 1993, p. 82). Students remain passive subjects while “English teaches the inevitability of the state, the virtues and duties of citizenship, [and] the demarcation of power” (Ball *et al.*, 1990, p. 79).

English as Progressive English

The concept of “Progressive English” roughly corresponds with various elements of the “individual ideal”, “the pluralist ideal”, and the “progressive ideal” discussed earlier in this chapter. This version of English emphasizes the importance of the personal growth of the individual. The significance of the student’s context and experience is recognized. Therefore, learning is self-directed and experiential. Student creativity and self-expression are encouraged. Progressive English marks a significant shift in the traditional hierarchical relationship between student and state that is propagated by the “English as Skills” or “English as ‘Great Literature’” concepts. In progressive forms of English, “[t]here are no universal, objective truths” that elevate the knowledge of dominant classes because “knowledge is a matter of individual voice or cultural positioning” (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993, p. 82). Furthermore, the adherence to standards is replaced by the concept of relativism. “[F]ailure becomes plurality, the children learn to take pride in their individual qualities whatever they may be, to follow their own route of learning, to fulfill themselves as a person” (Ball *et al.*, 1990, p. 80).

To meet the interests and needs of students in their quest for fulfillment, the methodology and the curriculum of progressive English are diversified. These changes reflect the shift in the notions of knowledge and learning. Knowledge is no longer accepted as external, objective, fragmented, and fixed. Therefore, learning consists of more than merely acquiring information as a discrete thing to be transmitted from teacher to student. Learners make meaning by participating in a variety of activities. Educators

of progressive English adopt a constructivist view which

focuses on issues of individual cognition. These ‘constructivists’ discourses work from the premise that the learner’s basis of meaning is found in her or his direct experience with a dynamic and responsive world. Put differently, these theories assert that we can only form concepts through our bodily actions. (Davis *et al.*, 2000, p. 65)

In addition, rather than having a teacher “preacher” impart knowledge to students, progressive English classrooms encourage student interaction. This reflects the cognitive theory of social constructionism which recognizes “we are usually better thinkers in the presence of others” (Davis *et al.*, 2000, p. 67). Consequently, the curriculum and methodology of progressive English is flexible, dynamic, and inclusive. Similarly, there is a rejection of universal standards, which contain developmental benchmarks and foster the acceptance of standardized assessments. Progressive English “is the literacy of personal discovery; freedom and control are learned through exploration and infinite differentiation” (Ball *et al.*, 1990, p. 80).

English as Critical Literacy

The English as “critical literacy” form corresponds to the “critical ideal” discussed earlier in this chapter. “This version of English is assertive, class-conscious and political in content. Social issues are addressed head on. The stance is oppositional, [sic] collective aspirations and criticisms become a basis for action” (Ball *et al.*, 1990, p. 80). The hierarchical relationship between student and state is not only dismissed (as it

may be argued it is in progressive education); this relationship is opposed. School is recognized as a political entity, and this is linked to its primary function. Through critical literacy, the dominant social, economic, and political forces that produce inequities are challenged. Thus, one function of the study of English is “to provide students with the tools for social access via the core knowledges historically and culturally specific to industrial society” (Cope and Kalantzis, 1993, pp. 83-84). This enables teachers and students to expose the mechanisms that maintain social inequities. Furthermore, though critical theory resonates with echoes from the progressive philosophy of education, the view of the individual is modified. While still respecting the unique individuality of the student, teachers of English as critical literacy recognize that a student has multiple collective identities as well. These collective identities may exist in a shared culture, religion, ethnicity, or gender and are linked to a second function of critical literacy: to empower students (individually and collectively) to transform the world by “[negotiating] cultural diversity” (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993, p. 84).

The ability to transform the world is related to critical literacy’s conception of the nature of knowledge:

Epistemology is a dialogue of dominant ways of knowing (the Western canon or logocentric science) and other marginalized discourses such that both core and margins are transformed. Knowledge generation as a matter of negotiation between and across the cultural and discourse differences that characterize industrial society. (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993, p. 82)

However, critical theorists charge that students in most schools only hear the non-negotiated “dialogue of dominant ways of knowing”. Therefore, Paulo Freire (1970)

contrasts the actual function schools serve with the function he believes they should serve. He notes that, through curriculum content and teaching methodologies, students are given representations of the world – how it is and how it should be. In effect, education controls the view of reality that people are given. Therefore, recognizing the political and power realities represented in schools, Freire exposes the purpose of schools in capitalist societies as being to maintain the status quo by teaching the oppressed to accept a dehumanizing view of reality. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), he writes that “[e]ducation as the exercise of domination stimulates the credulity of students, with the ideological intent (often not perceived by educators) of indoctrinating them to adapt to the world of oppression” (p. 65). The function of schools, therefore, is to make the oppressed accept their lot in life, by making them believe they lack the power to change a fixed and legitimate reality.

However, Freire also promotes the school’s potential as a humanizing, emancipatory vehicle. He insists that, by revealing the nature of social inequities and fostering critical thinking in both the oppressor and the oppressed, schools can transform the world. He claims that in a liberating education, “men develop their power to perceive critically *the way they exist* in the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation” (1970, pp. 70-71). To Freire, this is why schools should exist; they should function to promote social justice. Yet, to achieve this, curriculum content and methodologies must also be transformed.

In the critical literacy form of English, dialogue among student and teacher learners is essential. Indeed, dialogue provides the necessary foundation for the other

requirements of transformative education: investigation, reflection, and action.

Therefore, in critical literacy classrooms, teachers and students¹⁸ begin with dialogue in their investigation to discover relevant themes for study and to determine course content. Consequently, consistent with the form of English as critical literacy, the curriculum consists of an infinite variety of multicultural and multimodal texts. Furthermore, a critical approach to literacy avoids prescribing these texts – content is developed as a result of an investigation and reflection performed by teachers and students in the course of a dialogue, which recognizes the humanity and the autonomy of all participants. Critical literacy is not concerned with standards, and the outcome of the study of English is not a measurable product – it is an ongoing process of transformation. Students are encouraged to “read the world” and to deconstruct various languages and discourses in the process of questioning and challenging the authority of texts in their quest to transform existing inequities.

English as Cultural Studies

Morgan (2000) writes, “[i]t is never enough . . . to provide just one photograph of cultural studies”, and “[d]efinitions vary almost as widely as practitioners” (p. 14). Likewise, Casella (1998) asserts, “to lock cultural studies into an academic field or to classify it according to a single theory would undermine its most prominent characteristic, which is its interdisciplinary nature” (p. 1 of 9). Therefore, a consideration of English as cultural studies necessitates a major shift in the traditional view of the

¹⁸ In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) Freire illustrates the desirable egalitarian nature of the student-teacher relationship by using the terms “teacher-student” and “student-teacher”.

subject, erasing the boundaries that have long been accepted as distinguishing English from other fields of study. Morgan (2000) writes,

[t]he concept of culture in ‘cultural studies,’ . . . does not simply designate what we traditionally associate with the school subject English: literacy, the study of literature, competencies in written and verbal expression across a range of discourses and aesthetic experience. Nor is it separable from politics, economic factors, the traces of history and mundane, everyday concerns. (p. 18)

However, while defying explicit parameters, the emerging version of English as cultural studies does share characteristics of other forms of English. As in progressive English or critical literacy, English as cultural studies challenges traditional cultural hierarchies by expanding the concept of text far beyond the accepted canon of “English as the Great Literary Tradition”. In fact, the notion of a text is no longer “restricted to written work, but it is applied to music videos, clothing, social events, or shopping malls” (Morgan, 2000, p.16). Furthermore, cultural studies opposes the belief in static, objective, or universal forms of knowledge. Proponents of cultural studies recognize that accepted versions of knowledge or truth are often value-laden and interest-driven.

Therefore,

cultural studies views the world in the context of language where competing discourses (of morality, of welfare reform, of multiculturalism, of the exotic) are at war in the press, in political posturing and presentations, in magazines, film, music, books, and in classrooms, sometimes making concerted attempts to sway public opinions and

policies. These claims travel under the guise of ‘commonsense knowledges.’ They are discursive knowledges or myths that arise out of public and popular rhetoric. (Casella, 1998, p. 6 of 9)

Consequently, in cultural studies it is imperative that students and teachers have the opportunity to examine, interpret, and critique these “competing discourses” and the contexts in which they exist. This includes the teaching and learning environment itself. Much like the view of critical literacy, cultural studies also defies the conventional hierarchical relationship between students and teachers:

Cultural studies supposes a pedagogy in which students are at least as fully in control of much of the subject matter as are the teachers. This isn’t the end of teacherly authority, but it does transform the learning process by challenging teachers to redefine what it is they do in a classroom, and by involving students – in a quite orthodox Socratic manner – in the understanding and analysis of what they already know. (Frow, 2007, p. 2 of 2)

While English as cultural studies is, in many ways, related to English as critical literacy, it does seem to constitute another step in the evolving concept of English as a subject – indeed, it moves beyond English as a fixed entity. Morgan (2000) identifies cultural studies as a “multidisciplinary movement that, arising from the social sciences and humanities after the mid-[20th] century, breaks new ground in critical approaches to culture” (p. 14). In keeping with critical literacy, cultural studies does have a political agenda, and English studies, as a component of cultural studies, does aim to expose and critique the socio-political relations that propagate the inequitable distribution of power

that marginalizes and exploits oppressed people. However, the aim of cultural studies is broader in scope than merely challenging existing inequities, and the concept of critique is not necessarily negative. Morgan (2000) states,

criticism does not simply mean approaching everyday pedagogies as unredeemable, purely negative forces. Rather, it entails an open exploration of them as sites of social reproduction *and* experimentation, cultural expression *and* regulation, aesthetics *and* ideology, commerce *and* cultural performance. It thus requires forms of understanding and critique simultaneously. (p. 19)

Cultural studies also recognizes the complex, dynamic, and fluid nature of theory, of forms of knowledge, and of the relationships among various social, economic, and political groups. Therefore, it promotes a collaborative methodology and holistic, interdisciplinary approach to education. English, as a traditional subject, is seen not only as a value laden, hegemonic force, but also as an artificial construct that belies the dynamic and pluralistic nature of the various discourses it attempts to regulate.

According to Morgan (1990), a more interdisciplinary or historical approach to teaching English necessitates

reformulating an awareness of 'English' as neither unitary nor neutral knowledge, but the political construction of a plurality of discourses operating behind the labels 'language', 'literacy', and the 'literary'. It also entails that such discourses are continually in flux, and that by seeing English studies as a construction it becomes an arrangement constantly rearranged, and thus alterable in our present. (p. 231)

This emerging vision of English as cultural studies also requires a reformulation of the role of the teacher:

Since the relations that need to be considered have multiplied for this model, it seems that English teachers must now become part historian, part sociologist, part philosopher, part political theorist, etc. – in addition to their usual areas of expertise, language and literature. (Morgan, 2000, p. 25)

While the expanded scope of English as cultural studies and the more flexible, hybrid nature of the English teacher may appear daunting, the collaborative nature of cultural studies provides teachers with the necessary support not only of their students but also of fellow teachers from other traditional fields or disciplines of study.

Historical Connections

A discussion of the historical development of the subject English may be facilitated by a classification of the ideologies associated with English teaching, by an identification of the socio-political contexts in which paradigm shifts occurred, and by the labeling of various forms of English; however, such categories are deceptive. In truth, the study of English, at any given time, fulfils a variety of needs and serves a number of purposes. Even referring to the “development” of English – which may suggest a form of linear evolution – is a misrepresentation. Though there are some distinctive features of the various educational theories and forms of English, there do exist common features and overlapping priorities. At times, the theories concerning

curriculum development emerged from previous theories while, at other times, they were manifestations of a reactionary break from former concepts. These “developments” have proven to be complex, dynamic, intersecting, and anything but orderly and simple.

The conflicting ideologies surrounding the study of English and the practices they endorse exist simultaneously and remain evident in today’s ELA classrooms. The “English as skills” form is regularly supported when there are charges of dropping standards resulting in high illiteracy rates and renewed calls for a “back to the basics” English program. In fact, the *APEF ELA Foundation* (1996) insists “[t]he ability to communicate clearly and effectively involves the correct and appropriate use of language conventions and mechanics” (Atlantic, p. 7). Furthermore, as Kalantzis and Cope (1993) state, “[a]t the end of the twentieth century the traditional curriculum of a classical canon is still alive and well. Although it no longer enjoys unrivalled hegemony, it remains a very powerful cultural force” (p. 44). Moreover, “Progressive English” is still apparent in the various ways literary education encourages students by having them draw upon their own experiences, engage with texts, read critically and “respond personally to a range of texts” (Atlantic, 1996, p. 26). Also, as the 21st century has shown, previously marginalized voices are, increasingly, demanding to be heard. Clearly, this climate exemplifies the ideals of critical literacy, and a critical approach to English may be instrumental in the transformations for which these marginalized voices are calling. Finally, the *APEF ELA Foundation* (1996) document’s recognition that “students need to make connections and develop abilities across subject boundaries if they are to be ready to meet the shifting and ongoing demands of life, work and study today and in the future” (Atlantic, p. 5) corresponds with the goals of English as cultural studies. It is important

for English teachers to be aware of the various forms of English that exist and the significance of their adherence to particular ideologies. Therefore, history becomes an important component in understanding the study of English.

Willinsky (2000) concerns himself with the importance of history and how knowledge of this history empowers the reader to analyze and challenge. He writes,

[t]he connections between the passion [of studying literature] and the history is captured, for me, in the historical struggle for self-expression and self-determination among people, for that area where literature and language intersect with basic human rights and democratic action. (p. 3)

Therefore, Willinsky believes that “[t]o catch sight of this history is to begin working more effectively and more knowingly with and against those traditions” that advocate or suppress human rights and democracy (p. 3). He laments that, “English teaching has sometimes been on the wrong side of the struggle for self-determination” (p. 3). This raises a significant concern for ELA teachers in Newfoundland and Labrador. Perhaps to better understand the function that education and the study of English serve in today’s classroom, it is beneficial to consider the history of Newfoundland and Labrador and the role played by education and literacy in this province.

CHAPTER TWO

THE HISTORY OF EDUCATION IN NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Chapter Overview

The contending ideologies and forms of English, that were manifested and vied for supremacy in the development of formal, mass education (see Chapter One), are also reflected in the history of formal public education and English Language Arts studies in Newfoundland and Labrador. Historically, the development of formal education in Newfoundland and Labrador occurred at the site of numerous conflicts, primarily between church and state as both struggled for control. Yet, it is noteworthy that the competing interests of church and state were actually quite similar. The goals of the colonizing, imperial nation and those of the moralizing missionaries often intersected. In fact, the political impact of church control of education had so much in common with state interests that the church may be seen as an arm of the state in the subjugation of colonial people. As a British colony and, later, as a Canadian province, Newfoundland and Labrador witnessed the same imposition of imperial, moral, economic, civic, and national ideals upon its educational system that was experienced by other colonized territories. However, as in other post-colonial territories and in keeping with postmodernist theories, recent paradigm shifts in Newfoundland and Labrador's educational system reflect a greater commitment to progressive, pluralist, and/or critical ideologies. However, as noted in Chapter One, shifts in ideology or educational paradigms rarely signal the obliteration of former ideologies or paradigms. What is created is a complex, and often contradictory, hybridization of ideologies and theories

that necessitates teacher awareness to deal with the challenges inherent in this dynamic, multifaceted, blend of educational paradigms and ideologies. An important step in this teacher awareness may consist of a review of the historical development of formal education in Newfoundland and Labrador, which illustrates the pervasive and persistent influence of contending ideologies and practices in the province's educational system.

Unsettled Times

The early history of formal education – or the lack thereof – in Newfoundland and Labrador was a product of financial exploitation, nationalistic conflicts, and economic necessity. Indeed, Newfoundland and Labrador were viewed as vast resource bases to be exploited for the migratory fisheries of European powers.¹⁹ These European nations had little interest in facilitating the establishment, in Newfoundland or Labrador, of stable communities that could potentially compete with their economic goals. Furthermore, territorial disputes, primarily between the French and English, promoted instability and hindered the creation of secure communities in which formal educational arrangements could be made. The various conflicts of financial and imperial interests, combined with the isolation necessitated by economic factors, determined the sluggish rate of growth of formal education in Newfoundland and Labrador; indeed, for many early settlers of Newfoundland and Labrador, formal education was virtually nonexistent.

¹⁹ However, Europeans were not alone in their exploitation Labrador's resources. By the nineteenth century, settlers primarily from the northeast coast of Newfoundland were engaged in the annual Labrador fishery and, though Labrador was annexed to Newfoundland in 1809, Newfoundland showed little regard for the needs of its inhabitants. Indeed, in many ways, Newfoundland seemed to view Labrador as little more than a "vast storehouse of future wealth in natural resources" (Labrador, 1991, p. 211). In fact, it was not until 1946 that Labrador had even its first elected representative; United Church minister, Lester Burry was chosen as the Labrador representative to participate in the National Convention (Rompkey, 2003, p. 99).

Although 1610 marked England's "first real attempt at colonization" in Newfoundland, the "motherland" showed "very little interest" in the island as a colony (Cahill, 1949, p. 49). The British Government was largely influenced by West Country merchants, who wanted to maintain their dominance over the migratory fishery and feared the impact of planters stationed in Newfoundland. Therefore, the island was to be utilized as a base for the summer fishery and a convenient training ground for English sailors. In fact, Rowe²⁰ (1976) writes, "[s]ettlement in Newfoundland was forbidden by law"²¹ (p. 3). However, according to the *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador* (1994), "contrary to many writers and scholars [British policy] did not make settlement illegal" (Settlement, 1994, p. 133). Although there is dispute over the legality of settlement at this time, there is consensus that it was actively discouraged in favour of promoting the migratory fishery. As a result, Newfoundland did not "merit the help and attention that were being given to the recognized colonies on the North American mainland" (Rowe, 1976 p. 5). Moreover, Perlin (1959) notes that as late as

1789, the naval commander in Newfoundland ordered to be destroyed every building which contained a chimney. This was more than thirty years after Nova Scotia had been granted a representative assembly and had become a colony in which immigration was assisted, . . . and a settled society established. (p. 13)

²⁰ Frederick William Rowe (1912-1994) was a Newfoundland educator, politician, and historian. Possessing an abiding interest in Newfoundland history, education, and culture, Rowe authored several articles and books on these subjects. Any study of the history of education in Newfoundland would be incomplete without reference to his contributions in the field.

²¹ Various authors refer to the laws prohibiting settlement or property ownership in Newfoundland (Perlin, 1959, p. 13; Cahill, 1949, p. 51; Macpherson 1988, p. 33). Yet, Macpherson does not indicate that settlement was strictly prohibited and notes that Parliament "passed laws to try to stop settlement closer than 10 km to the coast" (p. 33). Rowe (1952), however, states that government forbade "the erection of permanent building within six miles of the coast" (p. 10).

In stark contrast to this, during the 16th, 17th, and much of the 18th centuries, there was little hope for the development of orderly settlements with organized educational systems, in Newfoundland. Indeed, it was 1811 before the British Government officially granted settlers “[t]he right to hold property”, and 1855 before the island was granted self-government (Perlin, 1959, p. 14). “The repressive policies”, of the 17th and 18th, “encouraged settlement in remote and isolated regions” and “had rendered impossible the establishment of local religious and educational institutions” on the island (Rowe, 1952, p. 11).

Similarly, early European interests in Labrador focused upon exploiting its natural resources rather than establishing permanent communities with formal educational institutions. For example, Rompkey²² (2003) indicates that the Vikings, after giving up on their settlement in Newfoundland in the 11th century, “continued to visit Labrador for another hundred years in search of wood” (p. 18). During the 16th century, the Basques established a whaling station in Red Bay Labrador. During the peak of the Labrador whaling industry, “there appear to have been well over a thousand [Basques] living and working at various harbours for at least six months of the year. There were probably more than six hundred in Red Bay alone” (Rompkey, 2003, p. 19). However, these temporary communities were short lived. By the 1580s, the Basques were faced with increased competition, from the English and the Dutch, in the whaling industry and with dwindling numbers of whales due to over-harvesting. The Basques presence in Labrador

²² Having experience in the Newfoundland and Labrador educational system and in the federal political system, Bill Rompkey offers valuable insights regarding the politics of education in this province, the socio-economic, cultural, and political relationships between what he refers to as the “uneasy stepsisters” – Newfoundland and Labrador – as well as the tumultuous relationships Newfoundland and Labrador have experienced with European powers and with Canada. Bill Rompkey is a former teacher, principal, and school superintendent; he became Labrador’s first Member of Parliament in 1972; and he was appointed to the Senate in 1995.

declined, and the English and Dutch whalers failed to establish settlements in Labrador. Indeed, according to Rompkey (2003), “[a]fter the Basques, the French were the next Europeans to establish a presence” in Labrador (p. 22). The French were not only interested in the fishery off the Labrador coast, but were also interested in establishing a fur trade with some of the natives of Labrador, the Innu. “By 1504 the French were trading with the natives from Bradore Bay (south of Blanc Sablon), beginning a period of near-exclusive French dominance over the south and central coastal regions that would last until 1763” (Labrador, 1994, p. 208). Indeed, “French traders by the mid-1700s had constructed a chain of posts and small forts along the [Labrador] coast” (Labrador, 1994, p.208). However, comparable to the British government’s disinterest in early colonial Newfoundland, “the French government provided no money for the running of its colony [in Labrador and elsewhere in North America]; the fur trade was the sole source of support in New France” (Rompkey, 2003, p. 23). Yet, the French felt justified in claiming rights to Labrador, “an area they regarded as a natural extension of New France [Quebec]” (Rowe, 1980, p. 467). However, while France experienced a “near-exclusive . . . dominance” over much of coastal Labrador, fishing vessels from England, New England, and even Newfoundland vied with the French for their positions in the Labrador fishery. Clearly, as was the case in Newfoundland, the early days of European presence in Labrador was based on economic exploitation with a “get in, get what you want, and get out” mentality. There was little apparent desire or opportunity to introduce a formal system of schooling in Newfoundland and Labrador at this time.

However, the lack of official encouragement from either the British or the French governments was not the only hindrance to the establishment of a comprehensive

educational system in Newfoundland and Labrador. For over two centuries, isolated attempts at settlement – primarily on the island – often erupted into territorial disputes between the French and the English. While neither country showed much interest in establishing permanent settlements in Newfoundland and Labrador, Cahill (1949) notes that the French, who “were in direct conflict with the English in North America, . . . were quicker than the English to realize the military importance of Newfoundland” (Cahill, 1949, p. 52). By 1662, the French “founded and fortified Placentia and had thriving settlements in other places on the south coast” of Newfoundland (Cahill, 1949, p. 52). During the various conflicts between England and France, the French in Newfoundland “captured St. John’s and other settlements and obtained control over the whole island” (Cahill, 1949, p. 52). However, the continental French were unable to duplicate their island victory over the English. By signing the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, the French relinquished their settlement at Placentia, but “kept the right to fish and dry fish along the entire coast from Cape Bonavista on the east coast, north to Pointe Riche on the west coast” (Thoulet, 2005, p. 44). However, according to Perlin (1959), this concession “made [the French] a factor in retarding the development of Newfoundland for nearly 200 years” because it “was to be the source of continuous conflict” (p. 13). For example, though the boundaries of the French Shore were altered to the coast between Point Riche and Cape Ray (in 1783), France retained rights along the French Shore until 1904. The French Shore issue had long-lasting consequences for those settled in that area. Rowe (1952) writes:

For almost two hundred years, . . . Newfoundlanders who settled on the “French Shore” suffered from the claims of the French with regard to

fishing rights. The attitude of the English Government, which was not modified until well on into the nineteenth century, was that such settlements were illegal. Consequently residents in the north and the west of Newfoundland were denied recognition for a longer period, even, than were those who had settled on the east coast, and . . . communities which had been inhabited for as much as one hundred years had been without religious, educational and other amenities. (p. 13)

The French presence in Labrador also continued to create conflict following the Seven Years War. Though the “Treaty of Paris [of 1763] officially ceded control of New France to the British, the French maintained a presence; French and British firms would argue over claims to Labrador [trading] posts for the next forty years” (Rompkey, 2003, p. 25). The instability caused by the various conflicts between the French and English during their early presence in Newfoundland and Labrador did not create a fertile environment for establishing a stable educational system. However, even had the inhabitants of Newfoundland and Labrador benefited from peaceful relations among the European nations that visited their shores and profited from official support of local settlements, economic necessity and geography would still create an obstacle to the establishment of a mass public educational system.

Economic necessity, combined with the competing interests of and tensions among the West Country merchants as well as the English and French governments, facilitated the establishment of isolated and scattered populations of settlers around the coasts of Newfoundland and Labrador. “[T]he nature of the fishery was such that one harbour or fishing ground could accommodate a set number of fishermen . . . so that once

that point was reached additional numbers resulting from immigration or natural growth had to move elsewhere” (Rowe, 1976, p. 5). Furthermore, Perlin (1959) notes that the repression and hostilities faced by many settlers “caused them to scatter to their thousand harbours where they might remain unmolested” (p. 14). Therefore, it is hardly surprising that there were few opportunities for early settlers to obtain a formal education. In general, the remote and sparse coastal populations lived “without benefit of clergy or education or law existing as best they could by their own resources, with no authority to aid them or provide them with the minimum of civil protection” (Perlin, 1959, p. 14).

However, it is altogether likely that, while the development of an organized educational system in Newfoundland and Labrador was certainly hindered by British disapproval of settlement, nationalistic rivalries, and geographical isolation, state sponsored formal educational institutions would probably not have been established even if conditions had been more conducive in Newfoundland and Labrador. Billard (1993) notes:

Early [16th and 17th centuries] settlement schemes . . . ignored the question of schooling for the young since there were few, if any, children involved in these efforts at settlement. . . . Even if there were children . . . it is doubtful whether the provision for schools would be considered since the movement for mass education of the young had not yet begun in England, let alone in Newfoundland. (p.2)

In the mother country itself, mass formal education was a 19th century phenomenon. It was introduced in England after it proved its worth as a hegemonic tool to reinforce imperialist ideals in the colonies (see Chapter One). Willinsky (2000) notes that imperial

England established mass education in its colonies. Colonials were to be instructed in standard English and were to study a literary canon that celebrated the mother country's heritage and values. After its value as a means of indoctrination became evident, mass formal education was employed at home to convince the working class of the superiority of the British system and of the legitimacy of its existing social and economic hierarchy (see Chapter One). Therefore, it is hardly surprising that state-sponsored, formal education was not a priority in Newfoundland and Labrador in the early years of settlement.

However, if secular imperialists did not recognize the value of education at this time, spiritual imperialists seemed well aware of the power of an educational system to promote a moral ideology (see Chapter One) and to "spread the gospel". Rowe (1976) indicates that "[n]o one knows for sure when education . . . first started in Newfoundland" (p.16). However, though it is likely that some children benefited from private tutoring and others left the island for schooling, "[t]he first schools in Newfoundland were begun by the church" (Macpherson, 1988, p. 95). The powerful influence of the church in Newfoundland and Labrador's educational system remained evident until near the end of the twentieth century.

Early Days of Schooling: Religious Influences

While mass public education was not introduced in England until the 19th century, missionary and charity movements were established much earlier and recognized the value of literacy as a means of propagating Christian values and the word of God. In

fact, by the early 18th century, “the charity schools movement got underway in England in response to growing conviction of some church people in England that salvation came to those who were faithful to Christ and who knew the Holy Scriptures through reading it for themselves” (Billard, 1993, p. 2). Furthermore, by the late 18th century a Sunday School Movement, initiated by British newspaper editor and proprietor Robert Raikes, was established in London. Recognizing that “the children of the poor worked in the factories all week, . . . Raikes decided to establish schools for these children to attend on Sundays” (Christian, March 2007, p. 1 of 3). In addition, European missionary movements were already practicing their own form of spiritual imperialism through the proliferation of their own versions of the word of God around the world. For example, European Moravian missionaries travelled to the West Indies and to Greenland as early as 1732 and 1733 respectively (Hiller, 2001, p. 1 of 4), and Rompkey (2003) notes that “[b]y 1832 [the Moravians] had 209 missionaries at 41 mission stations in the West Indies, North, Central, and South America, Greenland and Africa” (p. 37). Not surprisingly, missionary movements, affiliated with various churches, found their way to Newfoundland and Labrador and had a lasting impact upon the objectives and the curriculum of the formal educational system established here. The Church of England and the Roman Catholic churches played a significant role in the development of formal education on the island while, in Labrador, first the Moravian and much later the Grenfell²³ missionaries were instrumental in establishing schools.

²³ Although Dr. Wilfred Grenfell did not come to Newfoundland and Labrador until near the end of the 19th century – initially as part of Britain’s Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen – and his missionary work was primarily concerned with health care, his goals were also spiritual, and no study of early schooling in Labrador is complete without reference to the Grenfell Association’s contribution.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, the affiliation of church and school seemed almost inevitable, as the clergy were often the most qualified people to become teachers. Rowe (1976) writes, “in many cases . . . the *only*²⁴ person competent to teach school was the local clergyman” (p. 23). Furthermore:

In most of these outports, community life came to be church-centred, a not surprising development in view of the dominating role that the clergymen had no choice but to play. Apart from the clergyman there were few who could provide local leadership with the result that he, in addition to playing his normal role as spiritual leader, had to carry a multitude of other responsibilities. (Rowe, 1976, p. 49)

In later years, the clergyman was often the chairman of the local school board (Rowe, 1976, p. 49; Jones, 1976, p. 2-62²⁵). In fact, the first schools – much like many early schools in England – were Sunday schools in which students were “often taught some basic reading skills, promoting literacy as a means of reading the bible” (Schools, 1994, p. 100). The primary goal of these schools was to reinforce a moral ideology (see Chapter One); therefore the promotion of literacy as a means to “civilize” or to “Christianize” students by introducing them to the written scriptures was the primary focus²⁶ of the church schools or of the charity schools that were usually affiliated with one of the churches.

²⁴ The emphasis is mine.

²⁵ In Jones (1976), each page indicates chapter and page. Therefore, p. 2-62 indicates chapter two, page 62. The same is true for Lahey (1979) and Rollamnn (1999).

²⁶ Though the promotion of a moral ideology was a fundamental objective in the churches’ involvement with education, as noted in chapter one and to be discussed later in this chapter, other ideologies – imperialistic, economic, and civic – often intersected with this primarily professed goal.

Therefore, a number of charitable organizations or religious groups attempted to establish religious and educational facilities in Newfoundland and Labrador. Some of the more prominent organizations, on the island, included the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (S.P.G.), the Society for Educating the Poor of Newfoundland or The Newfoundland School Society (N.S.S.), and the Benevolent Irish Society (B.I.S.). In Labrador, the most influential groups in the early establishment of educational facilities were the Moravian missionaries and the Grenfell Association. However, even when these organizations began as nondenominational entities, they did promote Christian values and, invariably, became associated with either Protestantism or Roman Catholicism.

The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (S.P.G.) and the Newfoundland School Society (N.S.S.), though initially open to all students, were closely affiliated with the Church of England (and later with the Methodist Church²⁷ as well). It is believed that Newfoundland's first formal school was established by the S.P.G., in 1726 at Bonavista (Burke, 1937, p. 287). Although Burke notes that the school was intended "for 'all the poor people'" (p. 287), its founder was an Anglican clergyman, the Reverend Henry Jones. The Society continued its work by opening schools in several other communities, and, "[a]lthough ministering to the needs of all children, the Society had an Anglican basis and one of the rules, . . . was that the teachers had to be members of the Anglican Church. In practice many of the teachers were Anglican catechists and lay readers"

²⁷ "Methodism originated in England in the 1730s as a movement for reform and renewal within the Established [sic] Church of England", and its "primary object, in the words of [its founder, John] Wesley, was to 'spread scriptural holiness over the land'" (Methodism, 1991, p. 519). Though "Wesley himself opposed any formal separation of his movement from the Church of England", with the absence of his leadership after his death in 1791, "formal separation was virtually inevitable" (Methodism, 1991, p. 520). This separation between Methodists and the Church of England would later play a significant role in the establishment of a denominational educational system in Newfoundland and Labrador.

(Rowe, 1976, pp. 17-18). In addition, “the primary aim of the S. P. G. schools was to teach the children to read so that they could learn catechism and read the Bible and other religious literature” (Rowe, 1976, p. 17). In fact, many of the Society’s teachers “on Sundays conducted Church services” (Burke, 1937, p. 287). The history of the N.S.S. is similar to that of the S.P.G.. The Newfoundland School Society (also known as the Society for Educating the Poor of Newfoundland) was established in 1823, as a result of the efforts of an English merchant, Samuel Codner. N.S.S. schools were “officially non-denominational and indeed expressly forbade religious education” (Schools, 1994, p. 101). However, as with the S.P.G., the N.S.S. “required that its teachers be members of the Church of England²⁸”, and, “[w]hile it was expected that N.S.S. teachers would offer instruction in the Church of England catechism ‘after school hours only’, the prescribed classroom use of the authorized King James version of the Bible . . . was not acceptable to many Catholics” (Schools, 1994, p. 101). However, Catholics in the St. John’s area had an alternative to S.P.G. and N.S.S schools.

The initially non-denominational schools of the Benevolent Irish Society (B.I.S.) eventually became part of the Roman Catholic school system (Rowe, 1976, p. 17). Perhaps ironically, at the time of its inception in 1806, the Society’s “founders were nearly all Protestant” (Burke, 1937, p. 289). However, with a desire to promote “the broadest principles of benevolence, . . . they approached Dr. O’Donel, the first Catholic Bishop in St. John’s” to join them (Burke, 1937, p. 17). In 1826, the B.I.S. opened the Orphan Asylum School “for poorer children”, and “although [the school] catered in practice almost entirely to Roman Catholic pupils, it was organized . . . on an officially

²⁸ It is interesting to note the designation, “Church of England”, which reminds us that it is the “church of state”, and, indeed, the English church and state shared similar ideological views and goals.

non-denominational basis, with religious instruction outside regular school hours”, and it “was supported by the financial contributions of persons of all denominations, including the clergy” (Lahey, 1979, p. 1-50). However, Burke (1937) notes that, by 1828, the B.I.S. “had . . . practically become a Catholic organisation” (p.289). Consequently, in 1836, when the first Education Act was passed and the government offered some financial aid for the establishment and maintenance of schools, “the fact that a grant was made to a school recognized *de facto* as a Roman Catholic institution, created a precedent which obviously strengthened the hands of those who later advocated full denominational control over education” (Rowe, 1952, p. 37). While the Roman Catholics and the Church of England were primarily concerned with establishing their presence on the island, Moravian missionaries turned their attention to Labrador.

Major (2001) writes that although the Church of England was the official denomination of Newfoundland and Labrador throughout the eighteenth century, “[i]n Labrador, England had relented, for the sake of peace with the Inuit and harmony of the fishery,²⁹ and allowed [other Protestants] Moravian missionaries to go where Anglicans had no desire to tread” (p. 171). After the British government’s 1769 agreement to grant the Moravians the right to occupy land in northern Labrador, the Moravian missionaries established a settlement in Nain. As on the island, religious service was combined with education, and the Moravians offered schooling at Nain (and at their subsequent Labrador stations). Though the majority of these early missionaries were German, “[a]ll learned Inuktitut, which was the language used in church and school” (Hillier, 2001, p. 3 of 4).

²⁹ Indeed it may be argued that as an arm of the British state, the Church of England was content to leave northern Labrador to the Moravians in compliance of mercantile interests of the West Country merchants and later the Newfoundland merchants, who wished to keep the Inuit in northern Labrador – away from the areas regularly used by migratory fishermen.

However, though they spoke the language of the people, the Moravian goal of bringing Christianity to the Inuit necessitated “replacing [the Inuit’s] gods and practices with those [the Moravians] believed to be the right ones” (Rompkey, 2003, p. 39), and the school curriculum, which included “biblical subjects” (p. 42), supplemented church sermons in achieving this purpose. The Moravian influence in northern Labrador expanded during the remainder of the 18th century and during the 19th century when at least six other Moravian stations were created (Hiller, 2001). Even after the Newfoundland government assumed responsibility for education in Newfoundland and Labrador, schooling in northern Labrador was still left to the Moravians until well into the 20th century. Thus, for nearly two hundred years the education of the Inuit of Labrador was strongly influenced by Moravian missionaries and faced little interference from the state.³⁰ Indeed, during this period, the state showed little interest in introducing formal education anywhere in Labrador.

As the Moravian Missionaries provided schooling and promoted Christianity in northern Labrador, other missionaries attempted to offer similar services in southern Labrador. The International Grenfell Association (the Grenfell Mission), which initially provided health care and, later, educational and spiritual services in southern Labrador, developed from Britain’s Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen and its attempt to provide relief from the hardships and isolation experienced by those involved in the Labrador fishery. In 1892, sent by the Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen, “Wilfred Grenfell – an adventurous young British doctor, whose religious zeal had been fired by the evangelist Dwight

³⁰ Though the Moravians did engage in “considerable negotiation with the British government . . . [before being] permitted to begin a mission in Labrador” (Moravian Church, 1991, p. 610), once an agreement was reached, there was little interaction between the Moravian Mission and the state.

Moody³¹ – arrived on the Labrador coast” (Rompkey, 2003, p. 59). Grenfell’s activities in northern Newfoundland and in Labrador were inspired by Moody’s “basic ideology”, which “was that religion was expressed through services rendered to mankind” (Grenfell, 1984, p. 740). Appalled by the conditions he found in Labrador, Grenfell dedicated the majority of his life to alleviating some of the hardships he witnessed. Not satisfied with offering the first regular medical services to coastal Labrador, he initiated an educational system as well. Instrumental in the Grenfell Mission’s establishment of schools in Labrador were Harry Paddon and his friend Henry Gordon. Harry Paddon – also a British doctor – “heard the call of Grenfell and followed him to Labrador” (Rompkey, 2003, p. 62). Paddon settled in North West River, and, by the 1920s, a Grenfell Mission dormitory school was in operation, offering schooling to children from the north and south coast. Similarly, Anglican priest, Henry Gordon, who “[l]ike Paddon, . . . had been educated at a British public school” and “if not a muscular Christian, [he was] something very close to it” (Rompkey, 2003, p. 66), established a dormitory school in Cartwright. The success of these schools led to the proliferation of Grenfell Mission sponsored boarding schools in Labrador – many of which survived until the 1970s (Rompkey, 2003). Furthermore, though Grenfell, “disapproved of the segregation of children on the basis of religion and felt that one good school would be much better than several small insufficient ones” (Grenfell, 1984, p. 741), clearly Christian morality played a major role in the establishment and operation of these schools.³² Grenfell, the son of a Church of

³¹ According to Moore (1980), after Grenfell heard a series of Moody’s speeches in 1885, he “felt called to preach the word of God to the poor, and he began immediately” and “went on to establish schools for boys from the slums” (p. 15).

³² Major (2001) notes that “Grenfell’s robust and forthright brand of Christianity” did not win him the support of the “established Churches” (p. 228). Furthermore, “[h]e termed the denominational education system regressive and wasteful, never a popular stance with any of the Churches” (pp. 229-230).

England minister, was spiritually moved and motivated by evangelical Christian, Dwight Moody, and Henry Gordon was an Anglican priest. Moreover, while many of the inhabitants of southern Labrador were of European descent and had traditional ties to Christianity, the mission schools also instilled Christian moral ideologies in those students of aboriginal descent who traditionally had different spiritual beliefs. Though religious dissention over control of schools did not occur in Labrador as it did on the island, it is clear that it was the churches, or charitable organizations affiliated with them, that initiated schools in Newfoundland and Labrador. While admittedly these organizations provided a variety of services to the inhabitants of Newfoundland and Labrador, they also served their own agendas of promoting their own moral ideology (see Chapter One).

Therefore, as with the earliest schools in Britain, church authorities or charitable organizations, with their moral ideologies, had a powerful influence in determining the purpose of and the curriculum for education. As Rowe (1952) points out, the earliest schools, “appear to have been conducted along the lines of the Sunday school system”, and students “were to spend their time at ‘some portion of the scriptures and other useful and edifying books, and to be taught the catechism’” (p. 32). In these early schools, the primary goals of literacy were generally to ensure people’s ability to read the scriptures and to participate in church activities. For example, Billard (1993) cites that, in Trinity, “efforts ‘to teach the common prayer’ [had] been recorded in the early eighteenth century by a missionary of the S.P.G. whose aim was apparently to have the settlers take a more active part in the Prayer Book services of the church” (p. 4). Consequently, the texts and curriculum often reflected these objectives. Even in schools that were

nondenominational, the promotion of a moral ideology was clear. For example, though the S.P.G. schools were open to all denominations, “[p]upils were taught ‘moral religious duties without reference to particular doctrines’” (Rowe, 1952, p.41). Similarly, the nondenominational Grenfell Mission schools also endorsed Christian values. Recounting her experiences in Grenfell Mission boarding schools, Loder (1992) notes that in Muddy Bay (Labrador), a biblical text was assigned each week for a Sunday recitation (p. 113), and in St. Anthony, the verse “‘All thy children shall be taught of the Lord and great shall be the peace of thy children’” (p. 114) was displayed prominently on the school building. Furthermore, while the Moravian conversion of the Inuit was difficult, the Moravians persevered. Rompkey (2003) asserts that the Inuit “had had a satisfying spiritual and social life” of their own (p. 39); therefore, not surprisingly, “the majority [of Inuit] had initially resisted conversion” (p. 41). However, Rompkey (2003) also notes that, “after thirty years of Moravian presence, about half of those who lived in the northern communities professed Christianity” (p.41), and this was partially due to “the teaching of Inuit children, which by this time had gone on for a generation” (p. 42). Clearly, religious ideologies were propagated by the many of the earliest schools to be established in Newfoundland and Labrador. In Labrador, the supremacy of the Moravian and Grenfell missions’ influence in education went largely unchallenged until well into the twentieth century. The same cannot be said for schools on the island, and by the 1830s, the state began its attempt to gain some control over the educational system.

State and Schooling in Newfoundland and Labrador

The state did not formally become involved in Newfoundland and Labrador's educational system until after the establishment of representative government in 1832 – though, in the case of Labrador, official state involvement took much longer. The first Education Act was passed in 1836, and this marked the beginning of what would be the government's growing involvement in education. The government began legislating grants, often increasing the value of these grants and placing more stipulations upon how the funds were to be used. Rowe (1980) notes that some of the conditions that accompanied government grants included “the appointment of School Inspectors, the training of teachers, grants to supplement salaries of teachers with higher grades, teachers' pensions, grants for destitute and sparsely populated localities and grants for the denominational Academies or Colleges in St. John's” (p. 289). According to Rowe (1980), “the Government realized it had a responsibility, . . . and that . . . [it] had the right to say how its grants for education were to be spent” (p. 289). This realization reflects the practices that have historically dominated the development of education (see Chapter One); those in power have the ability to promote their own agendas. Once Newfoundland's representative government – still part of the British imperial system – began its attempts to direct education, there was a clear move toward promoting hegemony and an adherence to England's values and standards.

Though not all of the government's early endeavours to transplant a British educational system were victorious, its goal of establishing British standards and values did meet with some success. One of the setbacks the government encountered was its goal of forming non-denominational school boards. The Education Act of 1836,

authorized the creation of nine non-denominational school boards. However, “[l]ike all British colonies, [Newfoundland] was administered as a Protestant state – the Governor, administrative officials, the Council and nearly all the merchants were English Protestants. In the 1830s, however, 52% of the population were Irish Roman Catholics” (McCann, 1987, p. 82). Therefore, this “non-denomination” system advocated by the government would more likely be a uni-denominational system, in which schools in England’s colony would endorse Church of England (church of state) values. However, local resistance, largely the result of the firmly established Roman Catholic and Protestant influence in education, caused the government to reassess the situation, and the 1843 Act “represented the formal beginning of denomination education in Newfoundland” (p. 282). However, the government enjoyed more success in its creation of the Council of Higher Education, “an inter-denominational body, . . . formed with the primary purpose of setting examinations and devising appropriate curriculum” (McCann, 1998, p. 3 of 5). As noted in Chapter One, the Council of Higher Education ensured that the exams, based on British standards, given to Newfoundland students were composed and graded in England from 1884 to 1932 (Walker, 1990). Furthermore, evidence of what the Council of Higher Education considered the “appropriate curriculum” can be found by scanning *The Royal School Series*, texts published in London and used in Newfoundland schools. For example, “Colonial Loyalty” in *No. VI The Royal Readers* reflects the colonial educational system’s promotion of the imperial ideology. In this selection, Young (1906) writes, “Loyalty! love of British institutions! – they are ingrafted on our very nature; they are part and parcel of ourselves; and I can no more tear them from my heart (even if I would, and lacerate all its fibres) than I could sever a limb from

my body" (p. 175). The government's agenda to use education to promote the imperial ideology and the supremacy of all things British is also obvious in items such as "Battle of Trafalgar and Death of Nelson", "British Colonial and Naval Power", and "The British Constitution" (The royal, 1906). While it may be difficult to calculate with certainty the effectiveness of the educational system as a means of indoctrinating the inhabitants of colonial Newfoundland to believe in the legitimacy of Britain's authority and in the desirability of maintaining English values, there is no doubt that after the outbreak of the first World War, Newfoundlanders were willing to leave their colonial home to fight overseas in the defence of the mother country. However, what may be more surprising is that fact that so many Labradorians were willing to fight for England.

While the state began to take an active interest in education on the island, it largely ignored the educational needs of Labrador. Indeed, the void left by the government continued to be filled by non-governmental organizations such as the Moravian Church, the HBC,³³ and the Grenfell Mission. Rompkey (2003) notes,

[a]lthough around 1900 the government in St John's classified the Moravian schools as church institutions, it did not appoint teachers, determine curricula, or supervise methods of instruction. Nor did it provide any funding until 1919, when it allocated \$2000 for the boarding school in Nain. Yet government support for schools on the Island had

³³ Though the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) was not directly involved with the operation of educational institutions, the company did play a major role in the organization and operation of much of the economic activity within Labrador – a task that neither the British nor Newfoundland government seemed eager to accept. Rompkey (2003) states that it was not until the HBC closed its north coast trading posts in 1942 that, "for the first time, the [Newfoundland] government [took] a direct role in the economic welfare of the region" (p.90) by "stepping in to take over the company's operations" (p. 89). However, Rompkey also notes that though the government had "[a]t last . . . taken over responsibility from a non-governmental body", matters concerning Labrador education and health "remained in the hands of the Moravians and the Grenfell Mission" (2003, p. 90).

been steadily increasing, and the act of 1916 had provided a grant of \$367,000. (p. 46)

Until 1940, it was left to the Moravian Mission to finance and operate schools in several northern Labrador communities. At that time, the Mission received a small grant from the Newfoundland Government. However, Rompkey (2003) does concede that one of the few exceptions to the rule occurred along the south coast of Labrador: “[in] the summer of 1864 there was a day school at Battle Harbour, and the following summer schools appeared at Cape Charles and Venison Tickle. The state paid the itinerant teachers and supplied books for a curriculum of arithmetic, writing, and reading the Scriptures” (p. 113). However, this system was replaced in the twentieth century by the Grenfell Mission dormitory schools. In fact, through much of the first half of the twentieth century, it was left to the Grenfell Mission to “[fill] the vacuum left by an absent government” (p. 56). However, as noted earlier, leaders of the Grenfell Mission, particularly in the early years, were products of the British educational system. Furthermore, it may be noteworthy that though the early Moravian missionaries were German, by the 20th century the number of British Moravians in Labrador was increasing substantially (Hiller, 2001). Therefore, though the government of colonial Newfoundland was not directly involved in the operation of education in Labrador, it is likely that an adherence to British values and a loyalty to the imperial power were endorsed by the schooling provided to Labradorians just as it had been on the island.

Denominational Education

The debate over the denomination system of education in Newfoundland and Labrador³⁴ was the result of a contest between church and state to gain or to maintain control over their competing – though often complementary – agendas for education. As noted in Chapter One, the goals of the church and the state often intersect as imperialistic, nationalistic, or moralistic ideologies often correspond with one another. However, though the Education Act of 1836 included some government funding for church sponsored schools on the island, the churches were unwilling to relinquish their sway over education. Burke (1937) writes:

It is interesting to note that educational beginnings in Newfoundland were made under the auspices of the Church, and for over 100 years it was the clergy, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel and other religious agencies which supplied education to the people. It was not until 1836, 110 years after the first school was founded by a clergyman, that the State woke up to its duties and voted a sum of money for education. (p. 289)

It is also “interesting to note” that, though Britain was involved in Newfoundland’s migratory fishery as early as the 16th century, the state only “woke up to its duties” at about the same time the English Education Act imposed English as the language of instruction in British controlled schools in colonial India.³⁵ As stated in Chapter One, similar policies were enacted throughout the British Empire. However, in

³⁴ As noted in the previous section, until well into the 20th century, education in Labrador was left primarily to the Moravian and Grenfell missions. Therefore, the discussion in this section applies primarily to the situation on the island.

³⁵ The first Education Act in Newfoundland was passed in 1836, just one year after, as Willinsky (2000) observes the English Education Act of 1835 was implemented in India.

Newfoundland, state involvement was met with considerable resistance and resulted in the emergence of combative relationships among various religious denominations.

By the 1830s, the relative harmony that had existed between the English Protestants and Irish Roman Catholics had been replaced with tension that made their agreement with the state's plan for a non-denominational system unlikely.³⁶ According to Rollmann (1999), "during the eighteenth century and the first two decades of the nineteenth . . . a remarkable coexistence and mutual recognition and peace prevailed in Newfoundland" between the Protestants and the Roman Catholics (p. 1-22). However, he states that, with the establishment of Representative government, "[t]he election of 1832 shattered the ethnic and religious peace" on the island (p. 1-22). Then, the Education Act of 1936 not only offered some funding, but supported non-denominational education, which the Government advocated "as the only cost-effective method of providing schooling among the far-flung population of Newfoundland" (Schools, 1994, p. 101). However, church representatives rejected the idea of a non-denominational system and, though the Government "resolutely set out to establish nondenominational boards and schools, their hopes were frustrated by the fact that there was an almost total lack of local leadership apart from that given by clergymen" (Rowe, 1976, p. 23). Furthermore, the leaders within the clergy were strong advocates of denominational education, with a view to protecting dominance of their own moral and spiritually imperialistic ideologies.

³⁶ As noted earlier, the state's professed commitment to a non-denomination system would be seen as doubtful, particularly by Roman Catholics, because Newfoundland, like England, was officially a Protestant state with the majority of its government officials and leading businessmen being members of the Church of England.

One of the most effective leaders in the establishment of a denominational system was Bishop Fleming. According to Rollmann (1999), Fleming “sought to increase the presence and stature of Roman Catholicism in Newfoundland”, and one way “he did so [was] by education” (pp. 2-1 – 2-2). Fleming “vigorously assailed” the traditional position of the B.I.S. to adhere “to the undenominational principles upon which it had been founded” (Rowe, 1952, p. 35). Furthermore, “[t]o ensure a suitable education for Roman Catholic Children, [Fleming] turned the school supported by the Benevolent Irish Society into a denominational one” (Jones, 1976, p. 2-50). However, this move probably received little resistance because the student population of the Orphan Asylum School was essentially Roman Catholic. Moreover, to further solidify Roman Catholic control of schooling and to fight the threat of secular influence in schools, “between 1833 and 1843, he brought from Ireland two orders of nuns [Presentation and Mercy Nuns] to open schools for both poor and middle-class” girls (McCann, 1987, p. 87). Furthermore, in 1847, he arranged for Irish “monks of the order of St. Francis, to teach the boys of the Orphan Asylum schools” (Rowe, 1952, p. 75). Fleming’s efforts made the government’s attempt to establish a non-denominational education system more difficult. In fact, his advocacy for Roman Catholicism and criticism of government policies were so effective and so disturbing to authorities that “[b]etween 1834 and 1841 the British government made four appeals to the Papal Court to have the Catholic Bishop disciplined or removed from Newfoundland” (McCann, 1987, p. 81). However, these appeals were in vain, and the accomplishments of Bishop Fleming were instrumental in the eventual, official establishment of denominational education.

An equally vocal and effective religious leader in the denominational debate was the Church of England's Bishop Feild. He shared a fundamental belief with Bishop Fleming, and he "acted according to the principles which he had always held, arguing that education should be given in church schools under clerical control" (Jones, 1976, p. 2-55). However, the Church of England's major struggle for denominational education was not so much focused upon the segregation of Catholics and Protestants, as it was upon establishing a clear division among Anglicans and Methodists. Tensions among Anglicans and Methodists had been growing for some time.³⁷ Indeed, Jones (1976) notes that Bishop Feild's predecessor, Bishop Spencer had "recruited ordinands from among the schoolmasters of the Newfoundland School Society which, under his influence, barred Methodists from local committees of management and made them fear that Methodist schools would be destroyed by its competition" (p. 2-50). However, it was Feild's "denominational non-compromise [that] led to efforts to subdivide the education grant between Anglicans and Methodists, a situation that embittered Anglican-Methodist relations for years to come" (Rollmann, 1999, p. 2-24). The Methodists feared that subdividing the Protestant educational grant would be detrimental to the quality of education they could provide (Rowe, 1952, p.80). However, Feild believed that the religious differences between Anglicans and Methodists required as much recognition as

³⁷ Though Methodism began as movement seeking reform within the Church of England, by the late 18th century the division between the Methodists and the official Church of England was becoming pronounced. The Methodist influence was especially strong in Conception, Trinity and Bonavista Bays during the late 18th century, and by 1815 the first Methodist chapel was built in St. John's (Methodism, 1991, p. 522).

the differences between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. In 1851, Feild wrote:

It is a cause of equal surprise and concern to me that the just claim of the Church of England and of other Protestants who educate their children in their respective tenets should be disregarded by the House of Assembly. . . . Education cannot be carried on without religion; and religion can never be truly and honestly taught without frequent recurrence to, and vindication of, those distinctive matters of faith and doubt which each church recognizes as the ground work of its system. (cited in Rowe, 1952, p. 81)

Furthermore, during the denominational debate, Feild “published a pamphlet in defence of the right of parents to have their children instructed in their religion. He claimed for the Church of England merely the position already enjoyed by the Roman Catholics” (Jones, 1976, p. 2-56). Eventually the legislature capitulated, and “in 1874 the government yielded to pressure and set up a denominational system of education, with monies allocated according to the percentage of the population belonging to each denomination” (School Boards, 1994, p. 99). Furthermore, “[i]n the 1876 Act of the Legislature three denominational superintendents of education were to be appointed to represent the Roman Catholic, Anglican and Methodist denominations respectively” (Parsons, 1969, p. 11). This denominational system survived in Newfoundland and Labrador until the 1990s when “the [provincial] Liberal government of Brian Tobin finally passed the necessary legislation to form a non-denominational system, 155 years after the first denominational Education Act” (McCann, 1998, p. 5 of 5).

The power struggles between the church and state as well as among the various denominations for control of the education system is evidence of the recognition that education is a commanding, political tool in advancing the agendas of those in authority. State funding, though appreciated, was accompanied by conditions that clearly resulted in the churches' fears of losing control to secular authorities. Yet, once the government permitted the establishment of a denominational system in 1874, the grants allotted based upon religion as well as population, ensured church sway over education for more than one hundred years to follow. Interestingly, struggle among the various denominations reflected imperialist tendencies, and church and state interests often intersected. As noted in Chapter One, formal education was often utilized to further complementary imperialistic and moralistic ideologies. After its slow start, formal education in Newfoundland and Labrador became the shared responsibility of church and state, promoting their common agendas.

Mercantile Interests in Newfoundland and Labrador Education

Economic interests have traditionally played a major role in the development of education in Newfoundland and Labrador. As suggested in the previous section, state funding in education – while ensuring the government had a voice in determining how the money was spent – provided the necessary financial support to maintain a denominational education. Indeed, long before the first Education Act of 1836, many of the societies and even some of the clergy were very dependent upon the generosity and good will of wealthy merchants and government officials. However, this good will often

came at a price and necessitated the establishment of symbiotic relationships between schools and financially motivated benefactors. By supporting education on the island, English authorities and merchants hoped to maintain the peace and to maintain good relations with a colony that provided them with primary resources. Furthermore, the curriculum within most early Newfoundland schools supported the economic and civic, as well as the religious, ideologies that the mother country desired its colony to adopt. Consequently, though many of the organizations involved with introducing education to Newfoundland and Labrador had religious affiliations, their hybrid goals also reflected secular and economic interests.

The N.S.S., for example, was essentially secularly led and had the economic interests of the mother country at heart. Burke (1937) notes that its founder, Samuel Codner, “travelled up and down England and Scotland, enlisting the sympathy and support of the influential and wealthy”, and established the Society for Educating the Poor of Newfoundland (later known as the N.S.S.) in 1823 (p. 288). This organization, though charitable, endorsed imperial, utilitarian, and religious goals as its purpose appeared to be the production of God fearing, obedient, state servants. Burke (1937) cites an excerpt of the Society’s first report:

The elements of social and moral institutions are in great measure wanting [in Newfoundland] and it is by encouraging education among the lower classes and affording them Scriptural instruction that your Society hopes, under the blessing of Almighty God, to supply in some degree this lamentable deficiency. It is by giving the descendants of our own countrymen in Newfoundland the wholesome moral institutions and especially

schools that we shall best discharge the claims of kindred and of philanthropy, and most effectually teach them to understand and rightly appreciate their connection with, and interest in the moral as well as the national greatness of their Mother Country. They will soon be able to value the blessings which we trust this society has in store for them: for in proportion as the poor are made intelligent they will become industrious, and if moral and religious principles are wisely and diligently inculcated in the minds of the rising generation, we may confidently expect to find what is the never-failing result, that they will grow up a happy and useful people. (p. 289)

Clearly, while the society hoped to inculcate “moral and religious principles” through “Scriptural instruction”, there was also a desire to teach Newfoundlanders to appreciate the “greatness of their Mother Country” as well as to “become industrious” and “useful people”. These hybrid goals likely had much to do with maintaining the support of wealthy patrons and governmental authorities. Rollmann (1999) also refers to the church schools’ dependence upon secular support. He writes,

The fact remained that the Anglican priests, well into the nineteenth century, remained precariously dependent upon S.P.G. support and the good will of the many and often changing governors. Often, the dual role of the priest, who took on also the office of magistrate to supplement his meagre income, wedded him too closely to the powers that were. Such a position made him even more dependent upon the colonial bureaucracy or

local merchants and less of a prophet besides his role of being a priest.

(p. 1-5.)

Furthermore, it is clear that it was disadvantageous to be without the support of the “colonial bureaucracy”. In fact, “[i]t was a matter of some concern to Catholics that – although the Orphan Asylum quickly became the Colony’s largest school, and the N.S.S and S.P.G. were both to some extent encouraged by the government – the B.I.S. school was refused official support” (Schools, 1994, p. 101). Apparently, as the imperial power, England sought to promote Church of England schools over those that were considered Irish Roman Catholic schools. Rollmann (1999) notes “the means employed by the civil authorities to strengthen the Church of England in Newfoundland through financial support by governors as well as the preferences extended to the Church of England in the areas of education” (p. 1-22). Though, “as early as 1823”, the B.I.S. applied for government aid, none was received “until the passage of the first Newfoundland Education Act in 1836” (Lahey, 1979, p. 1-50). Apparently, “in the nineteenth century . . . [the Anglican Church] received some recognition from the colonial administration denied to Roman Catholics” (Rollmann, 1999, p. 2-4). It seems nationalism and economics played a role in the support of early colonial schools, as it was in the interest of England to teach settlers to have allegiance to the “Mother Country”. This goal not only determined the financial aid directed toward colonial schools, but it also shaped the curriculum that was offered.

As “useful” and “industrious” people in service to the “Mother Country”, Newfoundlanders only needed an elementary education. Billard (1993) contrasts the

educational requirements of Newfoundland and England:

Newfoundland was a primary producing colony of this nation and leaders for Newfoundland's social institutions were produced in England with English Schools contributing to the type of leaders needed for Newfoundland and its way of life. Clergy, teachers for the schools, lawyers, doctors and most ship's captains and businessmen came from England and were the products of the social and educational system there. Newfoundland did not need the variety of leaders for industry that were needed in a secondary industrial country. Hence the schools were not given the kinds of curriculum and school organization which were needed to educate various kinds of leaders. (pp. 21-22)

Indeed, the curriculum offered by the early church and society schools provided a very basic education emphasizing the skills necessary for the workforce. For example, though the B.I.S. Orphan Asylum school emphasized the three R's, there is evidence that the goal was also to prepare students to become productive members of the mercantile economy. According to Rowe (1952), the B.I.S. school "was designed to give practical elementary curriculum and at first its curriculum comprised only navigation, bookkeeping, English grammar, arithmetic, reading, writing and spelling" (p. 35). Referring to the early St. John's Charity schools – whose operation was later assumed by the N.S.S. – Mulcahy (1983) indicates an industrial component to the curriculum: "A master and a mistress were also engaged who were also competent to instruct the boys in spinning twine, making fishnets etc., and the girls in carding and spinning wool and knitting stockings, mitts, etc" (p. 19). Even when, in the mid-19th century, "commercial"

schools were established “to provide a somewhat richer curriculum than did the ordinary elementary school” (Rowe, 1952, p. 64), they were clearly designed “to train the lower classes in useful trades, such as net-making and navigation for boys and sewing for girls” (Schools, 1994, p. 102). Such a school system supports the propagation of an inequitable social system between colonials and imperialists.

Though the situation in Labrador was different than that on the island, mercantile interests did have an impact upon the development of education there. Like Newfoundland, Labrador is rich in natural resources, and there were those in England as well as in Newfoundland who were interested in exploiting Labrador’s natural wealth. The British participated the migratory fishery in Labrador since the 16th century and was well aware of its economic significance. Hiller (2001) notes that Sir Hugh Palliser, “Governor of Newfoundland from 1764 to 1768, thought that the Moravians might be useful in helping to end the conflict between Europeans and the Inuit” (p. 2 of 4). Therefore, Palliser pledged his support for the Moravians request to form settlements in Labrador and to convert the Inuit to Christianity; in return, the Moravians were to “contain the aboriginal people north of Hamilton Inlet and keep them away from the English fishermen” (Rompkey, 2003, p. 34). While the Moravians were not entirely successful in keeping the Inuit away from the Europeans, Brice-Bennett (1997) indicates that “[w]ith the declining presence of Inuit in southern Labrador, English fishing enterprises expanded” (p. 2 of 4). There was also an influx of fishermen from Newfoundland, and “[i]n 1825 the St John’s Chamber of Commerce wrote to the colonial secretary in Britain pointing out how important the Labrador fishery was to Newfoundland” (Rompkey, 2003, p. 56). Rompkey also states that “[i]n the Straits after

the 1870s, the English merchant firms and Jersey houses had been taken over by Job Brothers of St John's who, with the exception of Red Bay Stores, monopolized the Newfoundland shore fishery in the Straits well into the twentieth century" (p. 141). Again, though perhaps indirectly, mercantile interests influenced the introduction of education in Labrador. As more and more fisherman, from Europe as well as Newfoundland, settled on the coast, there was a growing awareness that some services needed to be provided. It was concern for the fishermen of coastal Labrador that caused Britain's Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen to send Grenfell to access the situation in which these settlers lived and, ultimately – as discussed earlier – led to the establishment of Grenfell Mission schools in southern Labrador. Therefore, though practices differed from community to community, it is clear that economic agendas played a major role in the establishment of a complex and varied educational system in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Inequities in the Educational System

Historically (and indeed currently), one of the major flaws of the educational system of Newfoundland and Labrador is its inability (or unwillingness) to provide equitable educational opportunities to all students. Major (2001) writes,

[t]he census of 1836 showed that only 26 per cent of school-age children were spending any time in school. Most would not have had any school to attend even if they had wanted to. By 1871 the figure was only 42 per cent. . . . Not surprisingly, the greater the distance from St. John's, the

higher the rate of illiteracy, except for those of northern Labrador communities that fell under the influence of the Moravians. (p. 245)

In fact, Major (2001) also states, “[o]f the seventy-nine schools of all types that existed in Newfoundland by 1836, three-quarters were in St. John’s and Conception Bay. There were hundreds of far-flung inlets that held but a few families, without any adults possessing an ability to read or write” (p. 246). Furthermore, McCann (1998) writes,

[t]he educational situation throughout the 1850s, ’60s and early ’70s was a continuing struggle to maintain adequate schooling on limited resources. Reports showed that the majority of schools were unsuitable, that teachers were under educated and underpaid, that facilities and equipment were sadly lacking and that many school boards were inefficient. (p. 2 of 5)

However, one must question how sincere the “continuing struggle” to provide education to all inhabitants of Newfoundland and Labrador was. While it may be argued that providing equitable educational opportunities to remote and sparsely populated communities was economically unfeasible, it is significant to note that even in St. John’s, the economic centre of Newfoundland and Labrador, discrepancies between the educational opportunities of the wealthy and the poor were blatant. Indeed, while McCann (1994) notes, “at the end of the nineteenth century the public education system displayed many negative features ascribable to colonial dependence”, and “a form of internal colonialism was evident in the dominance of St. John’s and its immediate environs over the island’s economic and cultural life” (p. 244), this same “internal colonialism” was also obvious in the “dominance” of the wealthy over the poor within St. John’s.

Inconsistencies in the opportunities for formal education have existed throughout Newfoundland and Labrador since the establishment of its earliest schools. For example, schools were founded in some Newfoundland communities nearly fifty years before the formation of Moravian schools in Labrador and well over one hundred fifty years before the creation of the Grenfell Mission's first dormitory schools in southern Labrador. Even once schools were established, the lack of co-operation among them was hardly surprising since they were the products of various, sometimes competing agendas. The introduction of formal education in Newfoundland and Labrador was, indeed, sporadic and lacked co-ordinated, consistent efforts. It is likely that private tutoring was available for some of the early inhabitants of Newfoundland and Labrador, before the inception of the first Sunday schools or day schools sponsored by a variety of church or charitable organizations. However, even once formal schools were created, access to them was not universal. Major (2001) notes,

[t]he children of the poor, where there was no charity school for them, might get to attend one of the day-long Sunday schools, if there was a minister, lay reader, or catechist available to conduct the class. Of course, even that much opportunity for education presented itself only in the larger communities. (p. 246)

In fact, the rural-urban divide in regards to educational opportunity was still evident in the 20th century. Referring to the 1930s, Major (2001) notes, "[i]f rural communities did secure a teacher (often it was only for part of the year)", and "[t]he most qualified of them were graduates of Grade 11 from more populous outports, perhaps with a summer school of teacher training in St. John's" (p. 345). Indeed, geography – and the

accompanying economic factors discussed earlier – did play a role in the development of education as those closer to economic growth centres generally had a greater chance to attend school. However, the inequities were not merely caused by geography.

Even in areas where schools were established, discrimination existed. For example, early governmental grants were given to charity schools associated with Protestantism, whereas, in its early years of operation, the Benevolent Irish Society's Orphan Asylum School was "denied any request for funds by the governing Protestants" (Major, 2001, p. 248). Furthermore, after the government established nine school boards in the 1830s, "[e]ven though Catholics were 50 per cent of the population, the merchant-dominated Executive Council appointed them to only 15 per cent of school board positions" (Major, 2001, p. 250). However, inequities were not merely based upon religious differences; the language of instruction was not always the native language of the student. For instance, though early Moravian missionaries offered education in Inuktitut, Rompkey (2003) notes that when the Moravians opened a boarding school at Makkovik in 1901, they used "the English language and books sent from England" (p. 46). In addition, Butt (1998) notes that during the 19th and most of the 20th centuries, when educational services were provided to the Newfoundland and Labrador francophone population, they were delivered in English. The supremacy of the Protestant Church in the early years of formal education and the more lasting dominance of English as the language of instruction in Newfoundland and Labrador are in keeping with the imperialistic and moralistic ideologies (see Chapter One) that have traditionally been driving forces in the development and operation of institutionalized schooling.

However, the promotion of economic and civic ideals also caused inequities in the system.

As Althusser (2001) notes, education has often been used to ensure the reproduction of the ideologies and practices that maintain the inequities of a capitalist system (see Chapter One). In Newfoundland, even when many of the larger centres offered public education, inequities remained between the wealthy and the poor. Major (2001) asserts that initiatives “that saw the rich aiding the establishment of schools for the poor were not the altogether altruistic endeavours they might have appeared at first glance” (p. 246) and refers to the example of English businessman, Samuel Codner, who was instrumental in establishing the Society for Educating the Poor of Newfoundland:

The convictions of Codner and his merchant supporters were about to be instilled in the minds of the children of the working poor. As with the charity schools, the children would rise up from illiteracy, but not from their proper place in the lower ranks. Give them some moral fortitude to go with their seatwork, the thinking ran, and it would make them more efficient workers, as well as law-abiding and respectful of their superiors. In the merchants’ view, an all-round better society was the object, that being one in which the merchants themselves could feel rather more secure. (p. 247)

Therefore, as noted earlier, the curriculum in most of the charity or society schools offered a very basic education in which students would learn the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic along with practical skills such as knitting for the girls and net-

building for the boys. The education generally provided for the poor was quite different than that available to the more privileged class.

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who were disgruntled with the inferior quality of their educational opportunities looked for solutions. There were options for settlers who could afford them. Rowe (1980) asserts, “[i]n a period of very rigid class-structures, those who comprised the ‘respectable’ class did not want their children to attend such classes” as those provided by the public charity schools that served the poor (Rowe, 1980, p. 203-4). The alternatives enjoyed by students of the “respectable” classes reflect another inequity in the educational system in Newfoundland and Labrador. Wealthy families could afford to engage private tutors, and “[s]ome of the middle- and upper-class children patronized the private schools; in most cases, the fees were high enough to exclude any children of the ‘lower order’” (Rowe, 1980, p. 204). Indeed, money often determined the educational opportunities available. Major (2001) notes that “[a] few well-to-do families who lived outside [the larger settlements] would send their children to board at the schools in St. John’s” (p. 258). Besides the advantage of segregating the social classes, private schools were introduced to meet the needs of “the more ‘respectable’ inhabitants of St. John’s [who] had become concerned over the lack of an institution that could give their offspring the benefits of a classical education” (Rowe, 1964, p. 56). Therefore, the curricula of private schools went beyond that of the elementary education of the public system. Billard (1993) states that some of these private schools, providing “Grammar school secondary programs”, also “offered mercantile and writing or mercantile and math which indicates the growing consciousness for business related education curriculum, in and around St. John’s” (p.

22).³⁸ Furthermore, the children in the private schools were “to be instructed by a steady stream of headmistresses, headmasters, and teachers recruited from England and Ireland” (Major, 2001, p. 258). Consequently, these schools, offering a curriculum largely imported from England and delivered by British citizens, often made students relate to, or at least wish to emulate, England more than Newfoundland and widened the social gulf between the “haves” and the “have nots”. This tendency for Newfoundlanders to wish to emulate the identity of the mother country was also supported by the practice of sending children abroad for a “quality” education. For example, even though the Moravian missionaries were responsible for education in northern Labrador, their own children were generally “sent back to Europe for education” (Hiller, 2001, p. 3 of 4), and sending children to schools in England was a common practice of the well-to-do in Newfoundland and Labrador. Though parents sent their children abroad or to local private schools as a means of circumventing the deficiencies in the educational system, these options did little to address the social inequity of the system, as the vast majority of Newfoundland and Labrador families could not afford them. Indeed, these practices had a profound effect upon the identity of the children who availed of these options.

An article in *The Newfoundlander* (1833) laments the lack of higher education on the island and addresses the issue of how those who are forced to be educated in other countries would view their home when they return:

While such laudable provision [of charity and society schools] is making for the education of your poorer fellow-countrymen, it is much to be regretted that not a single Seminary exists for the education of the young

³⁸ Significantly, though there were private schools in other parts of the island, the vast majority existed in St. John’s, where there was a greater concentration of wealthy families that could afford the privilege.

of the higher classes of society; whose parents are in consequence obliged to send them to other countries for that tuition they ought to receive at home, at the risk of returning with feelings estranged from the land of their birth, and with prejudices which may never be wholly removed.

(Memoranda)

Indeed, “the feelings estranged from the land of their birth”, was often accompanied with a sense of affiliation the values of England, from which much of the curriculum was created. The sense of kinship with the imperial nation felt by colonial graduates is reminiscent of Freire’s (1970) notion of the oppressor’s identity becoming the ideal (see Chapter One), and the system of special schooling for the privileged would advance the superiority of the middle and upper classes and foster a form of internalized hatred of the “other”. From this point the advantaged class aligns itself with the mother country, perpetuating a form of internal colonialism.

Unfortunately, the various inequities in the educational system, as well as the resulting social inequities in Newfoundland and Labrador, seemed entrenched. Major (2001) writes, “the dichotomy between rich and poor, with a small and well-educated segment exercising most of the fiscal and political power, was not about to advance the society to any great degree” and was “closely tied to a general lack of good schooling and the resultant high rates of illiteracy” (p. 244). Referring to the 19th century, he also states,

it must be remembered that there were plenty of the upper classes who would deny even that much education [the teaching of basic reading and writing] to the poor, for fear their steady supply of cheap labour might be diminished. Where their approval did come, it was with the provision that

such learning would keep the poor in their place, and not ‘qualify them for a rank to which they ought not to aspire.’” (Major, 2001, p. 245)

Moreover, though there were attempts to make education universal in Newfoundland and Labrador during the 20th century, inequities still existed. Rowe (1980) states that it was not until 1944 that “legislation was adopted . . . making school attendance compulsory for all children aged seven to fourteen” and that “education was free” (p. 414).³⁹ However, Rowe also suggests that “Newfoundland was not really ready” to deliver on this legislation (1980, p. 414). The comments by Newfoundland Ranger, Sergeant Ed Delaney, who was “sent to the Straits in 1945”, seem to support Rowe’s assessment:

Education in the Straits is not making any progress. The Government is pouring in money for nothing . . . Graded teachers are loath to come here and every fall most of the schools do not get Teachers until there is absolutely no chance of their getting a school on the island of Newfoundland. There are 12 or more settlements in the section from Red Bay to L’Anse au Clair, in most of the settlements there are several bright pupils who cannot go beyond Grade X because that is the limit of the teacher’s education. (cited in Rompkey, 2003, p. 117)

Therefore, legislating compulsory education was no guarantee of equitable opportunities, and even the introduction of secondary education for the masses did little to alleviate imbalances, which still exist in the 21st century (see Chapters Four and Five).

Unfortunately, it is extremely difficult (though not impossible) to challenge the inherent

³⁹ Major (2001) differs from Rowe stating, “[i]t would not be until 1942 that school attendance was made compulsory” (p. 259). He also notes that this occurred “a full fifty years behind most of Canada, the United States, and Great Britain” (p. 259).

inequities of an imported educational system which, consciously or unconsciously, contains the instruments of oppression and is designed to shape student identities by reinforcing the status quo and by advancing the legitimacy of dominant classes.

Schooling in Newfoundland and Labrador: An Import

As noted throughout this chapter, the educational system of Newfoundland and Labrador was imported. Starting with the church and charity schools, the clergy and other spiritually motivated leaders transplanted the ideologies and practices of European countries – primarily England – to Newfoundland and Labrador. For example, Beales (1969) writes that in England, “[e]ducation was inseparable in this period from the churches” (p. 23). This clearly accounts for the support of the British based religious societies that aspired to promote civilizing habits and Christian character among the settlers and aboriginal inhabitants of Newfoundland and in Labrador. Furthermore, as Rowe (1980) indicates, the Sunday schools in operation in Newfoundland during the late 18th century and early 19th century were “based on the ideas of [British publisher] Robert Raikes” (p.201).⁴⁰ Moreover, once the state became officially involved in schooling, it also imposed standards and practices, sometimes through bureaucratic attempts to police the educational system. The combined efforts of church and state were highly effective in transferring the imperialistic and religious ideologies of the “old world” to the new,

⁴⁰ In Raikes’ Sunday schools “children had their reading lessons from ten to two, with a one hour break for lunch. They then were taken to church, after which they were instructed in the catechism until five-thirty” (Christian, March 2007, p. 1 of 3).

inspiring a veneration for the mother country while instilling a sense of dependency as well as an inferiority complex in some of the inhabitants of Newfoundland and Labrador.

From its inception, formal schooling in Newfoundland and Labrador emulated established systems from elsewhere, and the personnel that delivered the imposed curriculum were imported. Though educational “opportunities” were not always administered with the heavy-handedness of the Protestant and Roman Catholic Churches on the Island, the imposition of an alien system also occurred in Labrador. For example, O’Brien (1992) states, “[t]he Grenfell Mission was in every sense colonial, being almost entirely financed, staffed and run by foreigners, foreigners who furthermore had a particular conception of how society should operate” (p. xi). Indeed, “[t]he Mission’s workers on site, . . . no matter . . . how committed they might be, could never fully make common cause with local people, from whom they were distanced by culture, experience and background”; therefore, “[l]ocal people were continually overwhelmed by the presence of outsiders, permitted little or no say in the formulation of policies and programs designed ostensibly for them” (O’Brien, 1992, p. xi). In fact, rarely did those with the most at stake have any “say in the formulation of policies and programs designed ostensibly for them”; the policing of the system was generally conducted by dominant interest groups who wished to maintain the standards and practices that advanced the moral and imperial interests of the mother country.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, there were official attempts to regulate the educational system, similar to those that Ball *et al.* (1990) indicate occurred in Britain (see Chapter One). One example was the establishment of the Council of Higher Education in the last decade of the 19th century (see Chapter One). Its main goals were

“setting examinations and devising appropriate curricula” (McCann, 1998, p. 3 of 5). These exams were composed and graded in England, and, as Rowe (1980) claims, “for the first time, there was almost complete uniformity in the textbooks used by Newfoundland students in the higher grades” (p. 289). Around this time, many colonial Newfoundlanders became familiar with the *Royal Readers*, which were published in London (and discussed earlier in this chapter). However, other official efforts to shape and regulate the system were to follow. For instance, the Curriculum Committee, appointed in 1933 by the Responsible Government, professing concern for the inadequacies and inconsistencies in the educational system, “invited an inspector from England” to assess the state of education on the island and to prepare a report (O’Brien, 1964, p. 13). Again, an authoritative, imperial voice from away was given the right to dictate the shape of the educational system in its submissive colony. Not surprisingly, one of the several recommendations in the inspector’s report was that English should be a “compulsory subject” – the only subject to be a required course (O’Brien, 1964, p. 16).⁴¹ The British inspector’s proposal of a compulsory English course in Newfoundland is reminiscent of imperial England’s 1835 English Education Act which, as noted in Chapter One, “made English the language of instruction in the Indian schools under British colonial control” (Willinsky, 2000, p. 3). Surely, “control” is the operative word.

By regulating and imposing a prescribed educational system in Newfoundland and Labrador, those in control ensured that they controlled the tools that could shape student identities. As noted earlier, Newfoundland and Labrador students attending church, charity, missionary, or private schools were exposed to imperialistic, civic, and

⁴¹ The legacy of this report is evident in Newfoundland and Labrador’s present educational system; English courses are still core requirements for graduation, not only in secondary school, but also at the province’s sole university (Memorial 2006).

moralistic ideologies transferred from the mother country. For example, Rowe (1964) outlines elements of the curriculum offered by a private school in St. John's – the Newfoundland Seminary. A review of some of the titles in its list of elocution exercises suggests the promotion of a variety of ideals. Selections such as "A Patriotic Ode"; "Address to England on the Inimitable Nelson's Death"; and "The Glorious Deeds of British Soldiers" reflect the veneration afforded the "Mother Country". Others, including "The Intrinsic Value of British Seamen"; "The Province of Women"; and "The English Volunteers" are likely meant to remind students of their value as labourers and the legitimacy of accepting their "province" or social standing. Finally, moralistic values seem promoted by items such as "On Modesty"; "Mental Excellence Superior to Personal Beauty"; and "Hymn for First Day" (p. 57).

In addition to texts, educational training and personnel were imported. Burke (1937) asserts that early educators of "superior character" were trained in England (p. 289). According to Rowe (1976), some teachers "had been given special training at the famous Central National School" (pp.17-18), and even in Newfoundland, teacher training followed the same "Bell system", under which "the teachers of the National Schools of England were trained" (p. 130). As for the Roman Catholic educational system, the early teachers were often Irish nuns and monks. By the late nineteenth century, the Christian Brothers of Ireland had assumed the responsibility for the Catholic boys' schools while the Presentation nuns operated the girls' schools. Consequently, "Many Catholic schools . . . were . . . marked by gender separation and the presence of nuns and brothers as teachers and administrators [until] these features largely disappeared in the 1980s" (Graesser, 1997, pp. 6-7). Thus, with the aid of a variety of transplanted educational

tools and personnel, students were initiated into ideologies that endorsed boundaries determined by empire, class, gender, and religion.

The early educational system imposed by secular and spiritual imperialists had a profound impact upon Newfoundland and Labrador society. As discussed in a previous section, the inequities in the system, exacerbated by geography, economics, and class distinctions, propagated a form of internal colonialism. Consequently, some Newfoundlanders and Labradorians felt more kinship to the imperial power that exploited their natural resources than to “other” Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Similar to Freire’s (1970) theory of the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed (see Chapter One), the “others” who did not feel kinship with the imperial identity still seemed to view the oppressive identity as the ideal.⁴² This perspective fostered a sense of inferiority and dependency in the Newfoundland and Labrador identity. For instance, Loder (1992) recalls how she felt as a student at a Grenfell Mission school in Labrador, noting “[t]he staff was good to us, but always let us know that we were not their equals. The staff came from abroad and felt themselves to be missionaries, trying to bring a bit of England to the Labrador wild” (p. 113). In addition, referring to the impact of the Grenfell Mission’s educational system, Major (2001) writes, “[l]ong-term dependency on

⁴² Outlining Newfoundland and Labrador’s reaction to and participation in World War I, Rowe (1980) suggests that, within Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, there was a nearly universal sense of identification with and loyalty to Britain:

In the mind of every Newfoundlander, the Island was Britain’s ‘Oldest Colony’, the foundation-stone of Britain’s world-wide empire. For those of English descent . . . no explanation had been needed when they heard their grandparents refer to ‘back home’. Those of Irish descent had enjoyed rights and privileges guaranteed by the British Crown for nearly a hundred years. Whatever stand their Irish motherland might take, they were Newfoundlanders – second to none in their loyalty to the British Crown. To the merchant in St. John’s, the fisherman in Bay of Islands, the Eskimo in northern Labrador, the Micmac in Bay d’Espoir, the British Queen was Queen. . . . When she died in 1901, it was Newfoundland’s Queen who had died. In the words of one woman in northern Newfoundland, ‘it seemed as if the world had come to an end.’ This attitude may be difficult for ‘outsiders’ to understand. That it exists was borne out by both world wars and by the fanatical devotion many Newfoundlanders have to the Union Jack and to the British Crown. (p. 369)

outsiders, no matter how well-meaning, is not something the people ever wanted” (p. 230). Similarly, the importation of educators, methodologies, and materials on the island also encouraged a lack of confidence in local abilities. For example, Major (2001) questions the Roman Catholic Bishop Fleming’s practice of continually “[choosing] both his educators and his priests from Ireland, rather than training interested Newfoundlanders” which “undoubtedly added to the perception that outsiders were better equipped to solve the island’s problems” (p. 251). This perception may have had something to do with the colony’s decision to join Canada in 1949 rather than to trust in its own ability to stand as an independent country.

The Tenth Canadian Province: Different Song – Same Tune

Though the educational system in Newfoundland and Labrador experienced some changes after Confederation with Canada, the interests of dominant groups were protected, entrenched practices survived, and traditional ideologies were upheld. The fears of some that Confederation would threaten church influence in the Newfoundland and Labrador educational system were largely unfounded. However, state funding of education did continue to facilitate centralization and standardization, which, in turn, proved effective hegemonic tools in shaping a nationalistic identity. In fact, in many ways, the educational system of the province of Newfoundland and Labrador was not all that far removed from that of the colony of Newfoundland and Labrador, and imperialist Britain was replaced by nationalist Canada.

One of the major issues in the Confederation debates was an issue that had historically created problems for various state organizations – the deep-rooted power the churches enjoyed over Newfoundland and Labrador’s educational system. Though education in the colony was closely linked to the imperialistic and mercantile interests of England, the churches had firm control of many aspects of schooling in the colony. Contrary to the desires of the Representative government, pressure from religious groups necessitated the official recognition of denominational education in Newfoundland in 1874. Moreover, when the Commission of Government was established in 1934, “there was strong support among British officials and the commissioners for abolishing the denominational system, but efforts in this direction were quickly thwarted by the churches. One area the churches closely guarded was the school curriculum” (Schools, 1994, p. 104). Having played a major role in the establishment of the first schools, the Churches wished to protect what they saw as the primary goal of education – to promote Christian values by teaching students to read their versions of the scriptures. Even in the more secular and private schools, the industrial, mercantile, or classical curriculum was augmented by religious instruction, as noted in the previous example of the Newfoundland Seminary. Therefore, education in the state-subsidized church schools of the colony often consisted of a contentious compromise between church and state interests. Yet, “compromise” may be the wrong word, as the church usually had the final say. Indeed, Graesser (1997) notes “[t]he pre-confederation Newfoundland education system was a partnership between church and state whereby government provided the funds and churches operated the schools with virtually no government involvement” (p. 2). The same struggle these “partners” fought over denominational education became a

focal point of the debate concerning Newfoundland's union with Canada. Major (2001) asserts that "[f]rom the start the Catholic hierarchy had urged a return to responsible government. . . . The anti-confederate stance stemmed from a fear that Canada would insist that Newfoundland rid itself of denominational schooling" (Major, 2001, p. 396).⁴³ However, these fears were laid to rest when, despite Canada's being "adamantly opposed", Term Seventeen of the British North America Act (Confederation) protected denominational education in Newfoundland and Labrador (Major, 2001, p. 402). The churches' traditional position of power was maintained; however, the state was determined to have an impact upon Newfoundland and Labrador's educational system.

Officially, Ottawa left education to provincial authorities; however, Canada was determined to revamp Newfoundland and Labrador's educational system. While Rowe (1976) indicates, that "traditionally Ottawa had shied away from involvement in education, arguing that under the Constitution it was a provincial responsibility" (p. 80), McCann (1994) suggests that "[t]he Liberal governments of the early Confederation period, with Federal funding at their disposal, set about attempting to transform Newfoundland . . . and education was seen as an important element in this process" (p.

⁴³ While debate over the denominational education system was a divisive issue, it was only one of the many concerns expressed in consideration of Confederation with Canada. As is always the case, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians – Roman Catholics included – had multiple, hybrid interests to promote or protect. Therefore, while the "Catholic hierarchy" may have "urged a return to responsible government", not all Catholics agreed. Economic and regional concerns had a significant impact upon their decisions. Major (2001) gives the example of Bishop O'Reilly in St. George's. This Irish-born Roman Catholic bishop supported Confederation and its local candidate Bill Keough. Major suggests that the reason was that both O'Reilly and Keough "knew well that neglect by the powerful in St. John's had never discriminated between Catholic and Protestant. Poor was poor. And when a degree of prosperity came it came from outside the country" (p. 397). Consequently, the outcome of the vote for Confederation reflected a multiplicity of views and identities that were influenced by economic disparities and the differences between urban and rural areas as much as by religion. On the Avalon Peninsula the majority voted for Responsible Government while the rest of Newfoundland and Labrador largely supported Confederation with Canada.

214). McCann also outlines several of the benefits that the province's educational system has reaped from Ottawa's assistance:

Federal transfer payments of up to half the capital account revenue have enabled the structure of a modern educational system from kindergarten to university to be built, and the infrastructure, particularly road communications and transport, necessary to sustain it. Schools have been enlarged, their number reduced, the ratio of teachers per school improved, the percentage of expenditure devoted to education vastly increased and, for the first time, all children in the age-group of 5-15 years have been enrolled in school. Almost everything that could be done quickly by means of a greatly increased cash flow was done. (1994, p. 252)

One of the things that was done fairly "quickly" by means of an "increased cash flow" was the increased centralization of the school system.

At the time of Confederation "[t]he great majority of the schools were small, wooden one-room, one-teacher" buildings (McCann, 1998, p. 4 of 5); however, aided by Federal transfer payments, the provincial government set out to change this. "A regional high school program was begun in the early 1950s to provide newer and larger facilities as improvements in transportation made more busing possible" (Schools, 1994, p. 105). Over a ten year period, the provincial government provided a number of grants, valued initially at \$500,000 annually and later raised to one million dollars annually, to support various school boards in building centralized high schools (Rowe, 1964, pp. 160-161). In addition, to encourage centralization, the government offered grants for a transportation program. In instances where financial "savings could be made by losing existing schools,

or refraining from building new ones and transporting the children to a larger central school, the government would advance grants to cover 90% of the cost of the transportation” (Rowe, 1964, p. 161). It is significant to note that economic considerations, as is often the case, are influential in shaping the structure of the education that will be offered to students. However, the government was not merely interested in establishing regional high schools; there was a move toward consolidating administrative power.

Following Confederation, the Provincial Department of Education was established. According to Rowe (1964), “apart from its function of implementing government policy, [this Department] has served as a unifying cohesive body. Common standards are uniformly applied in matters of curriculum, public examinations, teachers’ certification and salaries” (Rowe, 1964, p. 1). In many ways, its duties are reminiscent of those of the Council of Higher Education. However, the reach of the Provincial Department of Education has exceeded that of the former Council of Higher Education because it has assumed responsibility for (or taken control of) the educational system of Labrador, which under former state agencies had been left to the Moravian and Grenfell missions. For example,

in 1952 the Department of Education reclassified the Moravian schools in northern Labrador as ‘community’ schools, to be administered by a district school board chaired by the head of the Moravian Mission, the Rev. William Peacock. Thereafter, they used the same texts and exams as all other parts of the province. (Rompkey, 2003, p.107)

Admittedly, before Confederation and the establishment of the Department of Education, there had been a gradual shift from the Moravians' original practice of offering instruction to Inuit children in their own language. Hiller (2001) indicates that “[s]ignificant changes came with the 20th century, and the mission came under pressure to modernize and change its ways” (p. 3 of 4). Furthermore, after the First World War, the Moravian missions in Labrador “became a responsibility of the British church” (Hiller, 2001, p. 3 of 4); this may account for the replacement of Inuktitut by English as the language of instruction and the fact that, by 1949, these schools were “following the Newfoundland syllabus” (Moravian Church, 1991, p. 614). However, the terms of Confederation reflected the continuance of a disturbing imperialistic habit. Just as the governments of Britain and Newfoundland had largely ignored the rights of Labradorians – particularly those of aboriginal people – the government of Canada paid little attention to them. As Rompkey (2003) writes, “[w]hen the terms of union were struck, there was no mention of aboriginal people. It was as if they did not exist” (p. 101). Moreover, for the entire province, the establishment of the “unifying” and “cohesive” governmental Department of Education ensured the state’s presence in policing education and promoting the formation of a hegemonic identity. Increasingly, the ideal identity was a Canadian one.

Actually, according to McCann (1994) the “Canadianization” (p. 184) of Newfoundland and its educational system was already underway by 1949. He writes:

Canadian influence on Newfoundland education had been evident in the years before Confederation. Newfoundland had been represented on the Central Advisory Committee on Higher Education which met in Nova

Scotia from the late 1920s onwards; from the early 1930s Newfoundland's matriculation standards were set by the Common Examining Board of the Maritime Provinces and Newfoundland; in 1935 the new curriculum for Newfoundland schools was a modified version of the Nova Scotia curriculum of 1933. (fn, p. 184)

Furthermore, Rowe (1980) notes the pre-Confederation ties Newfoundland had with Canada: "educational contacts with Canada were numerous and intimate. With no university of its own, Newfoundland depended, for the most part, on Canadian universities to provide professional training. The great majority of Newfoundland doctors, lawyers, clergymen and degree-holding teachers were products of Canadian universities" (p. 455). However, the "Canadianization" of Newfoundland and Labrador was due to accelerate from 1949 onward since, no longer dependent upon financial assistance from Britain, the province became dependent upon transfer payments from Ottawa. In fact, Dier (1981) notes that after Confederation, Newfoundland and Labrador's "cultural perspective shifted from Britain to Canada. Children were indoctrinated with strong, pro-Canadian sentiments; to follow the steps of their elders, they were told, was to commit themselves to lives of poverty and misery" (p. 26). The suppression of local culture was backed by a mounting disdain of local language. Students were encouraged to adopt the characteristics of "standard English" (sound familiar?). Referring to practices at Memorial University of Newfoundland, Major (2001) states that the 1950s "was the time of 'speech' classes for first-year education students to rid the 'baymen' of their accents" (p. 450). In the educational system of post-Confederate Newfoundland and Labrador, "[t]raditional culture had no place" until "[t]he

new political climate of the early 1970s offered advocates of Newfoundland educational materials great promise” (Dier, 1981, p. 26). Therefore, for decades after Confederation, the educational system looked very similar to the former one: religion influenced curriculum and methodologies; state funding continued to advance secular ideals; and attempts to police the system supported nationalistic (formerly imperialistic) interests. However, the last quarter of the 20th century witnessed challenges to the long upheld status quo.

Newfoundland and Labrador Voice(s)

After centuries of acquiescing to the imposition of educational systems and ideologies imported from elsewhere and promoting the agendas of others, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians began to assert their own voices in the closing decades of the 20th century. Early challenges to the educational status quo took the form of what hooks (2001) and Said (1993) identify as “nationalist” movements to fight against assimilationist policies (see Chapter Three). Therefore, during what has been referred to as the province’s “cultural renaissance” attempts to promote Newfoundland and Labrador voices in the curriculum largely consisted of portraying simplistic, one-dimensional, mono-cultural views of the province. However, the province has experienced what may be considered the second wave of this “renaissance” – a second wave that is much more democratic and has the potential to acknowledge and promote the voices and the interests of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

The formal educational system in provincial Newfoundland and Labrador, a product of British imperialism and Canadian nationalism, maintained its traditional hegemonic tendencies. In the years immediately following Confederation, assimilation remained the goal, and the educational system reflected the belief that all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians were English speaking – or should be. Francophone Newfoundlanders were instructed in English, and as Rompkey (2003) writes, “[i]n [Inuit] schools English was now the sole language of instruction, even though about half the students came from homes that habitually used Inuktitut. Only in Nain were some of the beginners taught in their native tongue” (Rompkey, 2003, p. 107). Furthermore, Rompkey notes that the educational system made no accommodations for the lifestyle of the Innu who traditionally spent “about ten months in the woods of central Labrador” (p.110). He indicates that “[i]n the mid-1950s Father Joseph Pirson began to teach a mainstream curriculum and in 1960 a school was built. There was no attempt to accommodate the hunting cycle, and the withdrawal of family allowances was threatened if [Innu] parents did not send their children to school” (p. 110). However, non-English speaking and/or aboriginal students were not the only ones whose voices were absent in the structure of the educational system and in the curriculum. Many Newfoundland and Labrador families of European descent depended upon the fishery for their livelihoods, and children traditionally participated in this seasonal industry that operated well into months in which compulsory schooling prescribed they attend classes. As in the case of the Innu, there were no allowances made for this tradition. Furthermore, curriculum materials continued to be imported from England, Canada, and the United States. Indeed, as Deir (1981) writes, “[a]ccording to educators in this province, the Newfoundland

education system is infamous for ignoring local culture materials” (p. 25). However, Deir continues, “[o]nly in the last decade [1970s] has the government made any serious attempt to beef up the Newfoundland presence” (p. 25).

In fact, the 1970s witnessed the emergence of the pluralist ideology (see Chapter One) in Newfoundland and Labrador. Increasingly, educators were recognizing that assimilation into the national identity was an unacceptable threat to the existence of a valuable local culture and identity. Therefore, a new direction was needed in Newfoundland and Labrador education. Dr. Ches Brown, then director of the division of instruction in the Department of Education, states, “[w]e feel it (the teaching of Newfoundland culture) is important, and especially so at the present time because we think that there are values in Newfoundland society, that with the rate of change and influences, can be lost” (cited in Deir, 1981, p. 26). In response, more “Newfoundland content” was included in the curriculum, and, in 1979, “the division of instruction announced it would make Newfoundland anthologies mandatory in the literature program of junior high school” (Deir, 1981, p. 27). Deir also refers to the “latest victory” in the early 1980s which introduced “a Newfoundland writers’ anthology in each of grades seven, eight and nine” and prescribed that “[u]p to fifteen per cent of the entire literature program must be drawn from the Newfoundland anthology” (p. 25). This victory was followed by the introduction of the Newfoundland Culture course in September 1982 and the inclusion of a senior high anthology – *The Newfoundland Character* – in the mid-1980s. However, while these early challenges to a hegemonic educational system seem admirable, they are not without irony.

The province, while attempting to assert its identity as independent from Britain or Canada, imposed a hegemonic notion of the “Newfoundland character” which failed to acknowledge the multiplicity of identities that contribute to this place. Deir (1981) notes Dr. Brown’s comments on the dismissal of Newfoundland culture by the province’s early educators:

I don’t think that the people who taught us in earlier days had a very high regard for Newfoundland culture. And I suspect they didn’t see that as being a valuable thing to teach.

We had a strong influence from England so there was a large amount of either British empire or British history. And I think perhaps because we got our books from England, they taught British history. I think perhaps they thought British history was the best thing to study.
(p. 26).

However, once the movement began to challenge British influence and to break away from the “books from England”, the knee-jerk reaction was to promote a “Newfoundland heritage” which possessed the same hegemonic potential as any movement endorsing the heritage of the Great Literary Tradition or encouraging a national identity through advancing a Canadian literary heritage. The dearth of literature from Labrador and aboriginal Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in the three junior high anthologies is lamentable. While the editors acknowledge the poor representation of aboriginal and Labrador selections in their texts, they admit that “[t]he trouble lay not so much in locating literature of Labrador as in locating writings that would be meaningful and of interest to junior high students” and that “[t]he same problem was encountered in this

junior high series in finding suitable literature representing native people, ethnic groups and early chronological periods” (Norman, Warr, & Goulding, 1983, pp. iv – v). Even if one ignores the questions concerning who decides what constitutes “suitable literature” and who determines what is “meaningful and of interest to junior high students”, the scarcity of aboriginal, ethnic, and Labrador voices seems to negate any pretext of endorsing a genuine pluralist ideology. Furthermore, a reading of the themes outlined in the senior high anthology, *The Newfoundland Character*, reflects a stereotypical portrayal of the Newfoundland and Labrador identity. Some of the themes identified include: “A people of stamina and endurance”; “A people of wit and humour”; “An honest and God-fearing people”; “A neighbourly and hospitable folk”; “A resourceful and industrious people”; and “A stoical and fatalistic people” (Ryan & Rossiter, 1984). While many Newfoundland and Labrador voices remained stifled, the creation of a unified nationalistic Newfoundland and Labrador identity may have just been a bridge to the next step of forming a more inclusive concept of the province’s identity and adopting legislation and practices which support diversity.

The decades of the 1960s to the 1980s witnessed many marginalized groups within Newfoundland and Labrador fighting to have their voices heard, and by the 1990s, there was a clear indication that their struggles were beginning to pay off. Butt (1998) writes, “a rebirth of interest in French culture and heritage arose in the 1960s” (p. 2 of 3). Similarly, the Royal Commission (2003), reporting the findings of its research notes, “[t]he Inuit in Labrador described the awakening of the spirit of self-image that captured so many other people, including Newfoundlanders, in the 1970s. There was a pan-Aboriginal reaction to federal government policies, and in that time period Inuit leaders

began to take steps to address what they felt were threats to their identity” (pp. 50-51). Clearly, while the province was attempting to counteract the effects of Ottawa’s attempts to “Canadianize” Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, previously silenced voices – within the province – were demanding recognition. Moreover, they were making progress. Rompkey (2003) indicates that as a result of Inuit demands throughout the 1970s and 1980s, “more jurisdiction was restored to the communities and regional school boards were created”, “Inuktitut [returned] to the classrooms and a program of cultural studies was initiated” (p. 107). He also states, “[i]n answer to demands that had arisen at the ‘Labrador in the Eighties’ conference, educators like Beatrice Watts and Tim Borlase led the way in developing local curricula and putting in place unique linguistic and cultural programs to meet the special needs of Labrador children, both aboriginal and non-aboriginal” (Rompkey, 2003, p. 157). In addition, the 1990s brought legislation which acknowledged diversity and endorsed inclusion. In 1992, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador introduced a Multicultural Educational Policy. This document states,

[a]s with the rest of Canada, Newfoundland’s demography is also changing. The demand to recognize this and to benefit from this phenomenon caused the provincial government to develop an educational policy that refers to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the Multicultural Act. It reflects our commitment, as a people, to human rights and justice. On the other hand, it also recognizes the benefits to be derived from the vibrant and positive

strength that characterizes a diverse population. (Government, March 1992, p. 1 of 3)

The Multicultural Educational Policy also asserts that “the Department of Education will work to facilitate expanded and improved teaching of French, English, heritage and aboriginal languages” (p. 2 of 3). Consequently there have been changes in the province’s educational system. Butt (1998) states, “students can receive a French-language education at the Centre scolaire et communautaire Sainte-Anne at Mainland”, and “French schools have opened their doors to students in the St. John’s and Labrador regions” (p. 3 of 3). He also notes that “in 1997 francophones in the province were granted their own school board” (p. 3 of 3). The Government’s professed commitment to include the diverse voices of Newfoundland and Labrador is also reflected in recent educational and English Language Arts documents (see Chapter Four). However, as in past, these documents reflect complex and conflicting ideologies.

Into the 21st Century

In the closing decades of the 20th century, Newfoundland and Labrador’s educational system seemed to endorse elements of individualistic, pluralistic, and critical ideologies (see Chapter One); however, there is little doubt that nationalistic, economic, and civic ideals are still influential in our current system that promotes centralization and emphasizes the importance of preparing our province’s youth to effectively participate in the expanding global and technological society. Yet, there are those who believe radical

changes have taken place. Major (2001) writes,

[t]he most striking indication that there is a new attitude at work in Newfoundland and Labrador is the reform to the school system. What seemed impossible even a few years ago has taken place. Gone finally is the duplication and fiscal waste caused by a system of denominational schools. As good a job as some individual schools had done, society was no longer willing to tolerate the inherent disadvantages of the system, including the religious intolerance it perpetuated. (p. 448)

While an end to “religious intolerance” may facilitate a more inclusive educational system, there can be little doubt that economic concerns of “duplication and fiscal waste” were just as influential as any concerns for tolerance and acceptance in shaping the “new attitude” in Newfoundland and Labrador. In fact, McCann (1998) believes the new attitude in recent educational reform is *more* concerned with economics. Referring to documents published during the last two decades of the 20th century, McCann (1998) describes what he considers a “radically different ideology”, which recommends that Newfoundland and Labrador prepare for “a ‘post-industrial society’, characterized by computerization, modern transport, high-technology and communication systems and a vibrant service sector” (p. 4 of 5). Thus he asserts, “the *new*⁴⁴ aim of education [is] to produce a flexible workforce . . . suitable to the new global economy” (p. 4 of 5). Yet, as noted in Chapter One and previously in this chapter, there is nothing *new* about an economic ideology that utilizes formal schooling to produce an effective workforce.

While economic interests do continue to shape the province’s educational system, nationalist, pluralist, and critical ideologies are also apparent, not only in curriculum

⁴⁴ Emphasis is mine.

documents but also in the development of recent text books. In the 1990s, Newfoundland and Labrador joined the other Atlantic provinces in developing a common curricula for core subject areas (see Chapter Four). The subsequent development of common objectives, outcomes, and standards are reminiscent of nationalist ideologies in education. However, three anthologies, representing the diverse voices and cultures of Newfoundland and Labrador, have been created for the province's senior high ELA program. These anthologies, *Land, Sea & Time* (Books one, two and three), reflect a commitment to a pluralist ideology, celebrating diversity and inclusion. They not only include voices previously omitted by anthologies such as those created for the 1980s, but they also expand the definition of text. The editors include an introduction to their texts:

Land, Sea & Time is a three-volume collection of a variety of Newfoundland and Labrador texts.

Text is defined as any language event, whether oral, written, or visual. In this sense, a conversation, a poem, a poster, a story, a photograph, a tribute, a music video, a television program, a radio documentary, and a multi-media production, for example, are all texts.

The series, *Land, Sea & Time, Book One, Book Two, and Book Three* offers a blend of previously neglected voices, new voices, and those often found in anthologies. Together, these books give readers an opportunity to explore the literary and cultural heritage of Newfoundland and Labrador. (Jones, Lewis, Byrne, Chubbs, & Rose, 2000)

Not only is inclusion reflected in these anthologies but the Atlantic Provinces Educational Foundation (1996) English Language Arts Foundation document states, “[t]he intent of

this curriculum is inclusion”, and “[s]chools should foster the understanding of . . . diversity” (p. 42).

Clearly, as is apparent in the history of formal education and English as a subject (see Chapter One) as well as in the history of education in Newfoundland and Labrador, the current educational system is the product and the producer of a complex interconnected web of ideologies and agendas. The educational aims that take precedence at any given time are largely the result of shifts in economic, social, and cultural power structures. Therefore, it may be beneficial for teachers, as stakeholders in Newfoundland and Labrador’s educational system, to adopt a cultural studies approach to investigate not only the history of education in this province, but also to examine the economic, social, and cultural contexts in which our educational system exists (see Chapter Three).

CHAPTER THREE

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS: STRENGTHENING OUR VOICES

Chapter Overview

An examination of the history of formal education and the development of English as a subject (see Chapter One) reveals that formal education has been a powerful tool in “schooling” students to meet the needs of various interest groups promoting a number of intersecting and, often, conflicting ideologies. A review of schooling in Newfoundland and Labrador (see Chapter Two) also illustrates the political and ideological nature of education. In Newfoundland and Labrador, as elsewhere, the dominance of one ideology over another at specific times has influenced the perceived goals of formal education and the version or form of English endorsed by corresponding government and/or educational documents. However, a critical appraisal of the history of education and of English as a subject reveals the complexity inherent in the educational system and the futility of attempting to align oneself to a single ideology or to a narrow vision of what constitutes a valuable educational goal for our students.

Consequently, as we move into the 21st century, we must continually recognize the diversity of our people and our cultures; identify a variety of social, economic, and environmental needs; acknowledge the rights of those who have been marginalized in the past and the necessity of inclusive policies; accept the complexity and hybrid nature of our identities, needs, and ambitions; and offer our students a wide range of educational opportunities to meet their individual and collective needs. In 2003, the Royal Commission on Renewing and Strengthening Our Place in Canada published its report,

Our Place in Canada. This document was the result of a research approach that, significantly, reflected one of its major findings – the importance of inclusion. The Commission conducted a variety of meetings: 25 public meetings within the province; 2 meetings with expatriate Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in Alberta and Ontario; meetings with 560 students from 51 schools; 19 sessions with groups of women; visits to 22 business and 5 historic sites; 3 dialogues on the future of Newfoundland and Labrador which involved 35 women and 39 men; 8 roundtable discussions that involved over 100 people with specialized experience in areas such as the fishery, research, volunteerism, Confederation, women's issues, religion, concerns facing young adults, as well as Newfoundland and Labrador Culture and Heritage; and numerous meetings with individuals and representatives from various political, economic, social, and cultural organizations. Furthermore, in response to the Commission's invitation to the public, 250 written submissions were received from numerous individuals, a range of interest groups, governmental agencies, and non-governmental organizations representing various social, economic, and cultural concerns (Royal Commission, 2003, pp. 159-180). The contemporary and comprehensive nature of this document, as well as its relevance for educators and its recommendations for the educational system, make it a valuable resource when considering our multiple goals as educators and determining the forms of English that are introduced to our students.

Strengthening Our Voice

An examination of Newfoundland and Labrador in recent years reveals the growing diversity and complexity of its economy, society, and culture as well as an increasing desire to combat the sense of alienation experienced by many in the province and to promote more inclusive policies in all aspects of the province's economy, society, and culture. In 2002, then Premier, Roger Grimes, announced the appointment of a Royal Commission on Renewing and Strengthening Our Place in Canada. Its purpose was to study the evolution of Newfoundland and Labrador's economy, society, and culture since 1949. The members of the Commission presented their findings in June 2003. The report – *Our Place in Canada* – and the various reactions to it reflect the intricacy of any attempt to describe the economic, social, and cultural characteristics of the province. However, certain major themes permeate the report. First, as Bickerton (2002)⁴⁵ notes, “[w]ith regard to Newfoundland’s place in Confederation, there is a clear sense of alienation borne of marginality that infuses the report” (p. 290). Furthermore, many are disturbed by what they believe is a federalist or centralist tendency to stereotype Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Ironically, however, there appears to be the same “sense of alienation borne of marginality” within Newfoundland and Labrador. This is hardly surprising. As noted in Chapter Two, this sense of alienation and resentment of official neglect has deep roots in Labrador, where it is commonly felt that the island, starting with the summer fishery off the coast of Labrador, viewed Labrador as a vast storehouse of natural resources. Furthermore, Labrador was not given elected

⁴⁵ Bickerton's article, though it comments on a report published in 2003, was published in the Fall 2002 edition of *Newfoundland Studies* journal. According to the editor's note, the journal was behind on its publication schedule. “Thus this edition is dated Fall 2002; but at least some of the content derives from events which occurred in 2003” and 2004 (Hiller, Fall 2002, n.p.). This note also applies to citations from Bannister (Fall 2002), Boswell (Fall 2002), Conrad (Fall 2002) and Melnyk (Fall 2002).

representation until 1946, even though, after years of being passed back and forth between Quebec and the island, it had been finally annexed to Newfoundland in 1809. Clearly, within the province, there are those who feel the need to strengthen their place in Newfoundland and Labrador as much as the province feels the need to strengthen its place in Canada. However, recent developments reflect a second theme: the economy, society, and culture of the province are evolving, complex, and interdependent. The Royal Commission (2003) notes that, increasingly, “[c]ultural and recreational aspects of life are . . . major economic and social activities in their own right” (p. 29). Furthermore, there is a growing recognition of diversity. This leads to another of the Commission’s discoveries: to “strengthen our place in Canada”, we must not only find our voice, but also recognize that this voice is not that of the essential Newfoundlander and Labradorian. For many, within and outside the province, “Newfoundlander”⁴⁶ has conjured up an image of an oil-skin clad, Anglo-Saxon Protestant or Irish Roman Catholic fisherman in a dory. However, “our voice” consists of many voices, and it is imperative that we not only encourage, but that we also celebrate the inclusion of all these voices in any attempt to promote the economy, society, and culture of this province.⁴⁷ Finally, the Royal Commission recognizes the significance of education in this process. For educators, the challenge is to address the diversity of the interests and the needs of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians as well as to provide an education that supports students’ voices and facilitates prosperity in social and cultural as well as

⁴⁶ The omission of Labradorian is deliberate here, reflecting the fact that the stereotypical version of the essential Newfoundlander has often failed to acknowledge the contribution of various Labradorians to the complex, hybrid identities of the inhabitants of this province.

⁴⁷ As discussed in Chapter One, critical theorists and educators might argue that more than a celebration of these voices is necessary. The long marginalized people need more than a hearing – they need change! However, acknowledgement of these voices may empower them to take the next step – praxis.

financial terms. The expectations that confront teachers are daunting, and the challenge is to avoid the tendency to simplify or to essentialize the desires, needs, and characteristics of the students of this province.

In fact, any such inclination towards simplification leads to a form of “tunnel vision” which fails to acknowledge the multiplicity of voices that must be heard as well as the assortment of evolving issues and priorities that need consideration. Consequently, one must be wary of the common tendency for a group to essentialize itself in an attempt to present a unified front in the face of perceived oppression. African American social critic, bell hooks (2001), warns against the danger of promoting an “‘authentic’ black identity” (p. 2482), which ignores class and gender differences, to counteract the politics of racism in America. The essentialism of an “authentic” black identity ignores the various forms of alienation experienced by blacks of different social classes or genders. Indeed, hooks insists that only when “black folks” are critical of essentialism are they “empowered to recognize multiple experiences of black identity that are the lived conditions which make diverse cultural productions possible. When this diversity is ignored, it is easy to see black folks as falling into two categories: nationalists or assimilationists” (p. 2483). Such a binary is to be avoided because it continues to emphasize difference or “otherness” while dismissing the interdependence and complexity of human interaction.

Similarly, hooks’ warning is apt for the situation in which Newfoundlanders and Labradorians find themselves. While attempting to strengthen our place in Canada, we must also avoid essentialism, with its promotion of a static and narrow view of the Newfoundlander and Labradorian that is deceptively simple and exclusionary. In

addition, it is imperative that we reject simple “us versus them” notions of identity. While Premier Williams’ ploy of removing Canadian flags from provincial buildings in his 2004 struggle with the federal government was seen by some as a viable political move, such a stance reinforces an artificial division between our national and provincial identities. Furthermore, there were those within the province who disapproved of the removal of the flags. Many would agree with Joey Smallwood who once said, “We’re proud to be Canadians. We’re Newfoundland Canadians or if you like Canadian Newfoundlanders” (cited in Privy Council, 1999). However, even this binary notion of identity is misleading since we have multiple, complex, and hybrid identities.

Embracing this complexity, the Royal Commission on Renewing and Strengthening Our Place in Canada (2003) utilized a number of information gathering methodologies and “[listened] to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians of all ages and backgrounds within and outside the province” (p. 159). Furthermore, though Bannister (Fall 2002) suggests that the terms of reference for the Royal Commission on Renewing and Strengthening Our Place in Canada ensured that much of its “discussion and debate over the province’s history and culture [remained] focused on the Terms of Union and Confederation” and that “[w]e seem to have become obsessed with the question of whether or not we received a fair deal in 1949” (p. 175), the Royal Commission (2003) insists that its goal was not to dwell on the past but to consider the past to better understand the future. Willinsky (2000), would likely agree with the Royal Commission’s emphasis on the importance of history (see Chapter One). Willinsky stresses that an awareness of our past empowers us (educators and students) to examine and, if necessary, challenge any traditions that suppress democracy and human rights.

Yet, while Bannister may have over-emphasized the report's attention to the past, he does have a point when he warns that "[b]y re-fighting the political battles of the 1940s, we have lost sight of major cultural shifts and, as a result, we have ignored salient changes that have taken place in our collective memory" (p. 175). Any thorough examination of the province's economy, society, and culture must take a more panoramic and critical⁴⁸ view. While it may be noted that, in some ways, history does repeat itself, the contexts of historical events and ideologies are dynamic. Therefore, while remnants of earlier times echo in today's context – just as former educational ideologies and forms of English are still reflected in current educational documents – change is inevitable. Therefore, educators must constantly reflect upon their goals and methodologies and, if necessary, reformulate them. By participating in an open-minded, flexible, and critical study of contemporary Newfoundland and Labrador, educators may be able to uncover the increasingly complex and diversified economy; the dynamic and evolving society; as well as the rich and pluralistic culture that provide a context in which teaching and learning must take place.

Economic Developments

Though there is debate concerning Newfoundland and Labrador's current and potential financial situation, there seems to be general agreement upon four issues. First, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians feel they have been economically exploited and marginalized for the benefit of urban and/or federalist interests. This marginalization of

⁴⁸ Here, the word "critical" is not intended to connote a severely judgmental view or a fondness for finding fault. Rather, "critical" refers to an inquiring view that resists unquestioning acceptance of traditional "taken-for-granted."s."

the province's interests is often attributed to the lack of awareness of the province's economic potential and diversity. For too long, the federal and provincial governments have held a simplistic view of the Newfoundland and Labrador economy and have been overly dependent upon the province's natural resources as key to economic development. Secondly, there is a growing recognition of the complex and dynamic nature of economics and a trend toward economic diversity in Newfoundland and Labrador. Moreover, there seems to be consensus that, if the province is to realize its full economic potential, the people within the province must have a greater say in determining its financial development. Finally, it has been suggested that an appropriate and effective educational system is essential to economic prosperity. As noted in Chapters One and Two, the educational system has traditionally been expected to ensure students graduate skilled for the workforce and ideologically programmed to fulfill the needs of society's economy.

Economic Exploitation

The assertion that inhabitants of this province are victims of economic exploitation may have its roots in the history of early European involvement in Newfoundland and Labrador (see Chapter Two), but the trend of protecting a national/urban economy at the expense of regional/rural interests has been evident ever since. In the 16th century, Europeans came to Newfoundland and Labrador to meet the economic needs and political desires of their home countries. For centuries, the fishermen and the governments of France and England vied for the right to fish off the

teeming coasts of Newfoundland and Labrador. Settlement was discouraged because both nations preferred to maintain an active migratory fishery that benefited the mother countries. Once settlement was established, the dominant interests of England's West Country merchants were gradually replaced by those of the merchants of Newfoundland. Those living on the periphery – Labrador and outport Newfoundland – were often exploited for the benefit of larger economic centres such as St. John's (see Chapter Two). Since the colony joined Canada, the economic trend favouring the centre at the expense of the periphery has continued within the province and has been replicated in the broader picture of the national economy.

For example, it has often been suggested that Newfoundland and Labrador fails to reap the benefits of resource development because the province has been exploited and marginalized by Canada. The Royal Commission (2003) notes,

[s]ince Confederation, [the Province's] hydroelectric resources in Labrador have been developed for the benefit of Quebec; its oil resources have been developed in a manner that makes Canada the primary beneficiary; its fishery has all but disappeared under the stewardship of the federal government. (p. 1)

Admittedly, the Newfoundland and Labrador government freely signed the contract with Hydro-Québec, making Québec the major beneficiary of the energy produced by Churchill Falls.⁴⁹ However, the Royal Commission (2003) suggests the province had little choice in view of the "inaction of the federal government in the matter of allowing a power corridor through Québec" by which Newfoundland and Labrador could transmit

⁴⁹ According to Boswell (Fall 2002), the current deal "allows Québec to reap annual windfall profits of some \$850 million" (p. 284). Furthermore, Hydro-Québec will continue to be the primary beneficiary of the Churchill Falls development until the contract expires in 2041 (Royal Commission, 2003, p. 123).

energy to its potential markets (p. 123). “[T]he fact that the federal parliament has passed legislation to allow the construction of oil and gas pipelines across other provincial boundaries” (p. 123) seems to substantiate the claims of those who insist the economic interests of Newfoundland and Labrador are sublimated in favour of those of provinces that have greater representation in parliament. Furthermore, the Commission explains how the federal government, while professing the contrary, is, in fact, exploiting Newfoundland and Labrador’s offshore oil industry. In 1984, Jean Crétien, “then Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, . . . predicted that Newfoundland and Labrador might become a ‘have-province’ within five years of first oil from Hibernia” (p. 121). Moreover, “[w]hen the Atlantic Accord was signed in 1985, there were great expectations that offshore oil would set Newfoundland and Labrador on a course of phenomenal economic growth” (p. 121). Such optimism seemed justified by the wording of the Atlantic Accord, which included as one of its purposes the recognition of “the right of Newfoundland and Labrador to be the *principal beneficiary* of the oil and gas resources off its shores, consistent with the requirement for a strong and united Canada” (cited in Royal Commission, 2003, p. 117). However, the economic aspirations of Newfoundland and Labrador becoming a “have” province have not been realized and *Our Place in Canada* reflects this. According to Boswell (2002), rather than painting a rosy picture of the province’s economic future, the report seeks “to correct the erroneous but widely-held belief that offshore resource revenue will quickly bring Newfoundland and Labrador into the ranks of the ‘have’ provinces” and “shows that it is the federal, not the provincial, government which will receive most of the revenue” (p. 283). As for the fishery, while the Royal Commission (2003) acknowledges that the provincial government “made the

proper regulation of this industry difficult by its own actions, . . . the fact remains that this environmental, social and economic tragedy occurred on the federal government's watch and as a result of its failure to manage the resource properly" (p. 72). Dyer (March 2003) notes, "[i]n Canada, where the Atlantic and Pacific fisheries combined comprise just two percent of GDP, the growing threat to the cod-fishery" was not much of a "political priority" for "the federal government whose responsibility it was" (p. 325). Furthermore, in the written submissions received by the Royal Commission, "[i]t was a popularly expressed opinion that foreign fishing and fish quotas were 'political' in nature and provided Ottawa with a 'bargaining chip' in international relations" (Royal Commission, 2003, p. 173). In response to its research, the Royal Commission made recommendations about strengthening the province's voice in renegotiating current agreements or participating in joint federal-provincial management policies for all three resources. However, as Boswell (Fall 2002) notes, the "report was received with a resounding silence in Ottawa, and the reader is left wondering what will happen if there is no move by the federal government to address the deficiencies highlighted in the report" (p. 287). However, many of the province's inhabitants have long felt their concerns are met with silence from more than Ottawa.

Significantly, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians also feel ignored and unappreciated within their own province. For example, many of the written submissions received by the Royal Commission (2003) "mentioned the place of Labrador in relation to Newfoundland and what was felt to be an 'extractive' or a 'colonial' relationship" (p. 175). Indeed, it became clear that "an undercurrent of alienation continues to exist in Labrador", and "Labradorians sense that the provincial government continues to

primarily view Labrador through the lens of what Labrador can do for Newfoundland or the provincial treasury” (p. 52). This sense of alienation felt by Labradorians is hardly surprising considering the historically exploitative relationship they have endured with the island:

Just as the Island was an extension of Britain, Labrador was an extension of the Island. Ironically, those on the Island who might have effected change failed to see the similarities, even though they had themselves experienced the resentment that exploitation breeds. Even when laws were applied, such as the court of 1824 and the Customs Act, they were for the benefit of someone other than those who had chosen to live in Labrador. And even when services were provided, such as the mail service and the coastal shipping service, they were primarily for the benefit of the transient Newfoundland fishermen and their Newfoundland or West Country employers who came for the summer months. It is little wonder that Labradorians came to see themselves as second-class citizens, who more often than not were out of sight and out of mind. (Rompkey, 2003, p. 59)

The inequities in the relationship between Newfoundland and Labrador continued into the 20th century. In the 1920s, finding itself in financial difficulty, Newfoundland offered to sell Labrador to Quebec for as little as \$15 million dollars, and “[t]here is no evidence that the people of Labrador were ever consulted on the sale of the land on which they were living” (Rompkey, 2003, p. 80). Furthermore in 1966, Premier Smallwood stated, “If we are not big enough, if we are not imaginative enough, if we are not daring enough

to colonize Labrador, someone else will do it” (cited in Rompkey, 2003, p. 135). Clearly, Labradorians are justified when they suggest they have not been treated as equal partners within the province. However, inequitable relationships in the province are mirrored in the relations between rural and urban areas as well.

Some rural Newfoundlanders and Labradorians feel marginalized within their own province. They believe their economic interests receive less attention from the provincial government than the economic interests of their urban counterparts. The disparities between urban and rural areas have been aggravated by the 1992 moratorium and the resulting out-migration. Though Newfoundland and Labrador has typically experienced high rates of out-migration, the years following 1992 witnessed a sharp increase. The Economic and Statistics Branch of the Department of Finance (October 2006) describes the changes in the province’s demographics and notes the dramatic increase in out-migration following the fall-out of the moratorium:

Between 1972 and 1993, annual net out-migration averaged about 3,600. Net out-migration increased rapidly after 1994 (following the cod collapse, government restraint measures, and EI reform), reaching a peak of roughly 12,000 in 1998. Net out-migration trended downward for the next several years as adjustments related to the unique economic shocks mentioned above were absorbed and a period of strong economic growth emerged. Between 2002 and 2004 net out-migration averaged 2,000 persons per year and appeared to be fairly steady. However, net out-migration increased to 3,293 persons in 2005 as a booming Alberta economy attracted more workers and a large number of construction jobs

on the Voisey's Bay and White Rose projects ended. Net out-migration increased again in 2006, to 4,159, as difficult times in the local fishery and forestry sectors, and increased demand for labour in other provinces, particularly Alberta, provided additional incentives to potential migrants.

(Government, p. 4)

The (October 2006) report also reveals that while most areas have experienced population decline, "fishery/EI dependent rural regions [have been] disproportionately impacted", resulting in "[l]arger population losses in rural areas" and "an increased concentration of population in urban areas" (Government, p. 7). These findings are in keeping with those of the Royal Commission (2003) which indicates that while the economy of St. John's and the Avalon peninsula is particularly strong and is "more stable, more diverse and has a higher average income that [sic] at any point in its history" (p. 29), since the moratorium "[m]any rural municipalities, especially those that have lost both their economic bases and their youth, have suffered to the point that they can barely provide minimal levels of service or pay their debts" (p. 39). Furthermore, the Royal Commission (2003) acknowledges that "the new economy's focus on urban-based employment, and the move away from labour-intensive to technology-intensive industries . . . are among the difficult factors to be considered in addressing the future of our rural society" (p. 43). Though the recent trend of out-migration is not the result of concerted government programs of resettlement, many rural Newfoundlanders and Labradorians feel the present economic situation and lack of action on behalf of the provincial government leaves them little choice but to move and contributes to their feelings of marginalization. However, even if the fishing industry were to rebound, it is unlikely that

it would be sufficient to sustain rural communities as it once did. If there is hope for economic prosperity in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, it may lie in a policy of economic diversification.

Economic Complexity and Diversity

For centuries, the economy of Newfoundland and Labrador has seemed to reflect a very narrow, simplistic vision and an over-reliance upon primary industries. In fact, it was the fishery that first brought Europeans to Newfoundland and Labrador in the 16th century, and this dependence upon the fishery continued for more than four hundred years. By the time of Confederation, there were a number of small businesses in operation, some employment was provided by American bases in Labrador and on the island, and there was evidence of the beginnings of a tourism industry (Rowe, 1976). However, though there have been many changes in the economic welfare and development of the province since Confederation, the significance of natural resources has remained consistent. Yet, aspirations of financial prosperity based upon the development of the province's rich natural resources have not been realized. Moreover, the ecological crisis that resulted in the 1992 Moratorium has resulted in a reassessment of economic environmental practices. Therefore, in recent years there has not only been a growing trend toward diversifying the economy, but also an increased awareness of the importance of conservation and sustainability.

Admittedly, natural resources still play a significant role in the province's economy; however, there seems to be a growing recognition of the importance of

managing resources in a more sustainable and effective manner. Forestry, hydroelectricity, oil, mining, and even the fishery continue to be major contributors to Newfoundland and Labrador's economy. For example, Smith (March/April 2005) notes that the mining "sector contributed almost \$1.0 billion to the economy" in 2002 (p. 66). Furthermore, after the announcement of the moratorium in 1992,

[f]ew people expected Newfoundland's fishing industry to survive the collapse of cod, but survive it did. As cod disappeared, valuable stock of shrimp and crab . . . exploded. By 1995, the landed value of the Newfoundland fishery exceeded its pre-moratorium value and in 2001 the landed value of shellfish in Newfoundland reached \$406 million. Snow Crab in particular has taken the place of cod to become the economic backbone of the industry. (Lockett, Dec/Jan 2002, p. 40)

Yet, there are already those that caution against squandering this second chance. Indeed, to maintain what the Royal Commission (2003) calls "the last chance for the fishery", it notes the vulnerability of the shellfish industry, and suggests the development of "a plan to ensure the ongoing sustainability of the shrimp and crab stocks" (p. 113). Perhaps the province has learned from past mistakes. With sustainability in mind, the province has been developing its aquaculture industry, which had an export value of \$16 million in 2003, and "[t]he industry's goal is to produce 32,000 tonnes of farmed cod for market by 2010" (Economic Research, 2004). Newfoundland and Labrador is also focusing on the development of its renewable resources. For example, "[t]he Agriculture and Agrifoods industry in the Province comprises 740 farms and over 100 food manufacturers, employs more than 4,000 people and has sales of approximately \$500 million a year"

(Progressive, 2003, p. 37). While the development of sustainable industries is a step in the right direction, many recognize that Newfoundland and Labrador must also break the cycle of its over-dependence upon natural resources.

Therefore, though there is a national tendency to pigeonhole the Newfoundland and Labrador economy, such a tendency fails to acknowledge its increased diversification. A Canadian public opinion and marketing research firm, POLLARA (March 2003), concludes,

Canadian's lack of familiarity with Newfoundland and Labrador is particularly striking on the economic front. The diversification and recent strong growth of the Newfoundland and Labrador economy have gone largely unnoticed by other Canadians. The province's economy is viewed by many as rather one dimensional, based on one natural resource in particular; the fishery. (p. 473)

However, within the province there is an awareness that a narrow view of the economy and an over reliance upon primary industries has not served the province well. Therefore, there has been an increase in secondary and spin-off industries. For example, the province is expanding its involvement and control in the offshore petroleum industry:

Over the past decade, Newfoundland and Labrador has built a considerable supply and service capability throughout the oil and gas value chain, with a record of providing innovative solutions and delivering quality work. Local businesses have also built on traditional strengths in marine technology, developing value-adding niche specializations,

offshore Newfoundland and around the globe. (Robinson-Greene, March/April 2005, p. NR17)

Furthermore, though the province clearly relies upon its natural resource development, the Royal Commission (2003) notes that Newfoundland and Labrador's "employment is much less in primary or manufacturing sectors . . . and more in tertiary sectors such as business and personal services" (p. 29). For example, "[a]lthough services represent a relatively small portion of exports, the value has been rising due to growth in industries such as tourism, communications, business and computer services. Employment has been rising in recent years and in 2003 reached 217,800" (Provincial Economy, 2003). Moreover, Boland (May 2003) asserts that some of the tremendous potential of Newfoundland and Labrador's tourism industry is already being realized: "[b]etter services, high-end products, the development of historical attractions and increased awareness are among the reasons the province's fourth largest industry injects roughly \$700 million into the economy every year" (p. 38). In addition, the Royal Commission (2003) acknowledges the "emergence of an entrepreneurial spirit . . . , which has enabled the province to turn to small business to create jobs and improve incomes" (p. 131). Indeed, "many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians now own and operate their own businesses and are responsible for the largest share of new employment" (Royal Commission, 2003, p. 29). Therefore, it stands to reason that, if so much responsibility for new employment rests on the initiative of individual entrepreneurs, people within the province must have a more substantial voice and greater control in determining their financial futures.

If Newfoundland and Labrador is to become a full economic partner within the Canadian federation, its voices must be heard. This necessity is recognized in the report, *Our Place in Canada*, in which the Royal Commission (2003) emphasizes the need for joint management (federal and provincial) of the fishing industry (p. 113), and for the province to have greater control of all of its natural resources. Although, according to Boswell (Fall 2002), the report met “with a resounding silence in Ottawa” (p. 287), there were those in the province who took notice. Boswell (Fall 2002), referring to the Progressive Conservative Party of Newfoundland and Labrador’s “Blue Book” outlining its policies and intentions leading up to the provincial election in October 2003, notes,

much of the chapter entitled ‘Fairness and Equity in Canada’ dealt with the fishery, offshore oil revenue, and hydroelectric development on the Churchill River reflected the [Royal Commission] report’s recommendations.⁵⁰ Further, the Conservative government’s promise to establish an office of federal-provincial relations in Ottawa to focus on changes in offshore ownership and management, and custodial management, among other items, is very much in line with the report.

(p. 286)

Similarly, when dealing with companies wishing to exploit Newfoundland and Labrador’s resources, the province is much less likely to relinquish the benefits of related service industries, production, or processing of its resources. For example, to mine in

⁵⁰ In fact, provincial party leader, Danny Williams, makes reference to the Royal Commission on Renewing and Strengthening Our Place in Canada in his opening address in his party’s policy manual (Progressive, 2003, p. 1).

Voisey's Bay, Inco had to agree to a processing plant within the province. Furthermore, Newfoundland and Labrador companies have received 83% of awards, including more than \$490 million in contracts awarded to aboriginal companies. Over 2,700 people worked on all facets of the project in Newfoundland and Labrador in 2004. And over 90% of those were residents of the province. (Voisey's, March/April 2005, p. 67)

However, just as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians must be included as vocal partners within the federal economy, local voices must be respected within the province. Hopefully, recognizing the importance of promoting the interests of marginalized voices on the federal stage may facilitate the process of amplifying the voices of the marginalized within the province.

Indeed, within Newfoundland and Labrador, there is a need to promote inclusion and to establish a forum for consultation and negotiation among all our people if we are to combat the alienation felt by various groups within the province, including Labradorians, aboriginals, women, and inhabitants of rural Newfoundland and Labrador. Historically, the provincial government has not demonstrated a willingness to engage in meaningful consultation with Labradorians on vital economic issues that have had a direct impact upon them. For example, the Innu of Labrador were not consulted about the construction of the Churchill Falls project. Rompkey (2003) notes the impact of this development and the resentment felt by the aboriginal population:

The bitterness of the Innu was fuelled by the construction of the Churchill Falls project, which caused hundreds of waterways to be diverted and more than 1300 square kilometers of forest to be flooded. Prime hunting

areas at Michikamau and Ossoknanuan lakes vanished beneath Smallwood Reservoir. . . . As well, burial sites, holding perhaps thousand of years of Innu history, were wiped out. Campsites and bones over one thousand years old – valuable evidence in a later Innu land claim – disappeared.

(p. 112)

Such a colonial attitude must change, and the current provincial administration has indicated it recognizes this. The Progressive Conservative party promised that, if elected, its government would “not accept or ignore the unequal socio-economic conditions in aboriginal communities” and would “establish relationships that are built on equality and respect, and where aboriginal people can fulfill their desire to become more self-reliant and exercise greater responsibility for the well being of their communities” (Progressive, 2003, p. 14).⁵¹ Since being elected, the Williams’ government has shown some willingness to fulfill its promises. As a result,

[t]he Labrador Inuit Land Claim Agreement was signed on January 22, 2005 in Nain, Labrador. Within the Land Claim Settlement Area, Inuit own 15,800 sq. km. of land referred to as Labrador Inuit Lands where they have the exclusive right to carving stone, ownership of 3,950 square kilometres (1,525 square miles) of quarry materials and a 25 per cent

⁵¹ Indeed, some aboriginal people are having a greater say in their economic futures. Smith (March/April 2005) records that, “[t]hrough its wholly-owned subsidiary – the Labrador Inuit Development Corporation, the LIA [Labrador Inuit Association] is working with the Voisey’s Bay Nickel Corporation to maximize employment and education opportunities for Labrador Inuit” (p. 68). Furthermore, “the Labrador Inuit Development Corporation (the country’s only 100 per cent Canadian-owned mining company) owns and operates two dimension stone quarries” and has “been mining in Labrador since long before Voisey’s Bay was discovered” (Smith, March/April 2005, p. 69).

ownership interest in subsurface resources. (Smith, March/April 2005, p. 68)

Hopefully, the increased inclusion of such marginalized aboriginal and Labradorian voices will be repeated with the acceptance of other groups whose interests and voices have been ignored. For example, The Royal Commission (2003) also asserts,

[i]f women are to see themselves as valued, respected and included citizens of the province, stronger policies must be implemented to facilitate the inclusion of women in decision-making, improve women's access to training and education, improve gender equality in the workplace, [and] encourage women as entrepreneurs. (pp. 49-50)

Moreover, after stating that the sustainability of rural communities is one of the province's most significant economic challenges, the Royal Commission (2003) insists that "[t]he people of the province must become engaged in an informed, public dialogue on the future of rural Newfoundland and Labrador as preparation for the development of a rural strategy" (p. 147). Clearly, the promotion of "public dialogue" indicates there has been some recognition of the importance of the voices of "the people"; however, there is also the acknowledgement that this dialogue should be "informed". Consequently, as is traditionally the case, the educational system is expected to produce these "informed" people.

Education and Economics

The Royal Commission promotes an appropriate and effective educational system as the key to strengthening these voices and to preparing Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to become more self-reliant and economically prosperous. The Commission's findings suggest

[t]here is a growing appreciation that, with higher levels of education, come greater employment opportunities and income levels. While perhaps not a sufficient ingredient for prosperity and self-reliance, this change of attitude is certainly a necessary one. Research into other sustainable North Atlantic societies such as Iceland and Ireland indicates that literacy and higher education are vital for the achievement of economic and social change. (Royal Commission, 2003, p. 132)

In its submission to the Royal Commission, the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association supports this notion: "[c]learly, in a province where unemployment levels remain high and where job opportunities, while improving, still do not reach countrywide norms, education is paramount" (cited in Royal Commission, 2003, p. 132).

Furthermore, the Royal Commission (2003) indicates that the new global economy is providing improved opportunities for Newfoundland and Labrador because "human capital is becoming the most important strategic asset", particularly "in the 'new economy' of communication, information and e-business" (p. 129). Moreover, this "human 'capital', determined by the education and skill of the workforce", is "the key competitive factor" in such an economy (p. 130). Therefore, if "Newfoundland and Labrador [is] to attain greater prosperity and self-reliance, it must increase its investment

in education” (p. 133). This investment must include “appropriate educational programs” which allow young people “to take advantage of” some of the current “employment opportunities existing in this province” (p. 145). While an acknowledgement that “education is paramount” is encouraging, the utilitarian nature of some of the Commission’s proposals must be met with some caution.

Providing an education that enables students to become financially successful and self-reliant adults is important; however, there is a danger to view students and education as mere products. Bobbitt (2004), a proponent of the scientific method of curriculum development, promotes education as a preparation for “the affairs of adult life” (p. 11) at a time when “[i]ncreased specialization has been multiplying human interdependencies” and “civilization and humanization [has] advanced so swiftly” (p. 9). In “[a]n age of science” that “[demands] exactness and particularity” (p. 10), Bobbitt asserts that “[e]ducation that prepares for life is one that prepares definitely and adequately for . . . specific activities” (p. 11). He emphasizes the importance of skill-specific vocational education and the educational goal of “highest practicable level of efficiency” (p. 15). Bobbitt’s notion of education is somewhat like an assembly line, producing an efficient workforce that contributes to society’s economic prosperity. Some of the language in *Our Place in Canada* is reminiscent of Bobbitt’s theory as the report indicates that a highly skilled and educated workforce is essential to Newfoundland and Labrador’s economic prosperity. As noted in the previous paragraph, the Royal Commission report asserts that the “human capital” necessary to compete in the competitive global economy will be “determined by the education and skill of the workforce”; therefore, the

educational system must provide “appropriate educational programs” to prepare students for existing “employment opportunities”.

While the Royal Commission emphasizes the necessity of an “appropriate” education to realize the potential economic prosperity of 21st century Newfoundland and Labrador, there is nothing new in the attempt to utilize the educational system to endorse economic and civic ideologies (see Chapter One). To meet the demands of the economy, public schools become producers, and students become products, moulded to fulfill their roles in a skill-based society. Literacy, then, takes the “English as skills” form (see Chapter One). Admittedly, recent advances in technology and forms of communication have broadened the range of skills necessary and require the development of what Cope and Kalantzis (2000) label “multiliteracies” (see Chapter Five). In addition, the educational system would be remiss if it did not offer students the skills necessary to access new technologies and communication tools. However, one might recognize that equally important educational goals include encouraging students to critically view and challenge the existing structure of the economic system and to adopt practices that promote what Bowers (Spring 2003) refers to as “eco-justice”.

While the Royal Commission report promotes the need for technical and skill-related training, its recognition of individual voice, of the growing diversity of the provincial economy, and of the need for sustainable development has broader implications for education. For example, acknowledging that a successful economy depends upon the inclusion of the diverse voices throughout the province, the Royal Commission (2003) asserts, “[t]here is increasing evidence to show that social cohesion and inclusion are critical in order for societies to prosper economically” (p. 47). This

same respect for “social cohesion and inclusion” is crucial to an effective educational system; however, it necessitates the practice of a form of critical literacy (see Chapter One). A critical approach to “reading the world” helps to identify inequities in the system as an initial step in challenging these disparities. Furthermore, while social “inclusion” of previously marginalized voices appears beneficial, critical educators and students will be wary of tendencies towards “social cohesion” that promote hegemonic or assimilationist ideals rather than a genuine respect for diversity. Another concern for educators is the province’s continued economic dependence upon the environment, and there are elements of Bowers’s concept of eco-justice that can be adapted to Newfoundland and Labrador classrooms. If we wish to avoid another ecological disaster, such as the one that resulted in the Moratorium in 1992, it may be wise to acknowledge, as Bowers (Spring 2003) does, “how humans are nested in cultures and cultures are nested in and dependent upon natural systems” (p. 15). Therefore, human health and prosperity is dependent upon environmental health. Furthermore, Bowers notes how many “indigenous” and “oral-based” cultures have existed in symbiotic relationships with the environment and have relied upon “intergenerational knowledge” to pass on the traditions of co-existence between humans and ecosystems. It may not be too late for Newfoundland and Labrador educators to benefit from the inclusion of the voices of our own aboriginal people, who lived in harmony with the environment for centuries. In addition, there is much to learn from Gruenewald’s synthesis of “critical pedagogy” and “placed-based education” which acknowledges the connection among ecological concerns; economic, cultural, and social issues; as well as place-based situatedness.

Gruenewald (May 2003) writes,

[c]ritical place-based pedagogy cannot be only about struggles with human oppression. It also must embrace the experience of being human in connection with the others and with the world of nature, and the responsibility to conserve and restore our shared environments for future generations. (p. 6)

Clearly, there are a multitude of economically related concerns that educators must consider as they determine the goals they hope to achieve in their classrooms. However, the simultaneous existence of multiple and hybrid educational goals have historically been the nature of the educational beast (see Chapters One and Two). Moreover, connected to many of the economic concerns expressed in the Royal Commission Report are the social developments in the province.

Social Developments

The social issues concerning Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, though not unique to this province, deserve critical examination within the provincial context. Newfoundland and Labrador, like other provinces, is “increasingly frustrated because [its] interests are not understood by the federal public service or reflected in federal policies and programs. This is exacerbated by the perception of many Canadians that the interests of central Canada are of greater importance than those of other provinces” (Royal Commission, 2003, p. 144). Moreover, a major theme that emerged from

POLLARA's (March 2003) research into Canadians'⁵² perceptions of Newfoundland and Labrador is that "while Newfoundland and Labrador may be well-known to Canadians, it is not known-well" (p. 473). Perhaps this is partially due to the fact that, since Confederation, "[d]espite valiant efforts to avoid such a fate, and strong evidence that Canada's tenth province differs substantially from its Maritime cousins, Newfoundland and Labrador found its identity submerged in a region that had already congealed in the Canadian vocabulary by 1949" (Conrad, Fall 2002, p. 161). Initially, not only was the province's distinctiveness dismissed, but also the imposed perceptions that replaced it were often negative. Conrad (Fall 2002) states, "[b]ackward, conservative, and juiced up on handouts, [Atlantic Canadians] are widely perceived as a region blighted by location, culture, and identity" (p. 162). Moreover, "[g]eneral perceptions of the province and its people suggest a continuing familiarity with outdated stereotypes and past realities" (POLLARA, 2003, p. 473). These "outdated stereotypes and past realities" fail to recognize the dramatic social changes that have occurred in Newfoundland and Labrador. At times, people within the province have also failed to acknowledge the diversity and fluidity of their evolving society and have been guilty of perpetuating ill-informed stereotypes. Consequently, there is a need to promote social inclusion and to celebrate diversity. Education can play a crucial role in this process by addressing the social concerns of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. There is a very real need to combat the ignorance concerning marginalized groups within our province and within our country.

⁵² POLLARA (March 2003) states that its "report often makes reference to the views of 'Canadians.' Readers should note that this term denotes those Canadians outside the province of Newfoundland and Labrador" (p. 479).

Alienation and Marginalization

There is a very strong sense of social alienation in this province.

“Newfoundlanders and Labradorians feel ignored, misunderstood and unappreciated by their federal government and, to a lesser extent, by other Canadians” (Royal Commission, 2002, p. 2). A common perception is that the province is ignored by Ottawa and is fighting an uphill battle to convince the federal government that the social issues of Newfoundland and Labrador have an impact upon the nation as a whole. This is not easy when one considers that “[t]he population of Newfoundland and Labrador makes up less than 2 per cent of the Canadian total”, and the province has only 7 of 308 seats in the house of Parliament (Royal Commission, 2003, p. 81). Moreover, the province’s geographic distance from Canada’s power centres only amplifies our position on the periphery and further diminishes the impact of what may be felt as a social crisis in Newfoundland and Labrador. Perhaps the most devastating socio-economic event in the last two decades has been the failure of the fishery, with its resulting out-migration and threat to the rural way of life in Newfoundland and Labrador. Rex Murphy, in a commentary for the CBC’s *The National*, addresses the fisheries crisis, the lack of attention it receives in Ottawa, and the practical measure of our place in Confederation:

Problems or crises in the East Coast fishery, that's part of the wallpaper on the edge of confederation. It is this feeling of being on the edge of the agendas that count, away from the almighty centre, that over time rubs some nerves raw and contributes to extravagant response. If the Atlantic Ocean were 100 yards from either the bank towers of Toronto or the spires

of Parliament Hill, then the closing of one fishery and the scale back of another might even be a national emergency. . . .

It may not be a pleasant thought, but distance from the centre is, in far too many ways, for far too many people, the very measurement of this confederation's worth and meaning. (May 6, 2003)

While there are those Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who question their place in Canada, others question their place within their own province. Women, aboriginal peoples, other minority groups, and Labradorians have often been marginalized within their own province. For example, as Hanrahan (2003) notes, because

[t]he 1949 Terms of Union between Newfoundland and Canada made no mention of Aboriginal people in the new province . . . the *Indian Act* was not applied in Newfoundland. This meant that the province's Innu and Mi'kmaq were ineligible for the range of programs and services enjoyed by their counterparts in continental Canada. In fact, they did not exist in the law and thus lacked the recognition as previously sovereign nations that their counterparts enjoyed elsewhere in Canada. (p. 3)

Furthermore, the Royal Commission (2003) "after speaking with many Aboriginal groups and reviewing relevant submission and articles, . . . has come to understand that the absence of any specific mention of Aboriginal peoples in the Terms of Union was intentional" (p. 76) on the part of the Newfoundland government. In addition, during the Royal Commission's Public Consultation process, it was noted that "[t]he Terms of Union . . . make no reference to Francophone and Acadian communities in

Newfoundland and Labrador” (2003, p. 77). These are not the only groups to suffer from intentional exclusion. For instance, “[n]egative stereotypes about women’s skills and roles continue to create barriers for women in entering the labour market, accessing training and in availing of small business start-up funds”(p. 48), and

[t]he continuing barriers to the inclusion of women in decision-making in the province mean that women’s experiences are not being considered when policies are being developed, . . . and that one-half of the population are too often excluded when steps are taken to shape a new vision for our future.⁵³ (Royal Commission, 2003, p. 48)

Moreover, “Labradorians . . . believe that they do not get the respect they deserve from the provincial government and that their priorities are often ignored” (Royal Commission, 2003, p. 53). The fact that Labrador is represented by only 3 of the 48 seats in the provincial House of Assembly likely contributes to this attitude. In recent years, there has been a mounting sense of marginalization felt by rural communities in Newfoundland and Labrador. Out-migration has made it increasingly expensive for the province to maintain health and education facilities in small communities. As the outport way of life is threatened by out-migration, many feel their interests take a back seat to the social concerns of the growing urban centers, particularly on the Avalon Peninsula. The alienation felt by Newfoundlanders and Labradorians is often exacerbated by the ill-informed stereotypes that are leveled at them.

⁵³ The Royal Commission (2003) notes, “in all of the federal elections in this province since 1949, out of the 373 candidates only 30 have been women” (p. 49).

Social Stereotypes

The results of POLLARA's (March 2003) research into Canadians' perceptions of Newfoundland and Labrador seems to support the province's feeling that it is either misunderstood or omitted from the national consciousness. While 25% of Canadians "are unable to identify a common stereotype about people from Newfoundland and Labrador on an open-ended basis", 21% of respondents cited the stereotype that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are "*uneducated/stupid/unskilled/unsophisticated*" (p. 522). Furthermore, of those who can identify stereotypes, a percentage of them believe there is some truth to the stereotypes. While some stereotypes are more favourable, such as the 94% of respondents who believe there is validity in the perception that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians "tend to be *friendly/nice/warm/kind*" (p. 523), there is a clear indication of a lack of knowledge about this province, and some labels are not so flattering. For example, 75% of those who cited "*they are all fishers*"⁵⁴ believe there is truth in this statement (p. 523) while 65% "of those who offered *unemployed and lazy* as a stereotype believe it is at least somewhat true of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador" (p. 524). Some might observe that a national belief in such stereotypes is hardly surprising when one considers the way Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have been represented in national newspapers. For example, Margaret Wente, a columnist for *The Globe and Mail* writes that the province's "sense of victimhood is unmatched" and that "[r]ural Newfoundland . . . is probably the most vast and scenic welfare ghetto in the world" (January 6, 2005). She also suggests that this province is the home of "hare-brained make-work schemes" (supporting the *stupid* or *unsophisticated* stereotype) and that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians resent the possibility of having "to work more

⁵⁴ Emphasis is mine.

than 10 weeks before they [can] collect EI” (propagating the *unemployed* and *lazy* stereotype). Such representations of the province do little to alleviate the sense of social marginalization felt here. Unfortunately, there is no need to leave the province to witness the proliferation of negative stereotypes of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Misrepresentations are all too often bred within our own province. For example, insensitive and ill-advised jokes about gas-sniffing aboriginal youth reflect an ignorance and dismissal about serious social issues that concern fellow Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. In addition, distinctions are commonly made between the “townie” and the “bayman”, the latter often perceived as backward or unsophisticated and, invariably, associated with the fishery. Furthermore, urban dwellers have sometimes been guilty of misunderstanding the plight of rural Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who have lost their livelihood and their way of life with the closure of the cod fishery. Indeed, just as mainland Canada has sometimes insinuated that Newfoundland and Labrador is composed of a society looking for “handouts”, so, too, have non-seasonal workers within the province labelled seasonal workers as those who only care about “getting their stamps.” Such narrow-minded representations fail to acknowledge the complex and evolving social dynamic of this province.

Newfoundland and Labrador Society – Dynamic, Diverse, and Complex

Though there are those that possess a stereotypical view of Newfoundland and Labrador society, in reality the province has experienced dramatic social changes that highlight a variety of challenges facing those that live here. Significant events, such as

Confederation with Canada, government resettlement programs, and the 1992 closure of the northern cod fishery, have had a profound impact upon Newfoundland and Labrador. While there have been substantial changes in the province's demographics due to relocation and to out-migration, there is an increasing recognition of the multicultural nature of the province. The acknowledgement of diverse social groups necessitates the inclusion not only of new immigrants, but also of previously marginalized social groups "native" to the province. As we move into the 21st century, the challenge is to be open-minded, flexible, and democratic if we are to adequately adapt to and meet the needs of this dynamic, diverse, and complex society.

Newfoundland and Labrador has experienced incredible social changes since Confederation with Canada. According to Rowe (1980),

[a]t the moment of Union Newfoundland became eligible to participate in Canada's vast social welfare programmes, then considered the most generous and progressive in the world, on the same basis as other provinces. These programmes included veterans' benefits, unemployment insurance, merchant seamen benefits, Family Allowances, national Housing, health grants, old-age pensions and pensions for the blind. It was these programmes that, overnight, started to transform the lives of tens of thousands of ordinary people in Newfoundland. (p. 464)

The Royal Commission (2003) concurs with Rowe:

There have been major federal contributions to provincial infrastructure, such as the Trans-Canada Highway, Memorial University of Newfoundland, schools and hospitals. . . . Apart from the programs, there

has been measurable progress in terms of social outcomes such as life expectancy, infant mortality, family income and educational attainment. For such social indicators as home ownership, family stability and community safety, Newfoundland and Labrador continues, as it did at the time of Confederation, to exceed the Canadian average measures. (p. 28)

However, though the improvements in social programs and the development of infrastructure are generally seen as having a very positive impact upon Newfoundland and Labrador, there are those who insist much of what was gained came at a price. To enjoy the privileges of many social programs and their corresponding institutions, many had to participate in centralizations programs.

Since Union with Canada, there have been dramatic transformations in the province's demographics. At the time of Confederation, "[a]part from metropolitan St. John's, with about 60,000 people, no town had more than 10,000 in population – in fact, only four exceeded 5,000. The dozen or so communities with populations of from 2,000 to 4,000 were really enlarged villages" (Rowe, 1976, p. 213). However, from the 1950s to the 1970s, this changed significantly during the government resettlement programs under which inhabitants of small traditional fishing communities were induced to leave them for 'growth centres.' Hindsight indicates that many of the small communities would probably have been vacated voluntarily in any case, but many of the people who resettled were disappointed by their circumstances after the move, and many in the following generation looked back on the programme with bitterness and resentment as a

betrayal of the culture and traditions that made Newfoundland distinct.
(Economy, 1997)

The inhabitants of the island were not the only ones to regret government resettlement policies. Rompkey (2003) explains how several aboriginal communities in Labrador were relocated. In one example, he describes when the fifty families of Hebron were relocated. Most of them

spent the first winter crowded into temporary shelters at Hopedale, and a year or two later many of them were moved south to hastily built and inadequate cottages in Makkovik. Only a few families settled in Nain. For them it would be possible to return to their original home, at least from time to time. But those farther south would find it virtually impossible to go back. Moreover, they were clustered in houses in a special section of the community away from the rest. In addition, they did not speak English, nor did they use the same Inuktitut dialect as the Inuit of Makkovik.

For the first time in their lives, adult Inuit were made to feel different and inadequate compared with others in the community, even other Inuit. They had no knowledge of the nearby countryside and therefore were not immediately successful in hunting. They suffered a loss of respect from their peers and a loss of self-esteem. Reliance on welfare only made matters worse. (Rompkey, 2003, p. 106)

The resettlement programs in the early decades following Confederation had a profound impact upon Newfoundland and Labrador society. However, Rompkey (2003) suggests

that the government's policies were more detrimental for some aboriginals of Labrador. While "in most cases, particularly in the latter years, there was consultation with the people" about relocation, in Hebron "the people had not been consulted" (p. 106). For many, the years of the government resettlement policies are remembered as dark days. However, more dark days were to come in the last decade of the 20th century.

In the 1990s, the province was to witness an even more drastic population shift when, following the announcement on July 2, 1992,

[t]he cod moratorium completely shut down what had sustained Newfoundlanders and Labradorians for the past 500 years. Twenty thousand fishermen and plant workers lost their jobs that day and 20,000 more were forfeited in the economic backlash. What ensued was the largest mass exodus from the province ever. Outports became ghost towns and once burgeoning centres like Trepassey and Burgeo were stopped in their tracks. (The worst, March 2003, p. 86)

Since that time, out-migration has continued to be a major factor in determining the nature of Newfoundland and Labrador society. "Between 1991 and 2006, the province's population declined by 12.1% or 69,841 persons" (Government, October 2006, p. 5). In addition,

[t]he province's workforce is threatened by an aging population, the lowest birth rate in the country, a lost generation of skilled workers to outmigration, and migration of rural workers to urban areas within the province. As well, there are issues with the lack of competitive wages and

benefit packages offered here that is driving many of our brightest people beyond our borders. (Stuckless, May 2003, p. 79)

However, not everyone who leaves rural communities leaves the province. Many have moved to urban centers. In its report on demographic changes, the province's Department of Finance (October 2006) records that of 19 Provincial Zones the "Capital Coast" – which includes St. John's – is one of only two Zones that experienced a population increase between 1991-2006 (Government, p. 7).⁵⁵ Moreover, by 2003, "about 45% of the people in Newfoundland and Labrador [resided] within an hour's drive from St. John's" (Royal Commission, 2003, p. 191). The recent population migration is not a new thing, nor is it a problem unique to this province; however, it is a focal point for the social disconnect often felt between the provincial and federal governments as well as between rural and urban centres. In addition, it has changed the social fabric of the province.

The instability created by such profound fluctuations in the province's demographics is bound to create a sense of insecurity in today's youth. Many students within Newfoundland and Labrador are facing the very real possibility of being forced to leave their home province to find work, and this possibility shapes not only their outlook on the future but their perspective of their time at home. For example, Sider (2003) recounts a "revealing" story of a mother and her ten-year-old son:

They were riding in a car together, playing a tape from a popular folk music, social critic group Their song, "Saltwater Joys," about how special it was to live near, and be from, the "bay" . . . set the ten-year-old

⁵⁵ The other Zone that experienced population growth is Zone 1, consisting of northern Labrador. The report offers no suggested reasons for this growth (Government, October 2006, p. 7).

to crying, real crying, not just a tear or two. He told his mom, when asked why he was crying, that when he grew up he would have to leave Newfoundland in order to get a job (even though they lived in St. John's, the capital city). The very next day he asked his mother if she and his dad had enough money to send him to a high school on the Canadian mainland, because he did not want to grow up with a Newfoundland accent; it would prevent him from getting a decent job. (p. 44)

Furthermore, Boswell (Fall 2002) notes that the social impact of out-migration is compounded by "the fact that many of those leaving are recent university graduates and young families in search of meaningful employment" (p. 282). Of course the loss of "our best and brightest" increases the burden of those who remain at home. To further complicate matters, while today's Newfoundland and Labrador students confront the prospect of leaving the Province, in the very near future they may be expected to stay to assume the burden of maintaining a society faced with major labour shortages. The Government's Department of Finance (October 2006) predicts "labour shortages over the next 15 years" as a result of a number of factors: declining birth rates, continued out-migration, and an aging (soon to be retired) workforce. "The size of the replacement group available to cover retirements and new employment is shrinking" (Government, October 2006, p. 9). Clearly, the complexity and fluidity of social trends in Newfoundland and Labrador are proof that simplistic and stereotypical perceptions of the province's society are inadequate.

Narrow visions of Newfoundland and Labrador society are also challenged by the growing recognition of its multicultural nature. Although the province has often been

viewed as consisting of largely homogenous societal groupings of white Anglo-Saxon Protestants or Irish Roman Catholics, this mono-cultural view of the Newfoundlander and Labradorian excludes the French, the Innu, the Inuit, the Mi'kmaq, the Métis, and the multiplicity of new immigrant nationalities. French settlements started in Newfoundland and Labrador around the same time as English settlements, and the presence of most aboriginal groups predates European settlement (see Chapter Two). Furthermore, the province has witnessed an increase in its immigrant population. Porter (June 27, 2004) cites, “[a]ccording to Statistics Canada’s 2001 census, 8,030 immigrants were living in Newfoundland and Labrador – 6,015 of them immigrated before 1991, and 2,010 between 1991 and 2001”. Moreover, “Citizenship and Immigration Canada reports a consistent number of new arrivals during the first three years of this century. In 2000, 415 immigrants came to this province; 402 arrived in 2001; 405 in 2002” (Porter, June 27, 2004). Porter also notes that these figures “don’t include foreign workers (1,218 in 2002) or international students (a reported 322 in 2002)” and that “[b]etween 1993 and 2002, 64 babies from countries around the world (primarily Asia and eastern Europe) were adopted by families from this province”. Admittedly, “the province’s immigrant population is proportionately low when compared to other Canadian provinces”; however, “there is a need for more concrete direction on how to help integration” (Porter, June 27, 2004). Clearly, throughout the province, there is need for more recognition and inclusion of the increasingly diverse voices of Newfoundland and Labrador.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ An added example of the vast diversity within Newfoundland and Labrador society is the claim of Lloydetta Quaicoe, president of the Multicultural Women’s Organization of Newfoundland and Labrador as of June 2004. She “listed members from at least 25 countries” within her organization (Porter, June 27, 2004). Therefore, the immigrant population has not only increased in number but also in diversity.

In fact, the Royal Commission (2003) emphasizes the necessity of combating stereotypes and promoting inclusion to strengthen the place of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians on a provincial as well as federal level: “Newfoundlanders and Labradorians resent our own feelings of dependence and the stereotypes of others about us” (p. 3). Therefore, the goal should be to “work toward . . . [a] vision of an inclusive society respecting the rights, and benefiting from the strengths, of all persons” (p. 3).⁵⁷ In addition, it is vital that, “[i]nclusion, collaboration, accommodation and transparency are principles underlying the envisioned partnership between the provincial government and the federal government, but they must also guide relationships within this province” (Royal Commission, 2003, p. 47). In fact, if there is to be any hope that the rest of Canada will learn that Newfoundland and Labrador society is dynamic, complex, and diverse, these characteristics must be first acknowledged within our own province.

There is evidence that some of the diverse social voices within the Province are being heard, but there is still a long way to go. The report, *Our Place in Canada*, illustrates that social and economic concerns vary according to region and social group. For example, in Harbour Breton, people were largely concerned with foreign overfishing while, in Port aux Basques, issues about Marine Atlantic dominated the discussions. On the other hand, “representatives of the Mi’kmaq population in Bay St. George said they’re still fighting to be formally recognized by the Canadian government” (Stuckless, June 2003, p. 47). Yet, there has been progress made on some social issues, particularly concerning the interests of Labradorians and the recognition of aboriginal societies. For

⁵⁷ The Royal Commission for Renewing and Strengthening Our Place in Canada practiced a policy of inclusion, not only by inviting diverse voices to participate in the information gathering process, but also by ensuring that summary reports of the its findings are written in “Inuktitut, Innu-aimun, Mi’kmaq, English, and French – as well as Braille” (p. 4).

example, “[t]here is a separate Department for Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs, which is headquartered in Happy Valley-Goose Bay” (Royal Commission, 2003, p. 53).

Furthermore, in its pre-election “Blue Book”, the Progressive Conservative party’s key commitments include: “[resolving] aboriginal land claims” and “[recognizing] the right of aboriginal communities to exercise genuine control over their own affairs”

(Progressive, 2003, p. 14). Once elected, as previously noted, the Williams’ government signed a Land Claim Agreement with the Labrador Inuit. However, though relations between the provincial government and aboriginal peoples appear more productive, the findings of the Royal Commission (2003) remain valid: there is still “an unfinished agenda on Aboriginal issues” (p. 76). The agenda is also unfinished in regards to the inclusion of women, immigrants, rural communities, the French, and Labradorians as full partners in social relationships. Both the Royal Commission report and the Tory “Blue Book” name education as a valuable tool in promoting more equitable social relations, both federally and provincially. As usual, education is expected to be “all things to all people”.

Education and Society

The Royal Commission (2003) asserts that the province “will not dispel negative stereotypes with a massive public relations campaign”; instead Newfoundlanders and Labradorians must take “the opportunity . . . to better educate ourselves and Canadians” (2003, p. 55). The suggestion, that education breeds knowledge and that knowledge combats negative social stereotypes, appears reasonable. In practice, however, one must

ask how much influence Newfoundland and Labrador can wield in the education of other Canadians. Nevertheless, provincial educators can exert some influence over the educational experiences that occur within Newfoundland and Labrador. Yet, providing an education to meet the complex, evolving, and diverse social needs of students is not a simple process. The current educational system is required not only to foster the inclusion of the province's multiple diverse voices, but it must also address the social challenges that face our youth in a context of economic and demographic instability. Unfortunately, while official documents pay lip service to the educational system's vital role in addressing the evolving social needs of Newfoundland and Labrador, centralist tendencies, a dearth of the necessary resources, and a lack of adequate teacher education programs makes the jobs of teachers extremely problematic (see Chapters Four and Five).

The provincial Progressive Conservative party does profess an acknowledgement that there are multiple complex difficulties confronting educators in this province and that education is a priority in promoting a healthy society and the inclusion of various social groups. For example, its party policy "Blue Book" (2003) asserts that education must "acknowledge that students have different and sometimes conflicting needs" (Progressive, p. 11) and indicates the party's commitment to providing "a top quality education" (p. 49). However, once in power, the Williams' government reduced the number of school boards in the province (Government, 2004). Yet, while there has been a decline in student enrolment, schools still serve a wide variety of regions with an increasing range of social interests. Unfortunately, particularly for many rural communities, their educational administration has become much more distant – another symptom of the centralist tendencies of the province's shifting demographics.

Meanwhile, for school board personnel, the struggle to meet the diverse needs of the numerous regions and social groups under their jurisdiction has become much more difficult. Furthermore, it has been recognized that our province has

benefitted from the participation of people from Asian [sic], Africa, Latin America, the Mediterranean and the former Eastern Bloc. It is important that the people of the province become more aware of the presence and contributions of these new citizens, that we find ways to celebrate their presence and that we work together to facilitate the integration of new Canadians into our society. (Royal Commission, 2003, p. 52)

In addition, the provincial government developed a Multicultural Education Policy in 1992 (see Chapter Two). However, our current educational system and school curriculum have yet to consistently promote the inclusion and to enact practices that reflect a genuine respect for diversity. Porter (June 27, 2004) notes, “[t]here are more than 170 students in the public school system currently receiving English as a Second Language (ESL) training.” Yet, “[j]ust as is the case for other children needing support beyond the mainstream curriculum, [Newfoundland immigrant, Lloydetta Quaicoe] says current programs aren’t quite enough” (Porter, June 27, 2004). Moreover, even if the government were to fulfill its commitment to “[establishing] a plan . . . to ensure that aboriginal people acquire the knowledge and skills required for effective government of their communities” (Progressive, 2003, p. 14), one must ask who decides upon the appropriate “knowledge and skills” to be taught and whose standard of “effective government” will provide the measure of achievement? These are complex issues that

lack any simple solution. However, it is left to educators in the province to deal with these issues.

Today's teachers are expected to fulfill a variety of roles and to navigate through a host of competing and complementary agendas. However, as repeatedly noted in Chapters One and Two, negotiating a number of contending ideologies has historically been the province of educators. To address the dynamic, diverse, and complex social needs of our students, teachers must implement elements of various educational ideologies that have been discussed in Chapter One. For example, to enable our youth to address their feelings of alienation and marginalization within the province as well as in our nation, teachers may employ a critical pedagogy that encourages students to expose and challenge social inequities. Meanwhile, in an attempt to challenge social stereotypes and to promote inclusion while acknowledging the diversity of our students and their various hybrid social needs, teachers may be required to adopt practices endorsed by individualist, progressive and pluralistic ideologies (see Chapter One). The difficulties in reconciling the various ideologies and social agendas as well as acknowledging the systemic obstacles facing teachers will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five. However, it is imperative to accept that tackling the fluctuations and instabilities in Newfoundland and Labrador's evolving society requires an ELA program in which student voice is welcome, social issues are openly discussed, and students are encouraged to challenge social inequities.

Cultural Developments

In a conscious or unconscious attempt at assimilation, dominant groups have often dismissed or marginalized the cultures of others. In the decades immediately following Confederation, there were attempts to “Canadianize” Newfoundland and Labrador (see Chapter Two). Furthermore, the Royal Commission (2003) notes, during World War Two and for several years after, “there was a strong American influence on those living near the American bases” (Royal Commission, 2003, p. v). In addition, the increased influence of mass media, controlled and operated by those outside the province, encouraged assimilationist tendencies within the province. The threat of assimilation has occurred not only in Newfoundland and Labrador’s experiences with Canada, but also, significantly, in cross-cultural relations within the province. Finding a place in Newfoundland and Labrador has been “especially challenging for members of minority groups” because this province “has not had a history of broad diversity of culture, religion and language” (Royal Commission, 2003, pp. 51-2). However, the cultural consciousness of Newfoundland and Labrador has experienced dramatic fluctuations and transformations. A “cultural renaissance” occurred in response to the perceived threats to the very existence of Newfoundland and Labrador culture. Initially, this “renaissance” promoted a narrow or essentialist view of what constitutes the culture of this place. However, this tenacious and fiercely territorial perception of Newfoundland and Labrador culture has given way to a second wave cultural renaissance that is potentially much richer and more inclusive. Indeed, as more Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have found their cultural voices, many seem willing to acknowledge the fluidity and rich diversity of the province’s heritage. Again, as with economic and social issues, education

must play a major role in cultural issues. School curricula and classroom activities can be instrumental in promoting and sustaining this cultural evolution. Educators must be vigilant. Though, in recent years Newfoundland and Labrador culture appears vibrant and complex, the threat of cultural assimilation still exists, as does the tendency toward cultural essentialism.

Cultural Assimilation and Marginalization

The assimilation of Newfoundland and Labrador culture was a very real threat in the twentieth century. Harris (1974) states,

Newfoundland's distinctive culture has begun to recede before the impact of mainstream North American influences, which were first experienced acutely when World War II caused a large influx of military personnel. The increase in the amount of radio and television transmissions and the influx of large numbers of professional people from elsewhere have hastened the process of change. (p. 1087)

In addition, Howlett (April 2003) notes the influence of American music:

About 60 years ago, traditional Newfoundland and Labrador music was nearly abandoned by all but the older generations. In 1941, Americans arrived in the province They brought with them their own forms of music such as jazz, country and, of course, rock and roll, and filled the airwaves with them. Thus our first generation of rock and rollers was

spawned and songs like 'Squid Jigging Ground' were relegated to the kitchen with the older folk. (pp. 88-89)

Then, Confederation with Canada seemed to increase the threat to Newfoundland and Labrador culture. The Royal Commission (2003) states, "[i]n the first few decades following Confederation, our cultural policy was imported from Canada" (p. 171). Moreover, the product was delivered through the educational system when, after Confederation, the National film board "supplied films from its inventories to Newfoundland schools upon request" (Rowe, 1976, p. 193). Compounding the threat to the province's culture was the notion that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians had little to contribute artistically and culturally to Canada. Indeed, "Northrop Frye, the late Canadian literary critic, was heard to say that 'Canada has, for all practical purposes, no Atlantic seaboard'" (Clarke cited in Kelly, 1993, p. 31). Moreover, Mathews (1990) writes, "[t]he literature of Newfoundland – except for the poetry of E. J. Pratt⁵⁸ – had, by the mid-80s, made virtually no impact on the general Canadian literary consciousness" (p. 4). He also notes that in three important Canadian anthologies published in the 1980s, containing a combined total of over 120 selections of short fiction, "not one is written by a Newfoundlander" (p. 4). Unfortunately, a similar tendency to sublimate, dismiss, or devalue diverse cultures occurs within the province.

Newfoundland and Labrador has a long history of marginalizing or assimilating diverse cultural groups. For example, early Europeans made a conscious effort to "civilize" the aboriginals of Labrador by introducing them to Christianity and to the English language. Moravian mission schools in northern Labrador and Grenfell mission

⁵⁸ Mathews (1990) also notes that "Pratt's eminence might be explained in large measure by the fact that, at 25, he became a Torontonion and stayed that way" (p. 4).

schools in southern Labrador promoted Christian values (see Chapter Two). Indeed, the Moravian's primary purpose of establishing stations in Labrador was the conversion of the Inuit, who according to Major (2001) had their own vibrant spiritual culture before the arrival of the Europeans. Furthermore, instruction in Grenfell schools was in English, and while the Moravians initially offered instruction to the Inuit in their native tongue, by the 20th century they too were using English in their schools (Rompkey, 2003). On the island until late in the 20th century, the language of instruction was English – even though there was a significant French population in Newfoundland and Labrador. In addition, there are those who charge that official resettlement programs as well as inclinations toward centralization following the 1992 cod Moratorium have threatened to promote urban cultures at the expense of peripheral rural cultures.

Increasingly, cultural groups who have felt marginalized are voicing their fears and making their dissatisfaction obvious. Provincial aboriginal groups “expressed concerns that current approaches [to social and cultural issues] are not addressing their desires to protect their connections to the land, their family structures, their values and their culture” (Royal Commission, 2003, p. 188). In addition, Newfoundland and Labrador's francophone population have raised concerns “about the loss of the French language, the assimilation of the culture and the disregard for the historical tradition” (Royal Commission, 2003, p. 52). In recent years, many inhabitants of rural Newfoundland and Labrador are addressing their fears that their cultural heritage is being lost as a result of closures in the fishery, out-migration, and urban expansion. Though fears of cultural assimilation or extinction are valid, sometimes a fanatic promotion of culture is just as precarious.

*The Essential Newfoundlander*⁵⁹

When a culture is promoted as distinct, there is a dangerous tendency to depend upon a narrow vision of what constitutes the unique heritage, and it is important to question the complex and sometimes contradictory motives that are served by these stereotypes. For instance, “[i]n a Commission poll, 72 percent of Canadians viewed Newfoundland and Labrador as culturally distinct from Canada” (Royal Commission, 2003, p. v). Does the rest of Canada have anything to gain by essentializing and preserving a native Newfoundland and Labrador culture? Jackson (Winter 1986) warns against “culture promoters who visit” Newfoundland and Labrador and “have managed to turn ordinary people like ourselves into sacred cows” (p. 8). Jackson continues,

[f]or them we are an endangered species; they want to do everything to keep things the way they are: to shield us from all social and technological change, to encourage us to go back to our old ways, to stay simple, to refuse progress, to remain in the embrace of ‘unspoiled nature.’ (1986, p. 8)

Could it be that the powerful economic and social centre of the country benefits from representations of Newfoundland and Labrador culture as idyllic, simplistic, and unspoiled? Does the projection of such a romantic view enable Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to be more susceptible to accepting their peripheral position in economic, social, and culture concerns? Another question is who profits from the marketing of the province’s culture? In recent years, tourism in Newfoundland and Labrador has become closely linked with the province’s culture. Consequently, some participants in the Royal

⁵⁹ The omission of Labrador in this heading is deliberate because the view of the distinct character and/or culture of “the Newfoundlander” rarely recognizes Labrador’s contribution to the province’s “culture”.

Commission's (2003) Roundtable on Culture and Heritage⁶⁰ "felt we should not be defining ourselves as an export-oriented culture. This has resulted in a devaluing of ourselves and our culture and the erosion of our identity" (p. 171). However, tourism is big business, and tourists often come to this province in search of its quaint inhabitants and way of life. Finally, what dangers exist in well-intentioned motives to combat the hegemonic forces that threaten local culture from outside? For example, as hooks (1990) notes, some believe there is strength in a unified cultural voice that operates to counter the threat of cultural extinction inflicted by those in power. However, by emphasizing this unified (and often static, one-dimensional voice), the marginalized group may, as Kelly (1993) notes, "[q]uite paradoxically" dismiss the rich, dynamic diversity existing within its own heritage by allowing "the oppressive effects of the sort which come from 'without' through powerful culturally colonizing forces" to be "reproduced from within, through . . . homogenizing gestures" (p. 33).

Such "homogenizing gestures" were, indeed, a characteristic of the cultural resurgence that occurred in Newfoundland as a response to perceived threats from powerful centralizing forces. Gwyn (April 1976) suggests that the "Newfoundland renaissance", with its "exciting revival of art and theatre" (p. 38), was largely a reactionary movement against the Newfoundland "equivalent of the Plains of Abraham - Confederation" (p. 45). However, this artistic revival reflected an inclination to homogenize the provincial culture and to present Newfoundlanders as caricatures.

⁶⁰ Participants in the Royal Commission Roundtable on Culture and Heritage included "[t]en men and women from the Island and Labrador who are active in the culture and heritage community" (Royal Commission, 2003, p. 171).

Referring to much of the province's theatre during this "renaissance", Cook (Spring 1984) writes,

[I]ike cardboard cutouts, with little variation, . . . stock characters popped up in every play, and their sallies and jibes were greeted with roars of approval by a growing audience who came to see Newfoundland and Newfoundlanders (Good) triumph over the forces of Evil (anyone from away, politicians, *et al.*). (p. 76)

Said (1993), referring to colonial Africa's struggle against the hegemonic influence of imperialism, notes that an emerging "nationalist consciousness can very easily lead to frozen rigidity; merely to replace white officer and bureaucrats with colored equivalents, . . . is no guarantee that the nationalist functionaries will not replicate the old dispensation" (p. 214).⁶¹ Similarly, in an attempt to counteract the risk of assimilation into a Canadian culture, many participants in the Newfoundland renaissance rigidly replaced one form of hegemony for another. Said (1993) recognizes such an inclination as a form of "separatist nationalism" (p. 216) that is common in cultural resistance to colonizing or marginalizing influences. However, he points out that this practice may be followed by "a noticeable pull away from separatist nationalism toward a more integrative view of human community and human liberation" (p. 216). Therefore, Cook's question concerning the theatre of Newfoundland's cultural renaissance is valid:

⁶¹ Although it may be argued that Newfoundland and Labrador is not a colony of Canada, Melnyk (Fall 2002) states,

[f]or centuries, Newfoundland was an outpost of the British Empire, a colony with a distinct culture on the fringes of European civilization. Unlike Québec, which nurtured centuries of distinct nationality through language, civil law and religion, Newfoundland retained colonial ties and a colonial identity. When it transferred its allegiance to Confederation, its colonial status continued, a status based on economic need, historical precedent, and a mentality of traditionalism and isolation. (p. 300)

“[c]an a culture interpret itself honestly by caricature alone?” (Spring 1984, p. 77). This is one of the few questions that has a simple response; the answer is no. Certainly no culture can be interpreted honestly as exclusive, essentialized, or static.

Newfoundland and Labrador Culture: Diverse, Hybrid, and Fluid

There are some indications that Newfoundland and Labrador’s cultural renaissance has entered a second wave, one comprised of “a more integrative view of human community” and a recognition of the fluidity of culture. There is a growing acceptance of the province’s traditional and evolving cultural diversity. For example, a more inclusive approach

has resulted in more federal funding for the promotion of French identity [sic] and language, the availability of French media such as *Le Gaboteur*, the establishment of a separate Francophone school board, and a strengthened appreciation of our province’s French heritage. (Royal Commission, 2003, p. 52)

In addition, the Royal Commission’s findings suggest that, after being discouraged for many years, aboriginal religious traditions “are today finding a new place in the lives and dreams of the Innu, Inuit, Labrador Métis and Mi’kmaq” (2003, p. iv). Furthermore, Newfoundland and Labrador’s “religious traditions are constantly being expanded with the arrival of immigrants who bring the richness of other world religious and spiritual beliefs to our culture” (p. iv). This practice of greater inclusion is being accompanied by

the realization that culture is not static. No doubt, culture is often associated with tradition. However, as Harris (Summer 2004) notes,

[t]he word 'traditional' often suggests activities or behaviours that are static, antiquated, or in need of safeguarding in their original or 'authentic' state. While traditions that are near and dear to a culture should be preserved, those of contemporary society must also be respected for the dynamic elements that have kept them relevant. (p. 50)

In recent years, there is evidence that Newfoundland and Labrador culture has not only experienced a revival, but it is also developing. According to Howlett (April 2003), the "traditional" music of Newfoundland and Labrador that experienced a revival about a decade after Confederation has evolved, and today's groups "have successfully combined the nostalgia of the lyrics with the tradition of the instruments, and punched them up with rock and roll influences" (p 89). Furthermore, the "[o]ld songs are put to new melodies and new stories are being written every day" (Howlett, April 2003, p. 87). These new stories reflect the dynamic nature of Newfoundland and Labrador's history and society. Topics include resettlement, the cod moratorium, out-migration, and the feelings of expatriate Newfoundlanders (Howlett, April 2003). In addition, Harris's (1974) statements – "Newfoundland has been categorized as a living archive of folklore, folktale, and folk song", and "[w]hy the imaginative flair and inventiveness so apparent in the field of folk music has not carried over into other art forms can be no more than speculated upon" (p. 1087) – seem dated today. Newfoundland and Labrador's visual artists, musicians, writers, and actors have gained recognition on the national and international scene. The province also has burgeoning television and film industries.

Golfman (Summer 2004) gives the example of Paul Pope's *Life with Derek* – a 13-episode per season television series produced for the Family Channel. The first season of the program was shot in Corner Brook (p. 54). She also notes that, “[s]ince the establishment of the Newfoundland Labrador Film Development Corporation in 1997, over 80 projects have been generated locally” (Fall 2004, p. 55). In addition, *The Dictionary of Newfoundland English*, characterized by Murphy (2005) as “the house of our most important collective inheritance, the idiom and unique vocabulary of the Newfoundland people” (p. 51), has been published. However, the reference to *The Dictionary of Newfoundland English*⁶² as containing the “vocabulary of the Newfoundland people” is indicative of the sweeping generalizations that are still made about the culture of Newfoundland and Labrador. Labrador is omitted from the title, and the emphasis of English seems part of the legacy of imperial England's exported educational system. Though we have made progress, we still have a way to go before all of the province's multiple cultural voices are heard.

The Royal Commission (2003) seems to acknowledge this in one of its recommendations:

Members of other cultures must have the assurance that the diversity they bring is recognized and appreciated as strengthening the social fabric of this province. Only tangible recognitions and the whole hearted celebration of historically disenfranchised people can signal that everyone in this province recognizes that the strengths of this place are no longer primarily the property of traditional power groups. (p. 55)

⁶² The emphasis is mine.

Furthermore, during its Public Consultations, the Royal Commission was informed by aboriginal groups that “[r]espect for the languages and cultures of [their] people is essential to their survival” (p. 57). That is not to say that there has not been some progress. Indeed, some aboriginal voices are being heard. Osmond (July 2003) notes that Mi’sel Shannon Joe, Chief of the Conne River Mi’kmaq Reserve, “is committed to preserving the language, culture and traditions of his people, and plays a very public role in presenting a better understanding of the Mi’kmaq people of Miawpukek” (p. 50). As of 2003, he participated in a number of organizations, including the Atlantic Policy Congress, the First Nations Trust Fund, the Central Newfoundland University Committee, the Newfoundland Museum Advisory Committee, and the National Aboriginal Economic Development Board (p. 50). He is also the author of the children’s book, *Muinji’j (Little Bear) Becomes a Man*, which is largely based on his own life and his experiences with his grandfather (p. 51).

Though there is evidence that more voices are being heard, the economic and social climate of Newfoundland and Labrador is ripe for a regression towards the traditional essentialism that was sometimes apparent in the “cultural renaissance” of the early 1970s. At a time when out-migration echoes the feelings of the earlier resettlement policies, we must be wary of the same knee-jerk reaction to protecting rural culture through another form of rabid Newfoundland nationalism. Indeed, there is evidence that this is already happening. Newfoundland writer, Lisa Moore (when discussing the devastation the collapse of the cod fishery has had upon outport Newfoundland and Labrador) states, “[s]ometimes I feel like a fake Newfoundlander. I have no connection to the fishery; I’m a townie; I’ve never been in a dory; my family’s never fished” (Moore,

2005). If a middle-class, English-speaking, white “townie” feels like a “fake Newfoundlander” in the current climate, what does the future bode for the more traditionally marginalized groups within the province? Though it is an intimidating task, the responsibility for ensuring the propagation of a rich, inclusive, and dynamic cultural future rests largely upon the shoulders of an already beleaguered educational system.

Education and Culture

The report *Our Place in Canada* and the Progressive Conservative “Blue Book” agree in the assessment that education is the key to promoting and sustaining a healthy and vibrant Newfoundland and Labrador culture. During the Roundtable on Culture and Heritage, “participants spoke passionately of the need to protect and preserve our culture” (Royal Commission, 2003, p. 171). There was concern that

[k]nowledge of our history and culture no longer occurs naturally. Young people do not know their history or culture or have pride in who they are and where they are from. The province’s history is not adequately addressed in the school system; neither do we adequately tell our own stories. (p. 171)

However, employing the school curriculum and teachable moments to “adequately tell our own stories” as a means of transmitting history and culture is not the major difficulty facing teachers.

The true challenge lies in letting go of the reins and allowing students to tell their own stories rather than indoctrinating them to accept the validity and value of a rigid

mono-cultural view of the province. Students must be given the opportunity to tell their stories, to critique those stories, and to create new stories. In this way, they can see that culture is alive, not static. Furthermore, teachers and students must be conscious partners in attempting to reconcile the contradictory motives of promoting culture; to establish a balance between the past, the present, and the future; as well as to create a welcoming, inclusive, and supportive learning environment to study the complex, diverse, and dynamic cultures that exist within and “without” this province. Teachers and students must resist becoming pawns of economic, political, or social interests. Together, they need to pose and consider a number of questions. What are the true motives of cultural education? How do we respect the importance of tradition while acknowledging the necessity of change? Moreover, how do we and by whose criteria do we decide which traditions are worth preserving? Finally, whose stories “do we adequately tell”, who selects these stories, and in whose language are these stories told? These questions have no simple answers; however, perhaps what is important is the acknowledgement that these questions need to be asked and considered.

In addition, it is important to recognize that all of our evolving stories exist within varied, fluid, hybrid contexts. Just as there is no static, essentialized Newfoundland and Labrador culture, the stories that reflect our culture do not exist in isolation. Our culture is shaped by our histories as well as by the economic, environmental, and social contexts in which we live. ELA teachers wishing to promote our students’ culture may recognize the need to adopt what Morgan (2000) refers to as “English as cultural studies” (see Chapter One). Only by allowing students to tell their stories within a learning environment that crosses the artificially constructed boundaries of tradition disciplines

(history, geography, English, etc.) do we as teachers maximize our students' opportunities to live within their evolving, complex culture.

The Strength of Many Voices

According to the Royal Commission on Strengthening and Renewing Our Place in Canada (2003), “[t]he greatest barrier to a renewed and strengthened Newfoundland and Labrador in Canada is the belief that no one will listen, that the people of the province will not pull together, or that the province is too small to cause the federal government to care or respond” (p. 4). This reflects a lack of confidence and a feeling of powerlessness. However,

[a] poll carried out for the Commission found that 58 per cent of a representative group of people from Newfoundland and Labrador believe that it is neither the federal government, nor the provincial government, but the people themselves who need to take most responsibility for the future prosperity of this province. (Royal Commission, 2003, p. 7)

Furthermore, in the final sentence of the section “What We Heard”, the Royal Commission (2003) attempts “to integrate all of what [they] heard with the input from [their] roundtables, research, written submissions, and discussions with government officials” and concludes that, “as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, **‘we must take our own destiny into our own hands’**” (p. 194). The Royal Commission’s findings reflect the problem: though people within the province seem to recognize they need to take responsibility for the province’s future, they often lack the conviction that they have the

power to make a difference. This is the challenge to which provincial educators must rise.

As a first step toward taking responsibility for our future, teachers and students must be empowered by becoming consciously aware of the agendas that shape the educational system and that attempt to promote particular aspects of our economic, social, and cultural identities. This necessitates a more holistic and inclusive view of English language arts, one in which the various ideologies that shape the system are exposed and in which there is room to explore the study of English in its various forms (see Chapter One). Accordingly, we must be wary of dichotomies. For example, facilitating students' preparation for participation in the global economy does not necessitate the sacrificing of their social and cultural needs any more than promoting cultural capital and social identities necessitates sacrificing their prospects for economic prosperity. However, it is essential that students are encouraged to question established norms and to challenge the marginalization or dismissal of their individual and collective interests. Therefore, teachers and their students must become critical readers of what Paulo Freire (1970) calls "the word and the world", to examine whose interests are best served by economic, social, and cultural stereotypes and professed standards.

Furthermore, education must empower students by promoting the inclusion and the value of their social and cultural identities. By striving to meet these various goals – which are endorsed in current educational documents (see Chapter Four) – educators can support students in their efforts to strength their voices and to reach their full potential as equitable partners in a complex and evolving global village, without surrendering their local and individual economic, social, and cultural interests (see Chapter Five).

CHAPTER FOUR

RECENT EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS IN NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Chapter Overview

A review of the history and the development of formal education illustrates that institutionalized education is politically and ideologically biased. Depending upon the dominant forces controlling it, the educational system may become a tool to promote any of a number of ideologies: imperialistic, moralistic, civic, economic, nationalistic, individualistic, progressive, pluralistic, and/or critical (see Chapter One). Furthermore, English as a subject (or as a component of cultural studies) may take a variety of forms, and the concept of literacy has been repeatedly reformulated to meet the requirements of promoting the ideology of those in control of the educational system (see Chapter One). The ideological nature of institutionalized education and the use of various forms of literacy to meet ideological needs have been evident in the history of the development of Newfoundland and Labrador's educational system (see Chapter Two). The enduring struggle among the various ideologies that contend for control of education is unlikely to change because of the dynamic and diverse economic, social, cultural, and environmental contexts in which teachers and students exist (see Chapter Three). The history of educational reform is rife with examples of paradigm shifts that have been influenced by shifts in ideological power relations (see Chapter One), and of what Ball *et al.* (1990) refer to as official attempts to "police" the delivery of education and the subject English. However, each new paradigm or reform document has reflected the hybrid goals of various ideologies and has failed to decisively reconcile the contradictory and hybrid

relationships among many of the educational system's stated objectives. The same complexity and contradictions of earlier attempts at educational reform survive in recent attempts at educational reform in Newfoundland and Labrador as well as in the current documents outlining the objectives, curriculum, and preferred methodologies of the reformulated subject, English Language Arts.

The growing pains of evolution

The multifaceted and often paradoxical nature of educational reform is clearly evident in the various educational research, foundation, and curriculum documents that have been published over the last two decades. There is nothing new in this observation. There is nothing simplistic or static about teaching and learning. How can there be when the nature of students and teachers is so diverse, complex, and dynamic? Furthermore, although there are moments that witness "major" paradigm shifts, much remains the same, and even though one school of educational theory appears to supplant the previous, critical educators know that binary relationships and dichotomies between theories are not the answer. There are strengths and weaknesses inherent in any theory, and, to complicate matters, the very principle that appears a weakness in one light may be considered a strength from another perspective. Educational reform is an organic process, and, while dramatic shifts in thought do occur, rarely are all remnants of the former theories and practices, from which new ones emerge, discarded – nor should they be. However, sometimes existing policies and organizations need to be modified to provide the environment necessary for evolutionary changes. At times, the difficulty

consists of weighing the ideals of educational reform against what may be implemented, given the context in which the teacher and student exist. A critical evaluation of stated goals, intended curriculum, and assessment strategies as well as of organizational obstacles is imperative. The challenge for educators is to study educational reform and to critically read the various educational documents and examine the existing educational system, not only to detect the inevitable contradictions, but also to determine the elements of value in each of them.

Recent Changes

The Newfoundland and Labrador educational system and the English language arts (ELA) curriculum have received considerable attention and have undergone what many consider to be radical adjustments in recent years. “On August 6, 1990 the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador appointed a *Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Delivery of Programs and Services in Primary, Elementary, and Secondary Education* to obtain an impartial⁶³ assessment of the existing education system and to seek an appropriate vision for change” (Royal Commission, 1992, p. 4). The Commission’s report was published in 1992. At about the same time, control over Canada’s curricula became more centralized. Rather than remaining under provincial control, the curricula became the responsibility of four regions: the western and territorial region, Ontario, Quebec, and the Atlantic region. Subsequently, “the four Atlantic

⁶³ Interestingly, while formal education is often touted as a great leveler, providing equal opportunities for all students, a review of Chapter One’s discussion of the various ideologies supporting and supported by formal education, challenges any claims of institutionalized education’s impartiality. Furthermore, whether or not impartiality is possible or even desirable in a study or an institution so closely connected to human interests is debatable.

provinces combined their efforts and began writing a new curriculum applicable to the entire region” (Barrell, 2000, p. 39). In 1993, “[u]nder the auspices of the Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation” (APEF), “work began on the development of common curricula in specific core programs” (Atlantic, 1996, p. 3). In ELA, for example, the APEF published the *Foundation for the Atlantic Canada English Language Arts Curriculum: English language arts foundation* (referred to hereafter as *APEF ELA Foundation*), outlining the principles and desired outcomes of a regional common curriculum for New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island. Following this, specific curriculum documents were developed in each core subject area. In ELA, “each province was assigned responsibility for particular grades; Nova Scotia assumed responsibility for the senior grades and took the lead in writing *Atlantic Canada English Language Arts Curriculum Guide: Grades 10-12* which articulates the new vision for senior ELA programs” (Barrell, 2000, pp. 39-40). From this point, specific curriculum guides for each course were developed, following the parameters established by the *APEF ELA Foundation* document and the subject guide. After the new ELA curriculum had been piloted in various schools in the province, it was phased into the provincial senior high program over a three-year period, starting in level one in the 2001-2002 school year. There is no doubt that this new ELA program looks very different than the one that preceded it.

In fact, referring to new Canadian ELA foundation and curriculum documents, Barrell (2000) writes, “both new and experienced practitioners will perceive the documents as – and I do not use the phrase lightly – a paradigm shift” (p. 37). The prominent features of this shift include an adjustment in focus, from prioritizing print

texts and the traditional canon of the “Great Literature” to a broadened view of text and an increased recognition of diversity and the importance of including those voices that were excluded from the traditional canon. However, while the changes have been sweeping, remnants of early curriculum theories remain. A review of the recent educational documents clearly reflects the influence of the various ideologies and the forms of English discussed in Chapter One. For example, while the promotion of individual voice, diversity, inclusion, and critical thinking mirror the principles of the individualistic, pluralist, progressive, and critical ideals, the existence of the long-held goal of producing skilled citizens to be productive members of society, the creation of a common curriculum, and the reverence to standardized assessment are evidence of a continued official adherence to the traditional nationalistic, civic, and economic ideals of education. However, overlapping ideologies and the simultaneous existence of contradictory educational goals may be an inevitable component of any step in the evolution of educational reform. Indeed, the complexity of this recent paradigm shift was foreshadowed in the results of the Royal Commission study into education a decade earlier.

Initially, the Royal Commission study stressed financial considerations, as the Commission was to “make recommendations concerning appropriate and realistic courses of action which Government and administrative groups in education should adopt in order to realize the most effective, equitable and efficient utilization of personnel and financial resources” (Royal Commission, 1992, p. 5). However, the Royal Commission felt that “the emphasis of the Terms of Reference . . . on consolidation, efficiency and costs” was “too restrictive”; therefore, “the Commission has interpreted its mandate

broadly”, recognizing that a variety of factors, beyond financial and efficiency concerns, influence the quality of education (p. 5). Interestingly, many of the statements in the Commission’s report, *Our Children Our Future* (1992), seem to portend those found in another Royal Commission report, *Our Place in Canada* (see Chapter Three), over a decade later. As in the 2003 report, the Royal Commission (1992) recognizes some of the characteristics of the complex and dynamic nature of the province’s socio-economic situation when it acknowledges the

chronic and perhaps irreversible changes in our traditional industries, the changing nature of the workplace, the introduction of new technologies, changing population characteristics, changing family structures, increasing strains on economic resources, new expectations, and a heightened awareness of the rights of individual and groups whose liberties have been constrained in the past. (p. xv)

Such an observation, made in an educational document, suggests an awareness of the significance of the intricate, socio-economic contexts in which Newfoundland and Labrador students live and the necessity for formal education to play a role in addressing the dynamic and sundry needs of students. Clearly the Royal Commission of 1992 was cognizant that any “appropriate and realistic courses of action” proposed “to realize the most effective, equitable and efficient utilization of personnel and financial resources” cannot be determined by considering financial issues in isolation. It is also imperative to take into account the “situatedness” and the diverse needs of those the educational system is to serve. However, while this acknowledgement suggests a more holistic approach to education (perhaps similar to the cultural studies approach identified in Chapter One),

this same document also promotes a form of literacy that is more in keeping with the English as skills approach, also discussed in Chapter One. In fact, the current ELA curriculum's emphasis on technical skills and new forms of literacy are foreshadowed in the Royal Commission's *Our Children Our Future* (1992):

Coping with technological change and scientific innovation will require a sound set of basic skills which go beyond the necessary fundamentals of literacy and numeracy. They will require such new basics as critical and creative thinking, the capacity for independent learning, the ability to synthesize and communicate information, and innovative problem solving.
(p. 44)⁶⁴

Clearly, the Royal Commission report (1992) acknowledges that education must fulfill a combination of conflicting and intersecting goals and multiple issues must be addressed in any type of educational reform. For example, its report states, “[a]lthough curriculum was not specifically included in the terms of reference [of the 1992 Royal Commission], many briefs [submitted to the Commission] referred to curriculum matters because they are inextricably intertwined with aspects of administration” (Royal Commission, 1992, p. 19). Some of the curriculum “needs and issues raised” include “the need for locally written and published textbooks”; “the need for a Canada-wide curriculum”; “the importance of an economics-oriented curriculum in order to emphasize the economic importance of development for our future well-being”; and “the need to prevent sex role stereotyping in school programs” (p. 20). Clearly, there is a pervasive sense that formal

⁶⁴ The extended concepts of text and literacy, promoted by the Royal Commission (1992) and recent ELA curriculum documents, are discussed further in Chapter Five with a look at Cope and Kalantzis's (2000) framework for multiliteracies.

education is an essential component of social, economic, and cultural reform.⁶⁵

Therefore, though the 211 recommendations for educational reform in *Our Children Our Future* reflect the Commission's emphasis upon the need for improved efficiency in the educational system and a focus upon improving student achievement, they also reflect the complex and holistic nature of educational issues as well as the need for inclusion of all students, for the development of critical thinking skills, and for more local voice in determining educational policy. Many of the statements and recommendations in the provincial report are echoed in the APEF documents.

The APEF is also concerned with the efficient use of resources, the inclusion and equity of all students, as well as the improvement of student achievement in a fast-paced, technological, and information-based economy. In the *APEF ELA Foundation* (1996), the APEF states that the "primary purposes" of this common curriculum are to "improve the quality of education for all students through shared expertise and resources"; to "ensure that the education students receive across the region is equitable"; and to "meet the needs of both students and society" (Atlantic, 1996, p. 3). Moreover, it clearly links literacy to a student's ability "[t]o participate fully in today's society and function competently in the workplace" (Atlantic, 1996, p.1). This desire to prepare students to become productive members of society is also reflected in *English Language Arts: Grades 10-12, Overview* (referred to hereafter as *Grades 10-12, Overview*):

Pervasive, ongoing changes in society – for example, rapidly expanding use of technologies – require a corresponding shift in learning opportunities for students to develop relevant knowledge, skills, strategies,

⁶⁵ This same belief that education plays a variety of roles in addressing socio-economic and cultural concerns is also discussed in Chapter Three.

processes, and attitudes that will enable them to function well as individuals, citizens, workers, and learners. To function productively and participate fully in our increasingly sophisticated technological, information-based society, citizens will need broad literacy abilities, and they will need to use these abilities flexibly. (Newfoundland, 2001, p.1)

Therefore, though the new ELA curriculum documents endorse inclusion, flexibility, and individuality, they also reflect the desire to improve student achievement, to maintain standards, and to produce students who can effectively participate in a global economy. Rather than being discouraged by the apparent contradictions in some of these goals, educators may be heartened that the curriculum documents reflect the intricate, non-linear, and eclectic nature of teaching and learning while recognizing the interconnectedness of the subtle nuances among various educational goals. That is not to say that the complexity and apparent contradictions do not present difficulties for educators.

While there is great potential reflected in current educational reform policies and in the new ELA curriculum, there are also contradictions and dangers of which teachers and students must be aware. Those involved in education must adopt a critical pedagogy if they are to become more insightful readers of the educational system – its organization, its curriculum, and its methodology – and the world.⁶⁶ Change is one of life's great constants, as are complexity and contradiction. The challenge for educators is to strive for a critical and balanced approach to curriculum developments and to promote social justice, to celebrate diversity, and to support critical thinking while preparing students to

⁶⁶ Critical literacy as a professional practice, though introduced in Chapter One, will be also discussed in Chapter Five.

participate in an ever changing world, improving student achievement, and advancing human knowledge. Of course, nobody says this will be easy.

Precarious Potential

A critical examination of the organization of the educational system and of current ELA curriculum documents, as well as the principles and educational objectives that direct them, reveals the complexity of a system and of curriculum documents that though fraught with apparent inconsistencies – possess great potential. Although, within the province and among the Atlantic provinces, there are disadvantages inherent in a centralized approach to educational control and curriculum development, there are advantages to efficiently pooling resources and sharing ideas. While central control suggests a loss of local autonomy and a common curriculum suggests that generalizations are made, within Newfoundland and Labrador, school councils provide avenues for the promotion of local concerns, and the new ELA program professes to promote social and cultural diversity. Admittedly, the new curriculum documents could go further in advocating a challenge to society's existing inequitable power relations, but they do assert the power of language and encourage the promotion of diverse voices. As Hammett (2004) notes, “[a]lthough not receiving the explicit attention warranted, critical pedagogy and literacy are included in the new ELA curricular documents” (p. 123). Yet, in the context of the *APEF ELA Foundation*, critical inquiry, thinking, and reflection are often used in reference to preparing students to gather, interpret, and communicate information in an increasingly technical and media-oriented world. In addition, even as

the current curriculum endorses the improved student achievement desired in the Royal Commission report of 1992, it provides room for flexibility in terms of ways of representing and of evaluating. Yet, the curriculum's admirable flexibility is mitigated by its emphasis upon prescriptive standards and specific curriculum outcomes, just as its recognition of the dynamic socioeconomic and cultural factors that influence the lives of individual students is sometimes overshadowed by its preoccupation with education as means of producing economically productive adults for society's benefit. While it is imperative that the education system reflect the rapid developments of a highly technologized and information-based global society, some may argue that the current curriculum places too much importance upon technology and over-estimates its impact upon and availability to all students. Clearly, the current educational system and the ELA curriculum are rife with irregularities. However, the gaping contradictions within the system are clearly the result of the competing agendas among the various educational stakeholders at all levels (see Chapters One, Two, and Three). However, complexity is the nature of the beast, and teachers are left to find some middle ground by sifting through the intricacies of the program to glean what is of most value to themselves and to their students.

To Centralize or Not to Centralize?

Whether or not the consolidation of school boards within the province has been beneficial is a source of continuing debate. The Royal Commission of 1992, recognizing the benefits of co-operation and of reducing duplication, recommended the elimination of

a denominational system and the reduction of the number of school boards from the existing 27 to 9 non-denominational boards (Government, November 25, 1993, p. 4). This was not a new observation or recommendation. Indeed, the Royal Commission on Employment and Unemployment drew a similar conclusion in 1986 (Royal Commission, 1992, p. 103), and earlier attempts at structural efficiency within the province's educational system resulted in school board decreases from 270 in 1960 to 32 by 1989 (Royal Commission, 1992, p. 121). These numbers were further reduced in the 1990s and in 2004. Currently, Newfoundland and Labrador's educational system consists of 5 school boards. While the elimination of a number of school boards undoubtedly reduces the amount of unnecessary duplication in the system and lessens the government's financial responsibility for maintaining board offices and personnel, it is not always clear if this policy, which tends to focus on the administrative aspect of education, is the most effective means of tackling what needs to be done educationally, given the changing socio-economic and cultural needs of the province. Can fewer school board offices adequately provide quality services over vast geographical areas with increasingly diverse social, cultural, and economic local interests?

Perhaps in anticipation of such a question, the same report that recommends streamlining the existing system, identifies a major challenge facing provincial education as being "to provide greater regional and local authority by giving school boards, schools and parents more authority and flexibility to run their schools" (Royal Commission, 1992, p. 209). Rather than being self-contradictory, the Commission may have recognized the need of a balanced approach. The Commission (1992) indicates that

while it

believes school boards and school board office personnel are important, there is no evidence to suggest that the consolidation of boards results in any negative impact on educational performance. One of the shortcomings with consolidation in the past was the absence of any formal structures for local involvement to replace the loss of identity associated with the old board office. For the most part, the new board office was farther away, harder to reach and less relevant. (p. 237)

Consequently, the Commission recommended the development of school councils, consisting of parents, teachers, students, and other community members. This recommendation has been implemented, and these councils have a voice in the policy and decision-making of their schools. The Royal Commission's report insists that "any loss of immediacy or intimacy associated with the smaller, local board office should be more than compensated for by the involvement of the Council associated with each school" (1992, p. 237). Perhaps this is true – perhaps not. However, it is interesting to remember that some of the duties formerly performed by government financed school board offices and personnel have been replaced with volunteers from the community and with existing educational personnel who do not receive additional payment for this additional duty. Therefore, some would argue the real intent of consolidation has more to do with finances than with improving the quality of education, and that even though it was also recommended "that government increase its commitment to education and reallocate within the education system any savings realized through restructuring" (p. 415), it is difficult to prove whether or not this recommendation has been implemented.

However, education does not exist in a vacuum, free from financial constraints, any more than it can operate independently of the social, cultural, or individual needs of students. The Royal Commission (1992) is probably merely facing facts by stating “financial realities also dictate change. The fact is that we simply cannot afford to make the kind of qualitative changes necessary without new structural efficiency in the education system” (p. xvi). Since 1992, Newfoundland and Labrador has experienced a decline in birth rates and the devastating socio-economic impact of a massive out-migration, resulting not only in a declining enrolment in provincial schools, but also in a dwindling tax base which makes it much more difficult to provide social services. Consequently, while the “immediacy or intimacy associated with the smaller, local board office” may constitute a loss in the system, it appears a necessary one. Yet, while the implementation of local school councils have provided parents, students, teachers, and community members with a forum to promote their interests and to challenge existing policies that neglect their diverse and/or local concerns, the complexity and scope of these concerns present a daunting task to those who attempt to address them.

Inclusion or Hegemony?

As with the consolidation of provincial school boards, Newfoundland and Labrador’s participation in the APEF and the development of a common curriculum is a mixed blessing. The Royal Commission (1992) states, “there is a vital need for the Government of Canada, acting on behalf of all its citizens, to ensure that Canadians, wherever they live, have the educational opportunities which will enable them to function

in society, to maintain that society and preserve a common Canadian heritage” (p. 419). Consequently, the Commission recommends, “the creation of a national agency that would monitor Canadian education” and “determine national goals and policies for schooling, establish national standards, establish standards for the collection of educational data, conduct national education assessments, monitor and evaluate educational trends and serve as a centre for information on education research and improvements” (p. 418). Clearly, the Commission recognized some of the advantages of pooling resources in an effort to achieve common goals and promote national unity. However, for ELA teachers, references to “[preserving] a common Canadian heritage” echoes the time-honoured practice of endorsing the Great Literary Tradition by prescribing texts from the conventional classical canon (see Chapter One) – leaving little room for the diversity of student interests and choice of texts. Furthermore, promoting “national standards” is reminiscent of the educational system’s traditional, hegemonic goal to promote imperialistic or nationalistic ideologies (see Chapter One). Indeed, presuming to impose a common Canadian heritage and a standard assessment strategy upon the students of Newfoundland and Labrador may be perceived as a form of internal colonialism.

While efforts to make more efficient use of limited resources and to provide equitable educational services to all Canadians are commendable, there is certainly a danger in an unquestioning acceptance of a standardized, centralized educational system. As Barrell, Hammett, Mayher, and Pradl (2004) note, “[c]entralized planning in Canada means devising curricula for huge geographical areas” (p. 2), and “[c]entralized power means that particular interest groups, ministries of education, or school boards have less

leverage and this leaves broad national goals and global perspectives to be articulated by policy makers who are often far removed from the local scene” (p. 3). Their comments are reminiscent of Rex Murphy’s (see Chapter Three) when they write,

[a]s Canada struggles to find its place in the globalized economy, its vision of an overarching economic imperative demands a price: The immediate needs of the Pacific or Atlantic fishing village, the prairie farming community, or the isolated native communities are too easily neglected. (p. 3)

Consequently, though there are advantages to having the four Atlantic provinces cooperate in curriculum planning and development, educators must be aware of the complexities that arise from the fact that the ELA curriculum for Newfoundland and Labrador is controlled by a central authority, which subsumes the province in the larger Atlantic region. “Logistically” a central authority for a region of this size “cannot respond to individual community needs or concerns, but rather [needs] to paint with broad curriculum strokes over diverse geopolitical landscapes” (Barrell, 2000, p. 37). There are indeed salient points to be argued for both national and local curricula. Therefore, there is no need to establish a binary relationship between the two.

While students in Newfoundland and Labrador are situated within their own province and influenced by local interests, they are also Canadians and global citizens. Surely, there is a way to accommodate their multiple identities by promoting “a common Canadian heritage” while celebrating the diversity that makes Canada a multicultural nation. Moreover, in an increasingly interconnected global village, interests at local and regional levels are progressively inter-connected with national and transnational

concerns. Furthermore, while the *APEF ELA Foundation* document provides an overview of the common curriculum, provincial curriculum committees have a great deal of input regarding the development of the course specific curriculum guides within each province. Moreover, the *Grades 10-12, Overview* (2001) clearly indicates the importance of students being exposed to a wide range of literature on the local, regional, national, and international levels: “[i]dentifying and assessing the ideas and values inherent in contemporary, adolescent, regional, national, and world literature helps students to explore, clarify, and defend their own ideas and values” (Newfoundland, p. 68). Evidently, the major difficulty facing provincial ELA teachers is not the erasure of local interests from the curriculum; it is how to develop a balanced approach in the ELA classroom, one recognizing the plurality of student identities, acknowledging their differences and similarities, and emphasizing the necessity of providing an equitable forum which allows for the inclusion of various voices.

The Royal Commission (1992) report reflects the complexity of this task:

The principle that the needs of individuals and interest groups should be met by the education system has become a public expectation even though the principle frequently results in tension between the forces of individual and social identity, and between cultural homogeneity and cultural heterogeneity. Some of the pressure for structural changes now being placed upon the education system come from those who are now disenfranchised by it. The challenge is to develop yardsticks by which to determine what educational programs and services should be provided, to whom and in what form. (p. 44)

However, while it may be difficult, the Royal Commission asserts that equity in the education of diverse groups is essential and that “[t]o achieve equity, every child’s full participation and involvement in the education system must be rigorously pursued by providing adequate choices that meet diverse learning needs and interests, [and] by ensuring that the curriculum is current, relevant and meaningful” (1992, p. 205). Furthermore, it acknowledges, “all children come to school with certain skills, expectations, learning styles, and views that reflect their experiences and culture” and that “all cultures have value” (p. 210). Yet, perhaps inevitably, contradictions exist within *Our Children Our Future*. Advocating the importance of inclusion, the Royal Commission (1992) recognizes that one of the major challenges facing education is “[t]o provide for a system of education in which children of all religions can learn together, with each other and about each other, and can achieve tolerance of each others’ cultures and religious beliefs” (p. 208). Interestingly, however, the Royal Commission (1992), referring to its recommendation of eliminating denominational education in the province also suggests “just as in 1969, five churches were able to join together to form a single system, now in 1992, it is possible for all churches to disengage further and create a new system which will preserve the valued Christian character of schooling” (p. xviii). The reference to the “Christian” character of schooling in this province seems to negate the recognition this very document professes of the voices that have often gone unheard in the current educational system. Furthermore, the direct reference to religion suggests an unbalanced concern with this particular subject; particularly when the Royal Commission (1992) document fails to provide equal attention upon the importance of including those who have been traditionally marginalized because of gender, sexual orientation, or socio-

economic status. Evidently, even when there are apparent well-intended attempts at promoting diversity and inclusion, there is a need to examine critically how far a policy is willing to go and to expose potential, vigilant attempts to maintain ideological hegemony.

It has been argued that while recent educational documents pay lip service to the importance of celebrating diversity and promoting inclusion, they, in fact, contain sweeping generalizations and exclusionary policies while, at best, making only vague suggestions as to how teachers can advocate diversity and challenge existing inequitable power relations. The *APEF ELA Foundation* document clearly states its commitment to recognizing the value of diversity and to supporting inclusion:

The intent of this curriculum is inclusion. There is a place for the interests, values, experiences and language of each student and of the many groups within our regional, national and global community. The society of Atlantic Canada, like all of Canada, is linguistically, racially, culturally and socially diverse. Our society includes differences in gender, ability, values, lifestyles and languages. Schools should foster the understanding of such diversity.

In a learning community characterized by mutual trust, acceptance and respect, student diversity is both recognized and valued. All students are entitled to have their personal experiences and their racial and ethnocultural heritage valued within an environment that upholds the rights of each student and requires students to respect the rights of others. (Atlantic, 1996, p. 42)

Furthermore, authors of the document state, “[t]o contribute to the achievement of equity and quality in education, the curriculum must . . . expect that all students will be successful regardless of gender, racial and ethnocultural back-ground, social class, lifestyle or ability” (Atlantic, 1996, p. 42). However, as Gale and Densmore (2000) indicate, even though schools are often promoted as democratic institutions, providing equal access and potential for social advancement to all, “students’ academic performances are typically related to their social descriptors” (p. 109). Therefore, the questions remain what constitutes being “successful”, and how “must” the curriculum achieve this success. Must the curriculum compensate for students whose cultural capital differs from the dominant school culture and overcome their “deficiencies” to ensure they are successful, through assimilation, in achieving a common standard of success? On the other hand, could it mean that standards of success and what constitutes a quality education must be flexible to accommodate student diversity and the various manifestations of cultural capital? The *APEF ELA Foundation* document is vague on these points. However, the curriculum guide, *English Language Arts, English 3201: A curriculum guide* (referred to hereafter as *English 3201*) clearly states, “[w]hile students in English 3201 will vary in terms of their background and interests, they will be required to meet a minimum expectation for reading and viewing as well as the production of written, spoken and multi-media texts” (Newfoundland, June 2003, p. 47). Furthermore, Barrell (2000) contends that the ELA curriculum documents make some sweeping generalizations and, thereby, exclude some students by failing to recognize their diversity or lack of access to taken-for-granted resources. Barrell (2000) notes that, in ELA curriculum documents, students are “identified as having strong connections to new

technologies and media” (p. 44). For example, he cites the authors of the *Grades 10-12, Overview* as stating, “[t]oday’s students live in an information and entertainment culture”; therefore, information, visual, and media literacy “have a significant role to play in helping students” prepare to interact with “the immense amount of information and the diverse messages produced every day in a complex information and entertainment culture” (p. 44). However, Barrell (2000) insists,

[t]his recast understanding of Canadian Maritime ‘youth culture’ is patronizingly suburban for it is not necessarily the culture of the Innu or Inuit of central and coastal Labrador, of the students living in remote Newfoundland fishing communities, of the Mi’kmaq of New Brunswick, of the urban poor, or of the young people who live and work on regional farms. Few students have free and open access to multiple entertainment outlets, diverse information sources or technical innovations.⁶⁷ By not integrating the existing rich cultural matrix with the observable ongoing changes in the region, the writers seem to want to supersede local cultural events (music, theatre, crafts, carvings, dance, and entertainment) with outside icons and markers of popular culture. Value and importance are placed on an external, global environment. (p. 44)

Barrell’s points are valid. However, others would argue that a focus on inclusion and diversity is a major strength of the curriculum guide, *English 3201*. This guide echoes the foundation document’s insistence upon an inclusive curriculum “in which learners

⁶⁷ Barrell’s comment is supported by the findings of *Our Place in Canada*. For example, the Royal Commission (2003) reports “that only 58 percent of [Newfoundland and Labrador’s] population has Internet access” (p. 136).

. . . explore a subject of interest across national, cultural, and ethnic literatures” and “demonstrate familiarity with words of diverse literary traditions – works by women and men of many racial, ethnic, and cultural groups in different times and parts of the world” (Newfoundland, June 2003, p. 12). Again, the potential and the pitfalls of the new ELA curriculum are evident. What is to be included? What must be excluded? Who decides, and is it possible to challenge the decisions made by “the powers that be”? This emphasizes the importance of recognizing the power of language and advocating critical literacy in ELA classrooms.

Assessment of Achievement: Standardized or Flexible?

The new ELA curriculum documents do recognize the power of language and profess to support critical literacy, which encourages students and teachers to challenge inequitable and discriminating power relations. The *APEF ELA Foundation* document highlights the importance of language as “a primary instrument of thought and the most powerful tool students have for developing ideas and insights” (Atlantic, 1996, p. 37). Therefore,

[t]his curriculum encourages students to recognize the power of language to define and shape knowledge, self and relational positions in society. This curriculum encourages students to explore how forms of language construct and are constructed by particular social, historical, political and economic contexts. It encourages students to understand how their own and others’ uses of language have social effects. (Atlantic, 1996, p. 2)

The curriculum guide, *English 3201*, builds upon this observation and promotes critical literacy by stating the expectation for students to “respond critically” to “examine how texts work to reveal and produce ideologies, identities and positions” (Newfoundland, June 2003, p. 18). Moreover, the guide indicates that teachers are expected to encourage students to “become critical in their thinking as a habit of mind” (p. 18) and to examine “ways in which certain texts are inclusive or exclusive” (p. 18). In advocating critical literacy, authors of the curriculum document aim to induce students to challenge the taken-for-granted and often biased perspectives of themselves and of others. The inclusion of critical response, as a vital element in the new ELA curriculum,

helps students see themselves as free to agree with the text, to accept only parts of the text, or to actively disagree with it. Thinking critically about text will help students to recognize and evaluate human experience as well as the text in which those experiences are represented. Learning experiences should provide opportunities for students to think about and question their own and others’ perspectives and to assume a critical stance towards events, circumstances, and issues. (Newfoundland, June 2003, pp. 41-2)

However, merely being aware and critical of the power of language is not enough. It is of little use for students “to recognize when others use language powerfully and eloquently to influence and manipulate” or to become “self-critical” of their own use of language unless “they know their own words are heard and respected” (Atlantic, 1996, p. 39). To empower students to challenge the manipulation of language and to eliminate social inequities, student must become active participants in their own education. Here,

the current educational system falls short. Though students are expected to recognize the power of language and to critically respond to it, realities within many ELA classrooms hinder the achievement of some of the objectives outlined in the curriculum documents.

In many ways, the realities that exist within Newfoundland and Labrador's current educational system contradict some of the professed principles of curriculum documents and do little to promote diverse student voices or to empower students to actively challenge the existing dominant voices that hold such sway in our schools, our society, and our culture. For example, the authors of *APEF ELA Foundation* state that the curriculum should include "experiences designed, selected or directed by the teacher and experiences designed, selected or directed by the student" (Atlantic, 1996, p. 38).

Furthermore,

[i]n order for students to share responsibility for and have ownership of their learning, they must have choice as well as direction in that learning. Students, as they grow as learners, need to take increasing responsibility for their own learning and should organize their learning tasks. (Atlantic, 1996, p. 44)

However, it is difficult for many teachers to adjust to this new classroom dynamic and to give up what they perceive as control of their courses. Discomfort in the face of change is nothing new. For example, the Royal Commission (1992) notes that while educators promote "*active learning*, where children themselves are engaged more fully in the process of learning", they "will be unsuccessful in their attempts to change from a lecture-oriented to an experience-oriented classroom unless they have an opportunity to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge" (p. 274). A similar challenge is confronting

teachers now, and significant changes in teacher education are imperative (see Chapter Five).

However, even if teachers are given the “opportunity to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge” to prepare them to accept diversity and to include student voices in the teaching and learning process, the reality of standardized testing and the adherence to a narrow prescription for accountability make many teachers reluctant to relinquish control. Currently, the standardized, provincial public examination for English 3201 is valued at 50% of the student’s final grade. Although the *APEF ELA Foundation* document states that “[i]nstructional and assessment practices should . . . be free of racial, ethnic, cultural, gender and socio-economic bias” (Atlantic, 1996, p. 42), it is difficult to imagine standardized tests being consistent with critical pedagogy’s challenge to dominant discourses and promotion of flexibility and inclusion. However, this is just one more example of the complexity that exists within Newfoundland and Labrador’s educational system. However, for educators, it is necessary to ask whether inclusion and flexibility can only exist if there is a disregard for intellectual achievement. Does a concern for social justice necessitate eliminating standardized tests?

How can educators reconcile the desire for flexibility and inclusion with the long-held belief that performance on standardized tests is a reliable benchmark for assessing educational achievement? While the Royal Commission (1992) insists that there is a “need” for “individual consideration and flexibility in both teaching and learning” for a quality education and that “one simple standard will not work for all” (p. 205), it also

emphasizes that

[a]chievement test scores are an important indicator of student success and, in turn, a measure of the extent to which the school system is achieving its goals. This province compares the progress of students against a national sample of students using the Canadian Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) format – a nationally norm-referenced test. Results show that Newfoundland students, in all grades tested, consistently score well below the national median level While there are specific incidents where results are encouraging, on average, our schools typically score in the 35th to 45th percentile (the Canadian average score is the 50th percentile). This is clearly unacceptable. (p. 38)

A similar disconnect between stated goals and assessment procedures exists within the APEF documents. The authors of *APEF ELA Foundation* acknowledge that

[a]lthough it is expected that most students will be able to attain the key-stage curriculum outcomes, some students' needs and performance will range across key stages. Teachers should take this variation into consideration as they plan learning experiences and assess students' achievement of the various outcomes. (Atlantic, 1996, p. 15)

However, this document does provide the basis for standardized curriculum guides which provide "information on . . . the range of learners that can be expected at each key stage" and "specific curriculum outcomes" (Atlantic, 1996, p. 1). Indeed, "[t]his curriculum is defined in terms of outcomes" that clarify "specific expectations of what students in Atlantic Canada should know and be able to do at key stages in their curriculum" (p. 2).

The specific “outcomes framework provides reference points for teachers to inform their instructional practice as they monitor student progress and assess what students can and cannot do, what they know and what they need to know” (p. 2). Therefore, while professing the need to consider variation in assessing student achievement, the document clearly outlines “specific” expectations of what student “should” know and indicates that these specific expectations or outcomes become the “reference points” for assessment. How can the current educational system resolve the conflicts between the desire to accommodate a wide range of learners, with diverse needs and interests, and the tendency to depend upon specific objectives and upon standardized means of assessment to ensure those objectives have been met? Though this question will also be discussed in Chapter Five, it may be significant to consider that

[w]hat is assessed and evaluated, how it is assessed and evaluated, and how results are communicated send clear messages to students and others about what is really valued – what is worth learning, how it should be learned, what elements of quality are considered most important, and how well students are expected to perform. (Atlantic, 1996, p. 46)

Perhaps the problem is not the utilization of standardized tests to indicate achievement but is the type of achievement measure by the standardized tests. The authors of *Adjusting the course part II* state,

[b]y emphasizing achievement a clear statement is being made that the primary function of the schools is intellectual development. This does not mean, however, that this goal is narrowly confined to attaining high scores on tests of basic skills. Achievement also means understanding broad

concepts, ability to analyze and synthesize knowledge, ability to think critically, and understanding the processes involved in generating, locating and utilizing knowledge. (Government, February 1994, p. 2)

Therefore, as part of the evolution of this new curriculum, there is a need to establish new indicators of achievement that are more in line with the inclusive and eclectic objectives stated in the curriculum guides. Educators, striving for social justice and insisting upon the legitimacy of the diverse voices of their students, are also concerned with intellectual achievement. Thus, broadening the conception of what constitutes achievement does not have to entail discarding all forms of standardization. Flexible concepts of achievement need not result in unbridled relativism. Moreover, it must be acknowledged that standardized tests are not the sole arbiter of determining student achievement.

Consequently, the current use of standards need not be abolished; the standards merely need revision to include additional achievement indicators, more in keeping with the new ELA curriculum's broader, more inclusive view of achievement. However, this process of revision must begin with a critical look at "what is really valued" in the current educational system in Newfoundland and Labrador, as well as what are students being told about "what is worth learning". Who benefits – the individual or society?

Education's Agenda: Individual or Civic Interests?

Though recent educational documents contain evidence of progressive notions of social, economic, and cultural interconnectedness and profess recognition of the importance of meeting the diverse needs of students, it may be argued that too much

emphasis is placed upon economic competition and the utilitarian notion of preparing students to be productive members of society. For example, the Royal Commission (1992) acknowledges, “[w]ithin society generally there is a growing sense of the interdependence of the political, economic and social aspects of life. This, too, has had an effect on both the pace and nature of curriculum change” (p. 273). However, the Royal Commission (1992) seems to place a disproportionate amount of concern upon the economic goals of education: “There is no greater challenge facing this province than ensuring that our children obtain the skills, knowledge and abilities essential to survival in a fast-changing highly competitive world” (p. xix). Indeed, the Commission further notes how strongly education will be influenced by and will need to adapt to this “fast-changing highly competitive world”:

To use an industrial metaphor, we will be forced to re-tool our schools to deal with new expectations for a new type of learner – one capable of responding to an ever-changing post-industrial, high-technology age. Much of the public criticism of education, which has emanated to a large degree from the business community, has centred on the need for a graduate who is not so much a storehouse of knowledge but a manipulator of knowledge, capable of responding to personal, social and business needs. (p. 44)

The use of the “industrial metaphor” may be more than a little disconcerting to educators who resist the assembly-line philosophy of education, which regards students and their learning as products to be manufactured for society’s economic machine. Yet, the metaphor effectively mirrors the economic and civic ideals that Althusser (2001) asserts

have been historically reinforced by educational institutions in their roles as society's dominant Ideological State Apparatus (see Chapter One).

The endorsement of these ideals is also evident in the *Grades 10-12, Overview* (2001): "To function productively and participate fully in our increasingly sophisticated technological, information-based society, citizens will need broad literacy abilities, and they will need to use these abilities flexibly" (Newfoundland, 2001, p.1). Referring to this section of the *Overview*, Barrell (2000) observes, "[h]ere the intent is to locate the new program of studies within the changing economic and social realities of Eastern Canada and to prepare students for a 'sophisticated technological, information-based society'" (p. 43). This, in itself, is not a problem; the difficulty arises when there is only a superficial recognition of the complexity and depth of these interrelated issues. Barrell (2000) writes,

[n]o details about the nature of the changes happening in the region are provided. The authors do not attempt to address the heavy price being paid by people caught in the midst of rapid social and economic change, nor do they try to explicate the specific nature of the change or the technological and information skills pertinent to the region. (p. 43)

A more holistic and in depth consideration of these issues is necessary. As noted in Chapter Three, there is nothing wrong with preparing students for the economic realities they will face when they leave school. However, educators are remiss in their duties if they encourage students to blindly adhere to the current inequitable economic relationships within society, if they do not challenge students to question existing structures, and if they fail to promote a sense of empowerment in students and a belief

requirements of business for a flexible, technologically-proficient workforce. They examined the increasing diversity of the school population. They were aware of the interplay of many economic and geopolitical forces that were beginning to buffet the Canadian economy All these factors were influential in the reconstruction of a new vision of literacy for secondary schools. (p. xiii)

However, changes in the definition of literacy are not new. The authors of the *APEF ELA Foundation* (1996) note,

[a]s recently as one hundred years ago, literacy meant the ability to recall and recite from familiar texts and to write signatures. Even twenty years ago, definitions of literacy were linked almost exclusively to print materials. The vast spread of technology and media has broadened our concept of literacy. To participate fully in today's society and function competently in the workplace, students need to read and use a range of texts. (Atlantic, p. 1)

Therefore, the *APEF ELA Foundation* (1996) document emphasizes that the priority of the English language arts curriculum is literacy, and that "what it means to be literate will continue to change as visual and electronic media become more and more dominant as forms of expression and communication" (Atlantic, p. 1). However, for many teachers, the latest manifestation of the evolving definition of literacy constitutes what Barrell (2000) labels a "paradigm shift" (p. 37). This is understandable when one considers that

[w]ords, the traditional core of an English program, now share space with visual images, non-verbal sounds, graphs, and physical gestures. Fixed

texts are, at times, replaced by flexible, celluloid, plastic, or digital images. Conventional notions of texts are expanded to include multimedia and multiple-authored communications. Engagements with traditional canonical works are expanded to include growing cyber-genres and multivocal texts. The new curriculum challenges the supremacy of reading in the senior English classroom and encourages other discipline strands to take on much greater significance. Deep involvement with technology challenges silent reading and reflection time. Writing and multifaceted ways of representing information are called forth in greater and more complex formats. A kaleidoscope of visual displays, hyperlinks, and graphic images defy simple book illustrations. Sequential linear progressions are sometimes replaced with non-linear non-sequential expressions and interfaces. (Barrell, 2000, p. 41)

Particularly for teachers trained “in the old school”, the transformations in their subject area are dramatic.

However, as noted in Chapter One, the history of education is replete with examples of how socio-economic changes influenced ideologies that shaped the system and resulted in reformulations of English as a subject. Consequently, a modification in the subject is not new – unfortunately, neither is the tendency to dichotomize educational ideologies and forms of English. Because of the complexity of the contexts in which the educational system exists and the multifaceted nature of education itself, we need not establish firm binary distinctions between centralizing or decentralizing education, between diversity and national unity, between standardized and flexible assessment

methodologies, and between meeting the needs of the individual or the needs of society as a whole. The challenge is to establish an intricate, continuously evolving balance among the various educational aims and versions of English as a subject. However, while recognizing the impact of socio-economic, cultural, and technological changes in today's world and acknowledging the accompanying expansion of the term "literacy" are necessary components of the new curriculum, allowances must be made for the discomfort and resistance that will inevitably be the response of many teachers as they struggle to cope with the new demands that are placed upon them. Furthermore, it is imperative that we also concede that there are obstacles within the educational system, hindering the ability of teachers and students to respond effectively to these evolving demands.

Systemic obstacles hindering the "paradigm shift"

For many teachers in Newfoundland and Labrador, the new ELA curriculum appears radically different than the one that preceded it. Consequently, there are the inevitable growing pains that are to be expected with any major paradigm shift.⁶⁸ However, because of the inherent dynamic and fluid nature of the education profession, most teachers are accustomed to adapting to change. Yet, it is unreasonable to expect teachers to cope with growing responsibilities, new theories of what constitutes English language arts, and increased demands for new and varied resources without there being

⁶⁸ Though there are repeated references to a dramatic paradigm shift, the most recent incarnation of the subject English contains echoes of previous paradigms (see Chapter One for a review of paradigm shifts and the corresponding statements in recent curriculum documents). However, as Ball *et al.* (1990) note, current theories have been around for a long time, but practice is often slow to follow. Indeed, the current curriculum may be more indicative of practice "catching up" with theory.

significant adjustments to the existing educational system. In its 1992 report, the Royal Commission states, “[a]s teachers face new reforms and further increased expectations it is important that they work and plan more with their colleagues, sharing and developing their expertise together” (p. 276). Moreover, because “[t]he task of teaching is today more complex and demanding than in the past”, teachers need to be better prepared “for the realities of the classroom” (p. 279). “For teachers who are already active in their profession this preparation must come in the form of professional development activities; for prospective teachers, change must be made within the university system which prepares them for the teaching task” (p. 279). Unfortunately, there are those who would insist that, more than a decade after the 1992 report, these recommendations have gone unheeded. Currently, though the APEF documents indicate that education is a shared responsibility, teachers are often left with the bulk of the workload. Moreover, the education teachers receive is often at odds with the principles and goals of the new curriculum. Furthermore, the dearth of available resources hinders the ability of teachers to adequately administer the desired program. Clearly, if teachers are to effectively work within the new ELA curriculum framework, some of the obstacles created by the organization of the current system must be addressed.

Intensification

At least in the written documents, there is acknowledgement that teacher workload is overwhelming and that educational responsibility should be more evenly distributed among a variety of stakeholders. For example, the Royal Commission (1992)

indicates,

while financial support [for education] has been declining, schools have been challenged with increased demands on their time and resources. Without proper in-service training, adequate resources and input in the decision process, teachers have been asked to assume a number of responsibilities formerly handled by the family, the community and government agencies. (p. 101)

Moreover, the Commission reports, “a growing consensus that schools, families, communities, social agencies and the private sector must become stronger partners to help children succeed in school, and especially to assist those who have trouble achieving the desired standards” (p. 365). Likewise, the *APEF ELA Foundation* (1996) document indicates that the various organizations within the educational system are responsible for making decisions about “the allocation of personnel, time and materials, including technology – to ensure that all students have access to adequate learning experiences and appropriate resources” (Atlantic, p. 43). Meanwhile, “principals and other school administrators” are advised to offer support to the ELA program by “working to ensure that teachers of English language arts have appropriate support and ongoing opportunities for professional growth”; by “working with English language arts teachers to ensure that the variety of resources and experiences available meet the needs of all learners”; and by “ensuring equitable access to school facilities, technology and other learning opportunities for all” (Atlantic, 1996, p. 44). These statements reflect the well-intentioned ideals of educational reform; unfortunately, the reality does not reflect the ideal.

While there is a great deal of lip service paid to the need for education to be a shared responsibility, in fact, teachers are often left with the bulk of an ever-increasing workload. The response to the 1992 Royal Commission recommendation to streamline education and the creation of the APEF common curriculum have had a dramatic impact upon teacher workload. The consolidation of school boards within the province necessitates that existing board personnel have additional duties, as each board is now responsible for a larger number of schools. In addition, the reduced number of school boards also demands that some tasks, once performed by school board personnel, are downloaded to school administrators and classroom teachers. Dibbon (2004) notes,

[t]he reduction in the number of district level administrators from 193.5 in 1996 down to 90 in 2003, is believed by many to have had a negative impact on the implementation of new programs and consequently [sic] teacher workload, as a significant amount of administrative work was downloaded to the school and the classroom. (p. 1)

Meanwhile, additional duties have been allocated to educational personnel. For example, the Royal Commission (1992) indicates that school board personnel are assigned the “responsibility for the establishment and development of effective School Councils” (p. 232). Furthermore, while school councils have been established to encourage students, parents, and other community members to share in educational responsibility and decision-making, these councils have also added to the duties of teachers and administrators. Though school council members also consist of volunteers from the community, principals and a number of teachers (elected by other teachers) are required to be members of these councils (Royal Commission, 1992, p. 234). Indeed, in reference

to school councils, the Government (November 25, 1993) states, “[s]chool principals and staff will be expected to play important new roles in enhancing parental involvement” (p. 16). While the principle of shared involvement is a positive attribute of educational reform, adjustments have not been made to the existing workload of educators to compensate for additional responsibilities. To make matters more complicated, the implementation of the Atlantic province’s new common curriculum coincided with and contributed to the dramatic organizational changes occurring within Newfoundland and Labrador’s educational system.

For example, as Barrell (2000) notes, “the curriculum is expanding while less time is being devoted to secondary English education in Atlantic Canada” (p. 39). This expansion is partially the result of the new conceptions of literacy and the accompanying increase in the variety of learning activities, instructional strategies, and evaluation procedures with which ELA teachers are expected to become familiar and to employ. Interestingly, “no new courses or additional instruction time has been added to the discipline. By fully engaging the new literacies, some topics will have to be elbowed aside or mentioned in only a cursory manner” (Barrell, 2000, p. 42). In fact, rather than acknowledging that an increased workload requires an increased time allotment, the new ELA curriculum introduced an increased amount of prescribed content while reducing the time available to administer it.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ The irony of the situation will not be lost on many teachers. The new curriculum documents acknowledge the imperative of inclusion, profess the need for increased student voice, and promote choice and variety in terms of texts, methodologies, and assessment strategies. Yet, the time constraints placed upon students and teachers ensure that the politics of space becomes an issue. Therefore, the question becomes whose knowledge or interests will take precedent? This issue will be addressed further in Chapter Five.

The mounting intensification in English as a subject becomes obvious when one compares the preceding English curriculum and the current ELA curriculum. In Newfoundland and Labrador's previous senior high English curriculum, students in the academic stream generally completed six English courses: three, two-credit, literature courses and three, one-credit, language (writing) courses. Indeed, to graduate, students had to complete the three writing courses and, at least, two literature courses. As a result of the new curriculum, the three compulsory writing courses have been replaced by one, optional, two-credit, writing course. The three, two-credit literature courses have been replaced by three, two-credit English courses – which combine the content of the former literature and language courses. While the interdependence among reading and viewing, speaking and listening, as well as writing and other ways of representing supports the rationale of combining the former literature and language courses, it does not justify the reduction in instructional time. The time previously allotted to the former one-credit language courses has vanished. Indeed, this is a conservative estimate, considering that in the new English 3201 course, for example, students and teachers are expected to cover many of the requirements of the previous Thematic Literature 3201, Language 2101, and Language 3101 courses combined, as well as other additions introduced by the new curriculum. To date, little has been done to effectively address the issue of teacher workload.

While there have been suggestions to alleviate the problem of insufficient time to cover the curriculum, these have often been either ineffective or have actually served to further intensify teacher workload. The Royal Commission (1992) recommends increasing the school year from 190 days to 200 days (p. 327). Following the report, a

Classroom Issues Committee was established with a mandate to ensure “sufficient time is provided for instruction”, and “time is available for teacher professional activity” (Government, 1995). “Particular emphasis” was to be “placed on identifying and helping to minimize day to day interruptions that pre-empt teachers and students from [sic] making the best use of available instructional time”; therefore, producing “a resource guide to assist teachers in maximizing the use of instructional time and minimizing interruptions in the classroom” was a priority (Government, 1995). Not only does the inclusion of a resource guide contribute to the de-skilling of the professional teacher, but the underlying goal of maximizing instructional time limits the opportunities teachers and students have to engage in enrichment activities or to explore occasions promoting inclusion or celebrating diversity. How can perspectives and activities be broadened in an atmosphere in which interruptions are minimized? Experience has repeatedly shown that interruptions are often the catalyst of the most enriching teaching-learning occasions.

More recently, during contract negotiations between the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association and the provincial government in 2002, five days were added to the school year – no doubt in a genuine and benevolent effort to make time “available for teacher professional activity” and to provide teachers with “sufficient time . . . for instruction”. Indeed, it was stated that two of the additional days were to “be assigned for classroom instruction while the remaining three will be reserved for teacher professional development” (Jackson, March 14, 2002). While additional time is definitely needed to give teachers and students time to explore the expanded ELA curriculum, the addition of a couple of days to the school year falls far short of alleviating teacher workload and the intensification which accompanies the new curriculum.

Furthermore, though three days, “reserved for teacher professional development”, is an improvement, they are not sufficient to make up for the education and experience that teachers need to adjust to the new curriculum.

Teacher Education

Not only are ELA teachers expected to have knowledge of critical literary and social theories, but the new ELA curriculum also reflects an expectation that teachers are not only familiar with, but are also in agreement with the importance of an expanding concept of literacy, while possessing an extensive array of technical skills. With the APEF’s emphasis on technology and information-gathering skills, the new ELA curriculum documents possess an increasingly wide range of outcomes for student achievement and new definitions of literacy and texts. Indeed, Barrell and Hammett (2000) note the addition of “language arts” to the subject name of English, as an indicator of “a change in emphasis from literature to all the arts related to language – oracy, visual literacy, media literacy, grammar and composition, and information and communication technologies” (p. xvii). In addition, the curriculum guide, *English 3201* (June 2003), clearly reflects the increased technological demands placed upon teachers as they are expected to facilitate the students’ use of “the aesthetic conventions of audio, visual, and electronic media with competence and originality to effectively express their experiences, ideas and concerns” (Newfoundland, p. 26). Also, learning experiences include teaching students to “edit student-created film footage”; to “use databases and spreadsheets to support an argument or make mathematical projections”; to “use an application such as

HyperCard to produce a simple interactive multimedia program that effectively uses this medium to communicate an idea or feeling”; as well as to “manipulate and incorporate file-transfer textual documents, graphic, and sound files to be incorporated in student-produced communications” (p. 28). Moreover, suggested activities include having students “experiment with developing a home page (using the HTML language) to become information providers on the Internet” (p. 29). The influx of new technology is overwhelming and, if teachers are to be of assistance to their students, they will need training in the use of the necessary technology. Unfortunately, current post secondary programs do not adequately prepare future teachers to meet the demands awaiting them in today’s classrooms.

Actually, there is a clear disconnect between post secondary education and the new expectations of the APEF common curriculum. First of all, the APEF documents emphasize the importance of a cross-curricular or inter-disciplinary approach to learning. For example, the *APEF ELA Foundation* (1996) states, “students need to make connections and develop abilities across subject boundaries if they are to be ready to meet the shifting and ongoing demands of life, work and study today and in the future. Essential graduation learnings are cross-curricular” (Atlantic, p. 5). However, this holistic and interdependent notion of the study of English – which is similar to Morgan’s (2000) promotion of “English as cultural studies” (see Chapter One) – is not reflected in the structure of most universities or of teacher education programs. More often, universities adhere to rigid divisions among the various disciplines. For example, professors in the English faculty rarely engage in collaborations with professors from the Education faculty or encourage their students to consider interdisciplinary connections or

contradictory perspectives. Furthermore, Graff (2001) not only criticizes the isolationist approach among the various university faculties, but he also laments the lack of theory included in the study of university English. In reference to the university English department's tendency to study a text as if it exists in a vacuum (independent of social, cultural, or historical context), he writes, "the isolation of 'literature itself' in a conceptual vacuum [has] stranded students without a context for talking about literature and that . . . forces many of them to resort to *Cliffs Notes* and other such cribs" (p. 2060). His condemnation of this practice is resounding as he remarks that the authors of *Cliff Notes* have considered "the problems facing the average literature student more realistically than have many department curricular planners" (pp. 2060-2061).

Therefore, as things stand, many ELA teachers are being asked to examine and to "teach" English language arts in a way that is in stark contrast to the way in which they were taught and the ways in which they learned. In reference to changes in the ELA curriculum, Barrell (2000) states, "[f]or experienced teachers of English in the Atlantic region, these ideas go far beyond their past conceptions of the discipline" (p. 41) and for those "trained in the old school, these quick depictions of a discipline in metamorphosis may seem quite overwhelming" (p. 42). Pradl (2004) indicates that, in the past, "[t]hose of us who entered teacher education did so with a clear image of what being an 'English teacher' means – and that's a literature teacher. We thought our own experiences as readers of literature should serve as a guide for what we promoted in our pupils" (Pradl & Mayher, p. 11). Though Pradl is referring to those who began teaching English in the sixties, Barrell's (2000) comment suggests that the close association between the

“English” and the “literature” teacher remains as

a feeling of dissonance will be experienced by B. Ed. students as they try to find parallels between their heavy literary preparation in university and the emergence of national curricula that have elevated other and varied textual forms, limited literary engagement time, and introduced technological competence into the English classroom. (2000, p. 36)

Evidently, there is a clear distinction “between how traditional Canadian university English departments conceptualize the discipline and how high school ELA curriculum planners are constructing it” (Barrell, 2000, p. 39). Therefore, this weakness in the education system must be addressed. The Royal Commission (1992) recognizes that there is a need for more co-operation and co-ordination among all educational institutions; their report states, “[a] new, comprehensive and coordinated approach to the professional development of teachers and administrators in the province, involving the university, the department of education, and the school system, is required” (p. 281). Unfortunately, the necessary collaboration has yet to be realized, and the stop-gap measure of professional in-service is inadequate to alleviate the deficiencies in the current educational system.⁷⁰ However, some of the deficiencies in the current system could be lessened by an infusion of temporal and material resources.

Resource Needs

While there is much to be admired in the new ELA curriculum, the existing educational system has failed to provide the necessary time commitment and material

⁷⁰ This concern will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Five.

resources to fully implement it. Because the changes in English as a discipline are considerable, there is a need to invest significant time in the development and implementation of suitable professional development. Though some in-service was provided to introduce the new ELA curriculum, its duration was too short to be entirely effective. The amount of information and training required necessitates more than a few days of professional development. The Royal Commission (1992) recognizes that “[a] major investment of both time and effort in curriculum changes seems inappropriate when the knowledge and skills of teachers are left underdeveloped because of a lack of in-service opportunities” (p. 280). Furthermore, the lack of time allocated for follow-up in-service sessions is another shortcoming in the system’s investment in the new curriculum. The changes in the discipline are too extensive to be addressed in the isolated in-service sessions that were provided. Follow-up professional development days could be extremely valuable in elaborating on previously introduced information, offering support to teachers adapting to significant changes, introducing new strategies, and reinforcing the new ideals of the curriculum. Furthermore, the professional development that was provided was created and delivered specifically to ELA teachers. Clearly, the education system is not providing sufficient support for a curriculum emphasizing an integrative, holistic, and interdisciplinary approach to teaching and learning if time is not allotted for teachers in all subject areas to work together, to share expertise, and to collaborate in establishing the cross-curricular links among their disciplines. Evidently, not enough time has been committed to ensure the successful implementation of the new ELA program.

Moreover, the system's inefficiency in implementing the new common curriculum is further hampered by its failure to provide the material resources necessary to offer the educational opportunities outlined in the curriculum documents.

Unfortunately, a shortage of resources in the face of educational change is all too common. The Royal Commission (1992) reports,

while educational theorists are influencing policy makers and affecting the tasks assigned to teachers, the teachers who are charged with the responsibility of implementing new policies are faced with a critical shortage of materials, expertise, direction and support. (p. 274)

Yet, a disregard for the realities of resource shortages is apparent in the recent implementation of a technically dependent ELA curriculum. Indeed, there appears to be a lot of take-for-granted about the equitable access students throughout the Atlantic provinces have to the technology that plays such a vital role in the new curriculum.

Barrell (2003) writes,

[c]lassrooms in the Maritime region have a long way to go in terms of access to appropriate technologies and applications. Regional schools vary greatly in the access they have to new technologies, software applications, Internet connection, corporate sponsorships, technical support, and ongoing local commitment. Rural and isolated schools seldom have equal electronic access, corporate sponsorship, and technically trained community resource people. Depending on such factors as Home and School fund-raising efforts, corporate computer donations, proximity to Internet providers, or administrative commitment

to library and resource centre acquisition, English classrooms can be technologically equipped very differently from place to place. (p. 47)

To date, the necessary financial support required to achieve the equity and inclusion that the curriculum documents promote is lacking. The difficulty created by the scarcity of vital resources, like other obstacles stunting the evolutionary growth of the ELA curriculum, continues to present challenges to dedicated educators as they attempt to faithfully fulfill the new duties they have been given. Yet, it is important to acknowledge that there have always been obstacles to achieving the complex goals of education. Again, it is left to educators – while striving for the ideal – to find a tenuous balance between what is professed and what is possible within specific contexts.⁷¹

Conclusion

While ELA teachers continue to feel the sharp growing pains of a complex, evolutionary educational reform process, they may experience some relief in acknowledging the vast potential embedded in the new curriculum documents. After all, the APEF foundation and curriculum documents clearly promote diversity, complexity, critical thinking, and inclusion. While the existing structure of the educational system is not always conducive to achieving the full potential of the curriculum, the catalyst for initiating change exists within these documents. Barrell and Hammett (2000) are quite correct in “suggesting that the new curricula should be read critically, asking whose interests are being served and whose are not, and what may be their effects on various constituents. What perspectives, theories, and ideas are privileged and which are

⁷¹ Again, these concerns will be addressed in greater detail in Chapter Five.

ignored?” (p. xviii). Therefore, educators must be wary of facilitating the traditional hegemonic goals of education by blindly responding to calls for improved student achievement and threats of accountability – all in the attempt to improve the welfare of society as a whole. For example, in its 1995 status report, the Royal Commission Implementation Secretariat states,

[i]n order for large scale reform to succeed, it is necessary for each of us to look beyond our own immediate agendas, to the welfare of the system as a whole. This is difficult, as many of us hold varying beliefs about what will best serve the interests of students. Unfortunately, the interests of students cannot be served when groups hold contradictory agendas, each pulling the system in a different direction. . . . The history of education is littered with failed attempts at reform. Such failures are often as much due to lack of consensus, commitment, or sustained support as to flaws in the ideas themselves. . . . At this stage of our history, there seems to be a fairly clear consensus on the need for reform, and on the general thrust towards higher performance and greater accountability. What is missing is consensus on structure and process, particularly as change can be expected to affect the established interests of many groups. (Government, 1995)

Many of the stated – and clearly hegemonic – goals of the Royal Commission Implementation Secretariat fly in the face of the principles outlined in the new ELA curriculum. While compromise is admirable, ELA teachers must challenge many of these statements. The promotion of diversity necessitates considering the “immediate agendas” of all interested parties; the endorsement of inclusion necessitates concern for

the welfare of the individual as well as “the system as a whole”; and the awareness of complexity necessitates the recognition that not only groups, but also a single individual can “hold contradictory agendas”. The call for “consensus” is merely the reinforcement of the traditional hegemonic role of education. This must be challenged! To do this, teachers and students may practice the critical inquiry and thinking advocated in the new ELA curriculum and critically evaluate the explicit and implicit goals of education.

CHAPTER FIVE

NEGOTIATING THE MINEFIELD

Chapter Overview

A review of the history of mass formal education and of English as a subject reveals that not only are they powerful instruments in influencing values, attitudes, and practices of society but, consequently, they are sites where various interests and ideologies intersect and conflict in a competition for supremacy. The school, as a complex microcosm of society, reflects the socio-economic and cultural hierarchies of the society of which it is a product and a producer. Therefore, as in society, the history of formal education is rife with challenges to dominant ideologies and paradigms, which have resulted in shifts in thought and practice. However, change has never been absolute; remnants of previous theories and practices persist – sometimes in the form of resistance to new ideas and methodologies and sometimes because the new emerges from the old, adopting elements of former paradigms (see Chapters One and Four). Teachers in Newfoundland and Labrador have to be consciously aware of and to work within this intricate weave of educational ideologies and paradigm shifts (see Chapter One) – and all this within the context of a province experiencing incredible social, cultural, economic, and environmental changes (see Chapter Three). Making things even more challenging are the existing ELA foundation and curriculum documents that are replete with contradictions and an educational structure, equally contradictory, that contains systemic obstacles that make the tasks of teachers even more difficult (see Chapter Four). However, there is nothing novel about complexity and challenge in education and in the

ELA program. The key for teachers is to consciously explore the multiple and sometimes conflicting ideologies, paradigms, and practices – not only of the system and the subject, but also of ourselves. From here, critical reflection can uncover a course of determined and committed action on the part of teachers in this province.

The More Things Change . . .

A review of the history of formal schooling (see Chapter One), reveals that from its inception, formal education has identified literacy as one of its primary goals. Therefore, the association between literacy and the subject of English may partially account for the revered position that English maintains in Anglo-American, institutionalized education. In Newfoundland and Labrador, the dominance of English as a discipline is reflected not only in its being a core subject in public schools, but also in the degree requirements of the province's only university. All students are to study English; a minimum of six credit hours in English is generally required (Memorial, 2006).

This elevated position of English, established as the ideological power it wields was recognized (see Chapter One), seems firmly entrenched because the same contradictory ideologies that depend upon particular forms of English to validate their legitimacy are still contending for supremacy (see Chapter Four). The multiple ideals education has been expected to simultaneously support, historically, are reflected in the

present provincial government's pre-election policy manual:

Schools represent our highest aspirations. We expect them to nurture strong social and ethical values in our children and the skills to achieve economic success and personal satisfaction in their adult lives. We want schools to help students reach their full potential, and to be person-friendly places where gender, religious and ethnic difference, and different physical and intellectual abilities are acknowledged and accepted.

(Progressive, 2003, p. 51)

The legacy of the imperialist, moral, and national ideals described in Chapter One is reinforced by the currently governing Progressive Conservative party's expressed desire for education "to nurture strong social and ethical values". Moreover, the expectation that schools provide students with "the skills to achieve economic success" is reminiscent of the civic and economic ideals of the "English as skills" form consistent with Bobbitt's (2004) theory of a scientific method in curriculum making. In addition, traces of the individual ideal are evident in the duty of the school "to help students reach their full potential". There are even aspects of pluralist and progressive ideals as acknowledgement of difference and the goal of "personal satisfaction" are professed. Furthermore, these comments published in the Progressive Conservative Party "Blue Book" are indicative of the continuing efforts, by those with distinct political agendas, to "police" education.⁷²

⁷² Ball *et al.* (1990) note the pattern that, particularly in times of change or social unrest, various interest groups seek to promote their agendas by studying and reporting on the educational system and/or English teaching in an attempt to "police" or regulate the system and/or the subject in a way that best meets their goals (see Chapter One).

The history of educational development in Newfoundland and Labrador is rife with competing notions of education advocated by various interest groups intending to use education and a particular form of literacy to further their particular agendas (see Chapter Two). The primary goal of early Protestant and Roman Catholic schools on the island and Moravian and Grenfell mission schools in Labrador was the propagation of the gospel. In addition, once a formal governmental body was established within the province, the state quickly sought to establish its influence in education by providing funding for schools and attempting to dismantle the denominational system. The long running debate and struggle for control between church and state was somewhat ironic considering that many of their goals were compatible: to produce reliable, hardworking, obedient, and unquestioning parishioners or citizens. The eventual success of the government's long campaign to end denominational education did not mark the end of government's overt attempts to determine the functions and the forms of education in Newfoundland and Labrador.

As numerous reports before it, the findings of the government sponsored Royal Commission on Renewing and Strengthening Our Place in Canada indicate the importance of education and the role it is to fulfill. The report (2003) outlines a number of the Commission's observations (see Chapter Three). Essentially, the Commission recognizes the diversity, complexity, and interdependence of Newfoundland and Labrador's evolving economy, society, and culture. Its report endorses the need to foster the inclusion of diverse individual and collective voices. Unfortunately, many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians feel alienated, marginalized, or stereotyped – not

only within Canada but also within their own province. However, as in the past, education is promoted as a means of curing most ills.

This apparent expectation for education to be all things to all people, is also reflected in the foundation and curriculum documents that accompany the current senior high English language arts (ELA) program that was introduced province wide in the 2001-2002 school year (see Chapter Four). Developed by the Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation (APEF), the new ELA program, with its emphasis on a common curriculum and common, prescribed, specific curriculum outcomes, serves as a unifying force (reminiscent of the form of English promoted by imperialist or nationalist ideals). In addition, a common set of desired outcomes, with their accompanying common standards, narrows the focus of what is considered student achievement. This type of specification and prescription is beneficial to civic and economic ideals. By stating objectives that require students to become more technologically proficient in an increasingly technical and media-oriented world, English fulfills a goal of the APEF: to help students “participate fully in today’s society and function competently in the workplace” (Atlantic, 1996, p. 1). However, the ELA curriculum must not only provide society with a qualified workforce, but, according to the *English 3201* curriculum guide, it is also expected to meet the needs of the individual by “allowing student choice” (p. 3); by “[identifying] and [responding] to diversity in students’ learning styles” (p. 4); and by expecting students “to explore, extend, clarify, and reflect on their thoughts, ideas, feelings, and experiences” (Newfoundland, June 2003, p. 6). These goals support the *APEF ELA Foundation* document’s (1996) progressive stance that the new “curriculum emphasizes the importance of students’ active participation in all aspects of their learning

(Atlantic, 1996, p. 2). Furthermore, Hammett (2004) justifiably states that, though it does not get the attention it is due, elements of critical pedagogy are evident in the new curriculum. The *APEF ELA Foundation* document (1996) states that the new ELA curriculum “emphasizes the personal, social and cultural contexts of language learning and the power that language has within those contexts” (p. 2) and that students will be expected to “examine how texts work to reveal and produce ideologies, identities and positions” (Atlantic, p. 29). Where the new curriculum documents may be seen to fall short, in terms of critical literacy, is that they do little to promote praxis; transforming the world by challenging and eliminating existing social, economic, or cultural inequities is not an explicit goal of this curriculum. However, the documents do possess the myriad of intersecting, complementary, and conflicting goals that has been imposed upon English as a subject since its inception in the nineteenth century.

The complex and contradictory nature of English teaching and learning is nothing new. Yet, it does place English teachers in a very challenging situation. How can the competing ideological goals, with their embedded forms of English (see Chapter One), be reconciled? To be sure, it is unlikely that an absolute reconciliation among ideological forms of English can be achieved or is even desirable. Cope and Kalantzis (1993) suggest, that “even more so” than the existence of the various paradigms, “the vigorous debate that has gone on between them, are a positive and fruitful basis for rethinking pedagogy in general and literacy pedagogy in particular” (p. 64). Undoubtedly, the debate or dialogue among the theories is highly beneficial, and teachers should adopt the positive aspects of each paradigm. Yet, is it probable within the current educational system (with all its disconnects and contradictions) that teachers can become aware of the

various paradigms and can discern which aspects of each are most beneficial to meet the needs of diverse students in rapidly evolving and complex social, economic, and cultural contexts? Though teachers and students may be hampered by the systemic disconnects and contradictions inhabiting institutionalized public schooling (see Chapter Four), awareness of what Freire (1970) calls *conscientização* is the first step toward change. Therefore, students and teachers must critically “read the world” – including the very educational institutions in which they exist – to name the inconsistencies, the injustices, and the inequities in the system. Because we cannot change what we cannot name, critical literacy is essential in exposing implicit educational ideologies and practices. From this point, empowered and committed students and teachers can counteract and transform the systemic flaws and unjust hierarchies of educational institutions. One cannot expect teachers to be all things to all people or to provide all the answers. Besides, education should not be about the end result; it is not a product. In education, process is the key: to question, to investigate, to reflect, and to act.

Question, Investigate, Reflect, and Act

If teachers are to embrace the challenges they face in an increasingly dynamic and multifaceted educational context, they need to become consciously aware of the implicit and explicit goals of education and the role they play in opposing or propagating these aims. Teachers must acknowledge that they are products of the system and are often complicit in maintaining disparities in the system. Furthermore, while some argue that compulsory and free mass education provides all students with equal opportunities to

succeed, an investigation of institutionalized education reveals schools are not the great levelers they are sometimes touted as being. While recent governmental and curriculum documents profess an acknowledgement of diversity, essentialist tendencies and an emphasis upon standards threaten the authenticity of policies promoting diversity and inclusion. In addition, the 21st century's continuing emphasis on globalization and the accelerating rate of technological advances are double-edged swords that may either provide students and teachers with the opportunities to oppose existing hierarchies or equip those in power with the means of maintaining control and keeping marginalized people subjugated. How educators and the educational system respond to these developments will largely determine whether globalization and technological advances become emancipatory or subjective devices. Yet, to provide an informed response, teachers need to recognize the forces that shape social, economic, and cultural identities and positionings to understand the vital role they play. Furthermore, though numerous educational, social, literary, and cognitive theories have been developed to challenge traditional views, the system has been slow to change. Contemporary educational discourses refer to paradigm shifts. Indeed many of these shifts are reflected in the new senior high ELA curriculum documents. However, as Ball *et al.* (1990) note, shifts in thought are not always followed by changes in practice. Therefore, even though many educators agree that teaching and learning are non-linear, fluid, contextual, and complex processes, the structure of existing educational institutions and current teaching practices retain features of theories that promote teaching and learning as linear, fixed, fragmented, and complicated processes. If there is any hope to challenge these contradictions, teachers themselves must recognize them. As products of a system that enshrines

traditional views of knowledge and learning, teachers are sometimes ill-equipped to meet the task. Therefore, teacher education programs and educational structures must change to meet the varied needs of students in an era of globalization and rapid technological advancements as well as to correspond with emerging, interdependent and complex cognitive, educational, and social theories. If this is to be accomplished, educators and students must participate in a critical examination of the existing system, become involved in a process of reflection upon their own practices and conflicting frames, as well as contribute to a negotiated process of transformation.

Diversity and Inclusion

In recent years, governmental and educational documents have professed a commitment to accepting diversity and to promoting inclusion (see Chapters Three and Four). Both state and school officials name the classroom as the context in which this respect for diversity must be fostered. However, as teachers strive to meet the various needs of students, it is essential to examine the existing system with its many inconsistencies and to become conscious of the pitfalls that may arise as educators attempt to include multiple voices in their classrooms. Teachers and students will have to critically reflect upon current practices and, if necessary, modify these practices to enhance an atmosphere in which difference is celebrated – though not unconditionally.

Formal Education: Reproducing Hegemony and Inequity?

As products of the school system, many teachers consciously or unconsciously accept the erroneous view that a compulsory, mass public education system provides equal opportunity for all students. Gale and Densmore (2000) state,

[t]he dominant (neo-liberal) ideology of many teachers continues to suggest that schools function as a mechanism for social and economic mobility, and for developing a democratic society. Critical theorists, however, have argued over some length of time that the social and economic benefits from schooling are far greater for the rich than for the poor. (p. 138)

Denith (1999) not only agrees that schools fail as sites that cultivate social mobility, but she also asserts they are “oppressive organizations” which deliberately “seek to shape the way individuals think, interact and relate to one another. Schools construct cultural, racial, gender, and socioeconomic forms of domination which serve capitalism and the existing social order” (p. 411). Denith’s statements suggest that for all their professed democratic stance of inclusion and respect for diversity, late 20th century schools served the same purpose Althusser (1970) insists the late 19th century schools did (see Chapter One). An examination of the *APEF ELA Foundation* and the Newfoundland and Labrador ELA curriculum documents (see Chapter Four) reveals a similar disconnect between the professed respect for diversity and the realities of the documents’ exclusionary and assimilatory policies that are shaping 21st century schools.

The new ELA program seems to promote inclusion, at least on paper, by noting the various ways students learn, the need for a variety of instructional strategies, the desirability of student voice, and the promotion of personal response. ELA teachers are to have

[s]tudents read the literature of many cultures and investigate how forms of language construct and are constructed by particular social, historical, political and economic contexts. Such activities develop students' sense of cultural identity and promote their understanding of the contribution of diverse cultures to society. Inquiry into a range of issues enables students to consider issues and experiences from a range of viewpoints, explore their own identities and values and reflect on the bonds they share with humanity. (Atlantic, 1996, pp. 6-7)

However, a critical examination of the entire program necessitates questioning whether the ELA curriculum is more concerned with students recognizing “the bonds they share” than it is with having them “explore their own identities”. There are clearly echoes of the “national ideal” of English (see Chapter One). In addition, the promotion of centralization, assimilation, and uniformity are reflected in the program’s regional common curriculum, with its prescribed key stage outcomes as well as its standardized rubrics and examinations (see Chapter Four). This is not to say that this program lacks potential – merely that teachers must be conscious of the equally potentially crippling inconsistencies it contains.

Moreover, teachers who attempt to accommodate diversity in their classrooms must also examine their own tendencies and reflect upon their own practices. They must

be wary of adopting a superficial stance when recognizing difference. For some teachers, the historical absence of the voices of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in the province's curriculum has resulted in diversity being equated with the inclusion of *the* Newfoundlander and Labrador voice in the classroom (see Chapter Two). Similarly, advocates for strengthening the voice of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians within Canada have sometimes essentialized the identity of the inhabitant of this province (see Chapter Three). ELA teachers must reflect upon their roles in propagating the representation of the essential Newfoundlander and Labradorian in a province that – despite the belief of some that the province consists of a fairly homogenous society – has an increasingly multicultural population (see Chapter Three). By failing to challenge essentialist views, teachers are tacitly and often unconsciously complicit in promoting a form of internal, cultural colonialism. However, even when the multicultural nature of the province is recognized, essentialism is still a threat. Identifying a student based predominantly upon a specific category – such as Protestant or Roman Catholic; “townie” or “bayman” – fails to acknowledge the multiplicity of intersecting, hybrid identities each individual possesses. Identity is far more complex than such binaries suggest. Indeed to effectively integrate diversity and inclusion into the classroom, teachers must recognize the intricacy of student identities. Davis *et al.* (2000) note,

events of self identification are not always about distinguishing an ‘I’ from a ‘not-I.’ In fact, it may be that most events of self identification are about becoming part of a ‘we.’ Most of one’s activities are framed by the groups and cliques with which one identifies, as are the opinions and perspectives that orient one’s interpretations. (p. 174)

Therefore, it is necessary for teachers to reflect on their own beliefs to determine if they are in danger of simplifying or essentializing difference. Such tendencies negate many of the positive effects of any attempt at acknowledging diversity.

The Challenges of Facilitating Inclusive Practices

It is also imperative that teachers reflect upon their concept of what constitutes a classroom in which difference is accepted. Gale and Densmore (2000) note that some teachers “aware of the dangers of stereotyping, strive to deal with students as individuals”, and “well-meaning teachers may ignore group differences because they consider it impolite or insensitive to recognize” them (p. 118). In this way, difference is promoted as “no big deal” because everyone is different. However, by ignoring difference, teachers are also ignoring the power relations that value some groups over others. Moreover, by glossing over the significance of difference, teachers may unwittingly facilitate the assimilation of marginalized groups into dominant cultural or social identities. A second way to consider difference is to uncritically celebrate and romanticize it – respecting and valuing an infinite range of diversity. However, Howley, Spatig and Howley (1999) warn against multicultural forms of education that unquestioningly romanticize difference:

Multicultural education, which purports to value diversity rather than to encourage assimilation, also fails in many cases to confront the ideologies that denigrate persons and cultures differing from the mainstream. Some versions of multicultural education, in particular, exemplify the way that a

culturally sensitive stance can devolve into an approach that trivializes and marginalizes those who are different. This abasement occurs when writers and educators treat cultural differences superficially, rendering as harmless the power relations that shape the contest between dominant and subordinate groups. Silent on the practices of colonization, disenfranchisement, and economic oppression, this treatment fosters a myth of cultural difference. Central to the myth is the construction of culture as entertaining, sometimes quaint or stylish, and politically inert.

(p. 36)

A third way to view difference is consistent with a postmodern perspective that sees difference as relational and dynamic. “One’s sense of self, it is suggested, unfolds continuously through the recursive and reiterative processes of representing and interpreting one’s identity in relation to (and in distinction from) other forms – persons, objects, events, and so on” (Davis *et al.*, 2000, p. 169). Therefore, looking at difference in this way, critical educators and students also recognize views of difference fluctuate with shifts in power and that some power relations result in promoting a hierarchical system in which some cultural differences are more highly valued than others. However, recognizing the injustices and acknowledging that perceptions of difference are fluid, provides an opportunity to challenge and transform existing inequitable views of difference. However, even after considerable reflection, the task of establishing genuinely inclusive and transformative classroom practices may appear monumental to many teachers.

Attempts to accommodate a range of student needs and interests seem overwhelming in light of the systemic obstacles existing in the current ELA program and in many provincial schools. How can teachers allow students to explore their own interests and provide them with ample time to reflect upon and work through a process of transforming their frames and actions in such an intensive, prescriptive program? Each of the current ELA courses in secondary school is basically expected to complete the activities and include the content that once existed in two courses: literature (reading) and language (writing). Moreover, teachers are now asked to integrate ever-expanding concepts of literacy and text into their classrooms (see Chapter Four). Furthermore, new “strands” (speaking, listening, viewing and other ways of representing) have been added to the traditional reading and writing strands. Meanwhile, teachers are provided with a mere two thirds of the contact time they once enjoyed with students doing literature and language courses. In addition, though the curriculum documents profess a commitment to diversity and inclusion, they impose a prescribed canon, a detailed list of specific curriculum outcomes, and a number of standardized rubrics. Add to this the large class sizes many teachers face and the probability of creating a genuinely inclusive classroom appears unlikely. Many teachers, pressured by time constraints and the restrictive directives of the curriculum content, feel at the mercy of the politics of time, space, and knowledge. Consequently, how can teachers make room for the multiple forms of knowledge and the multiple complex voices of themselves and their students?

The Possibilities

Frankly, the system is in need of dramatic change; however, even within the existing system, there is much teachers and students can do to endorse diversity and inclusion. One of the first steps teachers and students may take is to critically read the various items of the new course content, calling into question the previously ignored features of the texts as well as the frames and voices that are excluded from them. Admittedly, some voices from the province are included in the revised resource list; yet many are still omitted, leaving teachers and students open to the danger of a new form of cultural hegemony. Though exalting and romanticizing the voices of traditionally subjugated groups is a common element in a move towards resistance (see Chapters Two and Three), teachers and students must be wary of the dangers inherent in this practice. Referring to the resistance of subjugated African-American culture, Toni Morrison (1992) writes,

I do not want to alter one hierarchy in order to institute another. It is true that I do not want to encourage those totalizing approaches to African-American scholarship which have no drive other than the exchange of domination – dominant Eurocentric scholarship *replaced* by dominant Afro-centric scholarship. (p. 8)

Freire (1970) is also concerned with this tendency as he laments that the hegemony of a dominant culture has been so effective that oppressed people see their oppressors as the ideal and themselves as “Other” (see Chapter One). Therefore, rather than working to eliminate an unjust hierarchy, the oppressed strive to become their ideal – the oppressor. Both Freire (1970) and Morrison (1992) express their concerns for the negative or

dehumanizing impact that oppression has – even upon those who perpetuate it. In their views, it is equally detrimental for students and teachers to idealize their own culture as it is to vilify the culture of the oppressor. Furthermore, such binary concepts of “us” and “them” belie the hybrid multiplicity of cultural identity. It is imperative that students and teachers recognize this. Therefore, while critically reading, they must attempt to find a delicate balance, and, though this is challenging, the ELA’s emphasis upon a speaking and listening strand is conducive to a method that can be instrumental in achieving this balance.

In an ELA classroom, in which teachers and students participate in mutually respectful dialogue, critical investigation and reflection can begin to dismantle unjust hierarchies and simplified views of “I” and “not I”. Howley *et al.* (1999) state:

Approaches that encourage border crossing, . . . promote a critical multiculturalism that invites dialogue about difference and across differences. These approaches comprehend the possibilities for personal liberation implicit in exchanges with the ‘other’ and with the ‘other’ within one’s self. (pp. 43-44)

This type of approach emphasizes the fluid and multifaceted nature of assorted, hybrid identities and cultures while recognizing them as social constructs. In an inclusive classroom that fosters dialogue rather than monologue, students can explore and reflect upon their own situatedness, histories, and relationships to create or transform their own sense of identity. Even within the narrow confines of the current system, there is room for an open invitation to dialogue and to engage in critical reading of existing curriculum.

However, there are also opportunities to explore beyond the prescribed curriculum.

Though the new ELA program is highly prescriptive and “no teacher could possibly be expected to be aware of and tailor instruction *relative* to the specific profiles of each learner in her or his classroom” (Davis *et al.*, 2000, p. 114), there are methodologies or strategies that are conducive to the promotion of diversity: “liberating constraints”, conversation, and “occasioning”. Davis *et al.* (2000) suggest that rather than following tightly scripted lesson plans and classroom management strategies, teachers introduce “liberating constraints”. These are “[w]ell-crafted learning activities . . . that maintain a balance between enough organization to orient students’ actions and sufficient openness to allow for the varieties of experience, ability, and interest that are represented in any classroom” (p. 87). Therefore, though a specific curriculum outcome or a prescribed text is a compulsory “constraint”, the approaches students and teachers take to achieve this outcome or to engage the text can be “liberating” as they “allow for diversity of activity” (p. 145).

An inclusive and flexible approach to the suggested minimum content for an ELA course can facilitate “liberating constraints”. For example, students are expected to complete “two novels for study and two (2) others for extended reading”; “fifteen poems for study”; “eight short fiction (others for extended reading)”; eight short non-fiction (others for extended reading)”; “eight visual texts”; and “two short plays and one Shakespearean play” (Newfoundland, June 2003, p. 62). The numbers and genres prescribed are clearly “constraints”; however, students and teachers may be liberated by their choice of selections and the ways in which they choose to engage these selections. Even when the constraint is as narrow as specifically requiring the study of a Shakespearean play, respect for diversity is possible when teaching is viewed as a

dialogue rather than a monologue and students are given the opportunity to read the play through their own frames of reference and encouraged to challenge the representations and themes it portrays. Therefore, rather than a teacher imposed linear sequence of lesson plans, conversation between teachers and students allow for flexibility and diversity as they negotiate the process of teaching and learning. The concept of occasioning is essential in this process. Davis *et al.* (2000) write, “[t]o occasion’ is to bring something about, but not always deliberately. An occasioned event is one that may be incidental or by chance” (p. 103). Teachers, who are open to the individuality, creativity, initiative, and diversity of their students and who accept that “all complex engagements involve adjustment, compromise, experiment, error, detour and surprise” (p. 144), will quickly learn that the most valuable and rewarding teaching and learning experiences are those that no lesson plan could ever produce and that depend upon surprise and variety.

Though attempting to meet the range of needs of all students is extremely challenging, the task need not be overwhelming. Though systemic obstacles to inclusion and diversity exist, there is still room for negotiation. Besides, some structure is necessary to provide focus for teaching and learning activities. However, it is imperative that teachers and students be cognizant that each individual reflects a combination of complex relations. Therefore, they must create a balanced curriculum and adopt a variety of learning methodologies to reflect the cultures, experiences, associations, backgrounds, and perspectives of all participants. Mistakes may be made; however, these can provide occasions for learning too if teachers and students engage in a process of open dialogue, critically reflection, and transformation in an attempt to foster diversity.

Globalization and Technicization

Globalization and rapid technological advancements (that are increasingly becoming the focus of educational and governmental documents) are mixed blessings for educators wishing to challenge inequitable power relations on a global scale. On one hand, globalization and technicization, with their emphases on the global market place and upon skills building, threaten a new form of imperialism. Traditionally subjugated people remain subordinate to multinational corporations requiring a skilled labour force. The educational system becomes the training ground, new versions of literacy and of the “English as skills” form are promoted, and an emphasis on global standards of achievement becomes practice. Those wishing to be successful in the new global economy are encouraged to assimilate, and social disparities persist. On the other hand, there is a paradox contained within globalization. While there is a push toward global standards, advances in media and communication technology are making people increasingly aware of the richness and diversity of global cultures. Furthermore, the skills required in the emerging world of globalization and technicization are much more varied and contain more flexibility than those associated with earlier industrial periods. Moreover, the multimodal forms of communication and media technology provide teachers and students with a vast array of learning opportunities to meet a variety of interests and to utilize diverse talents. Furthermore, increased access to information technology places the world at the finger-tips of teachers and students. Potentially, technology provides a vehicle through which teachers and students can explore an infinite number of world views and social structures, reflect upon the relationships among them, and challenge unjust ideologies in an emancipatory effort to transform the world.

However, it is crucial that teachers and students become aware of the complex impact globalization and technology may have on education. Critical educators are aware that technology education threatens to deskill teachers, and because access to technology is neither universal nor equitable, it also reproduces existing disparities between those that have and those that have not. Yet, it is also important to ask whether a concern for social justice necessitates totally excluding an “English as skills” methodology and abolishing the concept of standards. Again, negotiating a path through the complexities of the potential benefits and dangers of globalization and technological advancement requires a delicate balance.

The New Imperialism?

Investigating recent governmental and educational documents that respond to globalization, one quickly recognizes that current educational aims are reminiscent of those corresponding with imperial, economic, and civic ideals (see Chapter One). In March 2000, the Newfoundland and Labrador government’s Ministerial Panel on Educational Delivery in the Classroom released its report, *Supporting Learning*. The document states,

[g]iven the increasing interconnection and globalization of societies, the Panel views participation in regional and national initiatives, such as the APEF, as a generally positive educational development. The decision to develop curriculum regionally is consistent with similar initiatives

elsewhere in Canada, . . . and internationally. (Government, March 2000, p. 13)

This panel's conclusions clearly reinforce the interest in globalization and the corresponding tendency towards centralization and assimilation that are reflected in other governmental reports and in recent ELA curriculum documents (see Chapters Three and Four). Furthermore, a concern with achievement – based on regional, national, and international standards – is another potentially harmful characteristic of an educational system committed to a capitalist version of globalization. The Ministerial Panel, approving of the province's participation in a common curriculum, expressed the opinion that “in the area of assessment, it would be advantageous to the province to participate in the APEF examinations structure” as well (Government, March 2000, p. 14). The panel asserts that “[t]he need for accountability in the educational system is [largely] driven” by the increased importance of education as a basis for social and economic development and for competitiveness in a global economy which creates a demand for indicators of individual and system performance to ensure students can function at the levels required for individual well-being and for the growth of society. (p. 79)

The Ministerial Panel's report echoes a familiar refrain. Its advocacy for common curriculum and assessment standards as well as its concern for “economic development” and the “growth of society” reflect the same priorities for which mass formal schooling was introduced in imperial England over one hundred years ago (see Chapter One). Social or economic injustices as well as the needs of the individual take a back seat as education is to prepare students for “competitiveness”, and “individual and system

performance” will be assessed by “global” standards. In this way, education becomes increasingly exclusionary and elitist while schools become mere training grounds, which provide a “skilled”, unquestioning, labour force for the global, technological machine.

Reflecting upon the current situation, Davis (2000) indicates that globalization and technicization has resulted in “skills mania” with its “focus on ‘outcomes’ or ‘expectations,’ and standardized performance testing” (p. 6). He asserts that the “version of an education and training philosophy popular through the English-speaking world” (p. 7) is expressed in the Ontario governments’ (1990) *People and Skills in the New Global Economy*. This document states,

[w]ith the advent of new information-based technology and the shift to a more flexible and multiskilled workforce, employers are finding that generic workplace skills are becoming increasingly important relative to job-specific skills. Generic skills are those which workers can use in many jobs. They include analytical, problem solving, workplace interpersonal skills and broad technical skills that may be found in the skilled trades or in the operation of personal computers. (cited in Davis, 2000, p. 7)

The danger here is that elements of progressive English and critical literacy become casualties to an overemphasis upon an “English as skills” approach that views literacy as “knowing the skills” for an increasing number of diverse, work-related, and technological fields. This potentially creates other problems for teachers and students.

The Challenges of Education in the Context of Globalization and Technicization

Apple (2004), referring to the growing focus on skills training as well as “prespecified curricula, repeated testing, and strict and reductive accountability systems” (p. 189) in education, cautions against what he sees as intensification and the deskilling of teachers. He writes, “what might be called ‘skill diversification’ has a contradiction built into it. It is also part of a dynamic of intellectual deskilling in which mental workers are cut off from their own fields and again must rely even more heavily on ideas and processes provided by ‘experts’” (p. 189). As teachers scramble to achieve competency in a wide variety of information and media technologies and expend an increasing amount of time and effort to fulfill the curriculum’s objectives and assessment demands, this intensification

may be . . . reducing the quality not the quantity, of service provided to people. While, traditionally, ‘human service professionals’ have equated doing good work with the interests of their clients or students, intensification tends to contradict the traditional interest in work well done. (Apple, 1986, p. 189)

As educational institutions adapt to the realities of globalization and technicization, teachers and students must be vigilant to uncover how these adaptations have manifested themselves in the classroom and reflect upon the impact they are having on the lives of students and teachers.

A critical examination of recent developments in Newfoundland and Labrador reveals the growing influence of globalization and technicization, and it is important to consider the potential limitations these developments impose upon teachers and students.

Royal Commission reports, such as *Our Children Our Future* (1992) and *Our Place in Canada* (2003); the *APEF ELA Foundation* document (1996); and the ELA curriculum guides (see Chapters Three and Four): all stress the significance of preparing students to be citizens of a global, technical, information-oriented society. The ELA curriculum guides outline the very prescribed outcomes and assessments that Davis (2000) notes are part of the “skills mania” that has seized educational institutions. Furthermore, Dibbon’s (2004) report on teacher workload (see Chapter Four) clearly indicates that the intensification Apple (1986) describes is occurring within Newfoundland and Labrador. Moreover, despite the province’s “cultural renaissance” (see Chapter Three), there is also a continuing pressure towards assimilation. For example, Roch (Spring 2004) states that “[a]ccording to the 2001 Census of Canada, there are 2,180 people in Newfoundland whose mother tongue is French” (p. 19). Yet, though a “hard won French first-language program has spread throughout the province”, Roch also notes that “[m]any exogamous couples . . . choose not to give their children the opportunity to learn French, even though they have a right to, preferring English the international language of business” (p. 25). Moreover, when interviewed on CBC’s *Sunday Night*, Dr. Sandra Clarke of Memorial University of Newfoundland states that even English speaking Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are assimilating for economic reasons: “Kids today are smart. They want to get ahead economically, and they realize if they do want to get ahead, they need to have an accent that might buy them a good job when they leave – when they leave the Province” (Walsh, June 18, 2006). However, assimilatory practices are not always deliberate or conscious efforts. Olympic gold medallist and Newfoundlander, Brad Gushue; acknowledging that his accent is very different from his father’s, attributes it to

technology. He says that his generation has been far more “influenced by television, radio, and things of that nature – the internet” (Walsh, June 18, 2006). The benefits and disadvantages of assimilatory linguistic practices are much debated; some believe Newfoundlanders and Labradorians must cling tenaciously to traditional speech patterns while others insist that if the province is to be successful, it must transform itself to be more in line with global communications.

Unfortunately, reactions to educational shifts instigated by globalization often reflect similar unnecessary binary notions. Dichotomies often impede the goals of critical educators, and ELA teachers in this province should be wary of them. To cling to stereotypical or essentialist notions of Newfoundland and Labrador dialect, which may negate the value of diverse dialects within the province or ignore the inevitability of language’s constant transformations, is just as short-sighted as insisting upon adopting universal notions of a standard English. Similarly, a total rejection of learning outcomes, standards, and the “English as skills” form fails to acknowledge the reality that teachers and students are members of a complex, interdependent, global community. Davis (2000) aptly states the overriding problem:

It’s not the stress on skills I object to. It’s the current neglect of what these skills should be anchored in: content, conviction, allegiances, real human beings and, in general, a commitment to helping students understand history, learn about the world and consider ways to make it a better place to live. (pp. 8-9)

In other words, education which strives to prepare students to participate in a global and technologically advanced society is not wrong; it merely needs to be conducted through a

critical lenses, which aims at having students use their new skills as a means of gaining access to the tools which may facilitate their deeper understanding of the world around them and provide them with the means to critique and transform the world – “to make it a better place to live”.

The Possibilities

Cope and Kalantzis (2000) note that while there is a growing awareness of “global connectedness”, there is also an acknowledgement of “increasing local diversity”, and this is creating something of a paradox within English (p. 6). They write,

[a]t the same time as it is becoming a *lingua mundi*, a world language, and a *lingua franca*, a common language of global commerce, media and politics, English is also breaking into multiple and increasingly differentiated Englishes, marked by accent, national origin, subcultural style and professional or technical communities. Increasingly, the name of the game in English is crossing linguistic boundaries. (p. 6)

In this sense, rather than requiring assimilation, preparation for globalization necessitates a more flexible and inclusive view of language, one in which rigid concepts of standard English are no longer compatible. For ELA teachers, the implications are clear. The task is not to transmit a narrow formalized view of language. Students and teachers can be encouraged to “interact effectively using multiple languages, multiple Englishes, and communication patterns that more frequently cross cultural, community and national

boundaries” (Cope and Kalantzis, 2000, p. 6). Viewing globalization in this way reflects its potential for inclusive pedagogies that acknowledge the benefits of diversity.

Likewise, The New London Group (2000) sees potential in the emerging global economy to benefit those who have been previously subjugated by the hierarchy of the “old” capitalist system. The new system consists of a different structure and requires a different type of worker. The assembly line, mass production approach of “old” capitalism required little more than a specifically skilled automaton existing within a rigid hierarchy. However, this has changed in the “postFordism” or “fast capitalist” era of the expanding global economy. The New London Group (2000) writes,

[w]ith the development of postFordism or fast capitalism, more and more workplaces are opting for a flattened hierarchy. Commitment, responsibility, and motivation are won by developing a workplace culture in which the members of an organization identify with its vision, mission, and corporate values. The old vertical chains of command are replaced by the horizontal relationships of teamwork. A division of labour into its minute, de-skilled components is replaced by ‘multiskilled’, well-rounded workers who are flexible enough to be able to do complex and integrated work. (p. 11)

Though it is important to question who decides upon the organization’s “vision, mission and corporate values” and what hegemonic forces are employed to ensure that workers share these values, it is also significant to note that there appears to be more room in this system for multiple voices and critical thinking skills. The New London Group (2000) does acknowledge that “market-directed theories and practices, even though they sound

humane, will never authentically include a vision of meaningful success for *all*⁷³ students” and “in a system that still values vastly disparate social outcomes, there will never be enough room ‘at the top’” (p. 12). Depending upon the approach taken by educators and students, preparing for the global economy can be a means of “opening new educational and social possibilities” or can be a means of facilitating “mind control or exploitation” (p. 12). However, there are many aspects of the postFordism system that provide opportunities for critical educators. The New London Group (2000) notes, “[t]he new fast capitalist literature stresses adaptation to constant change through thinking and speaking for oneself; critique and empowerment; innovation and creativity; technical and systems thinking; and learning how to learn” (p. 12). Therefore, critical pedagogy (with its promotion of investigation, reflection, and action) does not have to be incompatible with preparing students for participating in the global economy.

For ELA teachers concerned with promoting the transformative power of language and with inclusive classroom practices that justly acknowledge students’ diverse abilities, aptitudes, and interests, globalization as well as advancements in media and communication technology may be seen as highly advantageous. Cope and Kalantzis (2000) recognize that ELA teachers are struggling to determine “[w]hat constitutes appropriate literacy teaching in the context of ever more critical factors of local diversity and global connectedness” while working “against the background cacophony of claims and counter claims about the canon of great literature, about grammar and about the need to get ‘back-to-basics’” (p. 3). However, they insist that “[c]ultural differences and rapidly shifting communications media [mean] that the very nature of the subject of literacy pedagogy [is] changing radically” (p. 5). They assert that the traditional view of

⁷³ Emphasis is mine.

literacy as decoding a print text is insufficient and ignores the fluid nature of knowledge and the transformative power of forms of representation. They propose a pedagogy of Multiliteracies, acknowledging multimodal forms of representation used by diverse cultural groups within “the multiplicity of communication channels and media” (p. 5).

According to Cope and Kalantzis (2000), “[a] pedagogy of Multiliteracies . . . focuses on modes of representation much broader than language alone” (p. 5). The New London Group (2000) concurs:

Now becoming increasingly important are modes of meaning other than Linguistic modes, including Visual Meanings (images, page layouts, screen formats); Audio Meaning (music sound effects); Gestural Meanings (body language, sensuality); Spatial Meanings (the meanings of environmental spaces, architectural spaces); and Multimodal Meanings [a combination of modes]. (p. 28)

The significance of particular modes of meaning may vary among cultures and individuals – some being more attuned to print, oracy, or visuals. Therefore, an inclusive pedagogy necessitates the acceptance that a comprehensive view of literacy acknowledges the diverse ways **students** make and represent meaning.

The New London Group (2000) asserts that hybridity and intertextuality are key concepts in understanding multiliteracies. Though identifying five modes of meaning (besides Multimodal), The New London Group (2000) suggests that “[i]n a profound sense, all meaning-making is Multimodal” (p. 29). For instance, in a conversation between acquaintances, communication depends as much upon body language and context (gestural and spatial modes) as it does upon tone of voice and the spoken word

(audio and linguistic modes). Moreover, emerging technological advances make it not only necessary to accept the hybridity of multimodal forms of meaning-making, but also make it easier to integrate them in many classrooms. For example, Kress (1998) notes, “contemporary technologies of page or text production make it easy to combine different modes of representation – image can be combined with language, sound can be added to image, movement of image is possible” (p. 56). Furthermore, the concept of hybridity recognizes the complexity of a student’s over-lapping cultures and identities and the ways in which a student makes and represents meaning within them. Intertextuality is another vital component of a multiliteracy pedagogy. The London Group (2000) writes,

[i]ntertextuality draws attention to the potentially complex ways in which meanings, such as linguistic meaning, are constituted through relationships to other texts, . . . , to other text types (discourse or genres), to other narratives, and other modes of meaning (such as visual design, architectonic or geographical positioning). Any text can be viewed historically in terms of the intertextual chains (historical series of texts) it draws upon, and in terms of the transformations it works upon them.

(p. 30)

Again, technological advances can be seen as a benefit in that they have the potential to expose students and teachers to an ever-increasing range of multimodal texts. Moreover, the access to texts from around the globe facilitates attempts to reflect upon the diverse ways various world cultures make meaning. Indeed, globalization and technicization provide incredible opportunities for teachers in Newfoundland and Labrador. However, teachers, students, and administrators of the educational system must become consciously

aware of the inequities existing in the system as well as of the competing interests served by the promotion of globalization and technicization and, as a result, take action to ensure the various needs of students in this province are met.

One of the primary areas of concern is the question of access to resources – both technical and human. As Barrell (2000) notes, “English classrooms can be technologically equipped very differently from place to place”, and “[r]ural and isolated schools seldom have equal electronic access, corporate sponsorship, and technically trained community resource people” (p. 47). To provide equitable opportunities for all students, this situation must change. It is imperative for the government to put its money where its mouth is. Government documents insist that formal education prepare students for the global electronic age (see Chapters Three and Four); therefore, the appropriate equipment and infrastructure must be supplied. Furthermore, even when the technological tools are in place, access is often hampered because of intensification and/or the teacher’s lack of familiarity with the technology. Rather than deskilling teachers and adding to their existing duties, the Department of Education must ensure that schools have qualified technicians available to each staff to provide expertise and assistance. Admittedly, there are such experts in the system; however, their limited numbers as well as their own teaching duties (in many cases) make it unrealistic that they become reliable and relatively consistent assets in many classrooms. This deficiency must be addressed.

Another important issue centres upon why globalization and technology must be integrated into our classrooms. Competing interests are reflected in the “skills mania” approach and the reactionary defensive position of those who view the inclusion of

technology in the English classroom as a threat to the supremacy of the written word and to the revered position of the canon of “the Great Tradition”. Other educators debate whether the purpose of education should be to prepare students for the workforce or to promote social justice. As always, dichotomies must be eyed with suspicion. As with notions of identity or multitudes of literacy, hybridity is a key concept in understanding the multiple goals of education. Must providing students with necessary skills for future employment necessitate a disregard for social justice? Such a binary notion borders on preposterous. Providing students with the necessary skills for future employment and participation in global technology is not a problem as long as these skills are embedded in a context that promotes critical thinking and encourages emancipation from social inequities. The New London Group (2000) maintains, “our role as teachers is not simply to be technocrats. It is not our job to produce docile, compliant workers. Students need also to develop the capacity to speak up, to negotiate, and to be able to engage critically with the conditions of their working lives” (p. 13).

Furthermore, the introduction of the literature of previously subjugated or excluded cultural voices, that is facilitated by the emergence of media and information technology, will not totally eradicate the literature of the “Great Tradition”. It merely reflects a healthy challenge to an elitist and exclusionary view of literacy by paving the way for a much more equitable and inclusive ELA classroom that not only allows for access to a wider range of “stories”, but also acknowledges multimodal forms through which humans make and represent meaning and facilitates a critical intertextual study of competing theories and ideologies. For example, the emerging concept of multiliteracies – necessitated by technicization and what Kress (1998) calls “the revolutionary effects of

the ‘Electronic Age’” (p. 75) – is conducive to the promotion of social justice as it provides opportunities to challenge the exclusionary traditional view of literacy:

The focus on language alone has meant neglect, even repression, of the potentials of representational and communicational modes in particular cultures; a repressive and systematic neglect of human potentials in many of these areas; Semiotic modes have different potentials, so that they afford different kinds of possibilities of human expression and engagement with the world, and through this differential engagement with the world, differential possibilities of development Or, to put it provocatively: the single, exclusive, intensive focus on written language has dampened the full development of all kinds of human potentials.

(Kress, 1998, p. 75)

Moreover, expanding “the canon” to include diverse forms of representation also promotes social justice by inviting multiple voices into the classroom. Barrell (2000) writes,

[a] wise and emancipatory application of technology in high schools could show broad, divergent views of the world, alternative information sources and opinions, and forms of entertainment. Ultimately, local culture(s) could regain their status and be seen as part of a collective cultural mosaic.

(p. 46)

However, ensuring that cultures “regain their status” requires more than an unquestioning acceptance of globalization and the integration of technology; again, a critical methodology is vital. Students and teachers in Newfoundland and Labrador will likely

discover that their “views of the world” and “forms of entertainment” do not enjoy equitable representation. However, in a classroom that promotes the critical investigation of and reflection on information and media technology, students and teachers may expose the fact that, as Barrell (2000) notes, “multinational-controlled media outlets and entertainment sources are imposing their worldview over regional values and limiting local sources of information and entertainment” (p. 46). From this point, teachers and students can negotiate the means through which they can begin to challenge inequities.⁷⁴

By adopting a pedagogy of critical literacy, ELA teachers and students in Newfoundland and Labrador can employ globalization and technicization to their advantage. As long as the government and the Department of Education do their job to ensure that the resources are available to all schools in the province, students and teachers have the *access* that is essential to mount any challenge against attempts to exploit them. The electronic multimedia age provides students and teachers with unprecedented access to a wide range of multimodal and multicultural texts and institutional resources. Though there are potential hazards associated with globalization and technicization, critically aware students and teachers can work to ensure that their approach fosters, as The New London Group (2000) suggests, “new educational and social possibilities” rather than “mind control and exploitation” (p. 12). In the process of exploring world views and socio-economic structures as well as reflecting on the relationships among them, our own

⁷⁴ Interestingly, in 2000, the CBC chose to incorporate its St. John’s based, one hour news program *Here and Now* into a new national program, *Canada Now*, in which local news was allotted a half hour. This occurred even after “the Newfoundland legislature unanimously approved a resolution calling on the CBC to spare the local supper-hour newscast” (*Broadcast dialogue*, May 4, 2000, p.3) and St. John’s East MP, Norman Doyle, announced in Parliament that “over 30,000 names on various petitions” indicated the displeasure of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians with the proposed change (Canada, June 7, 2000). However, disgruntled local viewers expressed their opinions clearly, and though it cannot be asserted as a certainty, it is likely that “local voices” made some contribution to the CBC’s decision to return *Here and Now* to its full one hour time slot in 2005.

schools are a good place to start. Furthermore, while “learning how to incorporate technology into classroom practices, teachers need to learn how to critically read and engage English language arts curriculum documents” (Barrell, 2000, p. 47). It is essential that, while we transform what it means to be literate in an interconnected and interdependent global village, we transform our schools to ensure that all voices are represented. Though “[w]e cannot remake the world through schooling . . . we can instantiate a vision through pedagogy that creates in microcosm a transformed set of relationships and possibilities for social futures; a vision that is lived in schools” (The New London Group, 2000, p. 19).

Theory and Practice

As educators, we have conscious and unconscious beliefs about the nature of teaching and learning. Furthermore, these beliefs or theories translate into practice in the classroom. However, there are many difficulties associated with the practice of teaching and learning theories. For instance, modifications in theories are not always followed by alterations in practice because the faith in and the comfort with familiar routines are often difficult to relinquish. Secondly, even when one attempts to change methodologies to coincide with emerging social and cognitive theories, institutional constraints may hinder progress. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, teachers and students often adhere to perceptions or theories of which they are not consciously aware. As always, it is important to investigate the relationships between theories and practices; to become aware of and to reflect upon our own perceptions and practices; and to act in ways that

reinforce theories and practices that are beneficial to the interests of students and to transform those that propagate discriminatory and unjust practices.

Two Theories of Teaching and Learning

The primary theories of cognition and learning that predominated when mass formal schooling was initiated in the 19th century may be categorized as complicated theories. These traditional views of cognition reflect the belief that knowledge is a thing to be acquired. Knowledge is external, fixed, objective, and fragmented. Learning consists of taking in pieces of information and is believed to progress through a predictable sequence of stages that can be objectively measured. These theories determine a methodology of teaching and learning. “[I]f knowledge is viewed as simply an external body of information independent of human beings, then the role of the teacher is to take this knowledge and insert it into the minds of students” (Kincheloe and Steinberg, 1999, p. 61). Therefore, the teacher’s role is to merely transmit the required information to passive students through the use of pre-planned, outcomes-based, subject-oriented, test-driven lesson planning and classroom management practices. The teacher is the authority, and the student is the submissive recipient. Assessments are standardized to ensure that learning out-comes are met at predictable, specific developmental stages. However, other theories of cognition have emerged to challenge the supremacy of complicated theories.

More recent discourses about cognition recognize that knowledge and learning are much more intricate. Complexity theories acknowledge that humans (as with most

universal phenomena) are much more complex, dynamic, and unpredictable than complicated theories imply. Consequently, there is a shift in the concepts of knowledge and of how learning takes place:

Complex theories of learning suggest that learning is not about acquiring or accumulating information. Rather, learning is principally a matter of keeping pace with one's evolving circumstances. The learning agent . . . is constantly revising its memories, its capacity for action its range of possibilities. Knowledge is contingent, contextual, and evolving; never absolute, universal, or fixed. (Davis *et al.* 2000, p. 78)

The recognition of the student as a "learning agent" and knowledge as "evolving" necessitates a revision of teaching and learning methodologies:

Viewing cognition as a process of knowledge production presages profound pedagogical changes. Teachers who frame cognition in this way see their role as creators of situations where student experiences could intersect with information gleaned from the academic disciplines. (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1999, p. 61)

Indeed, as students and teachers create and play a part in experiences that "intersect with information", they become participants in the educational process as "learning is . . . understood as a participation in the world, a co-evolution of knower and known that transforms both" (Davis *et al.*, 2000, p. 64). Complex theories promote a more holistic view of teaching and learning in which the learner's own experiences and actions are

essential in the learning process:

Instead of 'knowledge as object,' these theories suggest notions that are more toward 'knowledge as action.' That is, a body's knowledge might be thought to encompass the habits and behaviors out of which that body's character or integrity emerges. In this sense, *learning* is a process through which one becomes capable of more sophisticated, more flexible, more creative action. (Davis *et al.* 2000, p. 73)

This "more flexible" view of knowledge, in which learner experience and active participation is imperative, modifies the relationship between teacher and student. The hierarchy of the teacher expert and the student novice is recast as a more equitable structure supporting mutual participation and co-operation. Furthermore, flexibility also necessitates a challenge to standardized assessments that measure the achievement of a fictional norm. Complexity theories advocate the use of a wide variety of holistic and fluid assessment strategies, which reject notions of fixed or universal standards.

Furthermore, because "*learning* is a process" rather than a product, the developmental benchmarks of summative and absolute evaluation schemes seem irrelevant. However, though complex theories have emerged, educational practices still have a tendency to reflect an adherence to traditional complicated theories of cognition. This same tendency occurs in response to other educational paradigm shifts.

Challenges and Contradictions

As discussed in Chapter One, theories concerning curriculum development and the role of education – as well as the subject, English – have undergone dramatic shifts in thought over the last one hundred years. Early educational theories advocated the importance of preparing students to become productive, obedient, and patriotic citizens, contributing to the economic and political health of their nations. The multiple identities, experiences, and needs of the individual were subordinate to the common good and the needs of society. Formal education was to provide moral instruction and skills training. Early conceptions of literacy promoted “English as skills” and/or “English as the Great Literary Tradition”. The methodologies and assessment strategies associated with these paradigms largely coincide with complicated learning theories. However, these educational paradigms are challenged by others that focus more on the identities, experiences, and needs of the individual while challenging the conceptions of the common good and the social hierarchy in which the individual is subordinate. The perceived role of formal education is modified to advance the interests of the child and to promote social justice. Therefore, conceptions of literacy were reformulated to reflect a greater emphasis on “Progressive English” and “English as Critical Literacy”. The methodologies and assessment strategies of these paradigms basically adhere to those of complexity theories. However, as with shifts in theories of cognition, changes in thought concerning curriculum development and the role of education do not always guarantee adjustments in practice.

Though the current ELA foundation and curriculum documents reflect characteristics of complex learning theories, the focus on traditional instructional

strategies, course content, and assessment protocols that are more in line with complicated learning theories still dominates in many Newfoundland and Labrador classrooms. The *APEF ELA Foundation* (1996) and the ELA curriculum guides acknowledge that language learning is personal and intricately connected to the student's cultural and social situatedness. In fact, the *English 3201* curriculum guide encourages teachers to consider the question "What do students want to read?" (Newfoundland, June 2003, p. 17). Moreover, learning is accepted as "an *active* process of *constructing* meaning, drawing on all sources and *ways of knowing*"⁷⁵ (Atlantic, 1996, p. 37). The ELA documents also support social constructivist theories by proposing that students be given the opportunity to work collaboratively. In addition, the curriculum guide, *English 3201* endorses the importance of student talk: "talk is central to students' exploration, analysis, creation and critique of . . . information" (Newfoundland, June 2003, p. 14). It also recognizes the interconnectedness and interdependence of various forms of knowledge and states that students "should be encouraged to participate in interdisciplinary research and presentations" (p. 4). The *APEF ELA Foundation* document promotes an integrated and holistic approach to language studies while it recognizes the need for varied and flexible assessment strategies that are concerned with "the learning process itself, not limited to final products" (Atlantic, 1996, p. 37).

Yet, in classroom practices, an adherence to complicated learning theories persists. Generally, teachers prescribe the texts that students study, rather than having students make their own choices about what texts are relevant to them. Though there are occasions for cooperative, collaborative, and activity oriented learning experiences, the traditional instructional and classroom management structure – consisting of stationary

⁷⁵ The emphases placed on sections of this quotation are mine.

students (sitting in parallel rows of desks) passively listening to the teacher (standing at the front of the room) transmit information – provides a familiar comfort to teachers who feel unsettled by the perceived chaos and lack of control of methodologies that are more conducive to complex theories. Teachers do most of the talking while the students do most of the listening. Moreover, ELA courses are often divided into fragmented units of study, with little more than superficial attention being paid to integrating students' social and cultural concerns. Furthermore, though the *APEF ELA Foundation* document insists, “[t]ests play a minor role in the total assessment program” (Atlantic, 1996, p. 53), pen and paper tests are still a mainstay in most classrooms, and comprehensive, summative pen and paper tests are generally given a greater value than other forms of assessment concerning process. In addition, teachers (as well as many students and parents) are not only accustomed to but also often desire a final numerical grade that measures learning as a product. Again, though there has been an acknowledgement of changes in cognitive theories of teaching and learning, practices are slow to change. This is also true for reformulations in the goals of education and the duties of English as a subject.

Though recent ELA foundation and curriculum documents profess a respect for the needs of the individual student, a desire to challenge inequities, and a commitment to eliminate unjust policies, the practices in many Newfoundland and Labrador classrooms actually impede the success of these ideals. The *APEF ELA Foundation* (1996) document states, “[a]ll students are entitled to have their personal experiences and their racial and ethnocultural heritage valued within an environment that upholds the rights of each student and requires students to respect the rights of others” (Atlantic, 1996, p. 37). For many teachers, however, tailoring classroom activities to accommodate the “personal

experiences”, and “racial and ethnocultural heritage” of “all” students seems an overwhelming task at a time when Newfoundland and Labrador schools are becoming increasingly multicultural (see Chapter Three). Therefore, the tendency often remains to develop whole class learning activities and to teach to the fictional norm – which is, invariably, the norm of the dominant culture. The *APEF ELA Foundation* document also insists, “students need opportunities to . . . critically examine different experiences and perspectives within social and cultural contexts” (Atlantic, 1996, p. 42). Yet, for many ELA teachers, the examining of “social and cultural” issues is still perceived as the realm of the social studies teacher. Inexperienced with integrating socio-economic and cultural studies into the ELA classrooms, many teachers fail to incorporate the dramatic socio-economic, cultural, and environmental changes that are occurring within Newfoundland and Labrador (see Chapter Three) as part of their ELA curriculum. Furthermore, the *APEF ELA Foundation* document states, “students need opportunities to . . . challenge prejudice and discrimination which result in unequal opportunities for some members of society” (Atlantic, 1996, p. 42). Indeed the role of the educational system is to promote “ways to ensure that the [ELA] program at all levels is anti-discriminatory and reflective of a commitment to *redress*⁷⁶ educational inequities based on class, race, gender, ability or geography” (p.43). However, in practice, even when teachers and students critically read texts, the purpose is to “determine if the information and the way the information is presented are valid or reliable” (Newfoundland, June 2003, p. 15) more than it is to expose the injustices of taken for granted forms of knowledge or of the legitimacy of existing, hierarchical social structures. Furthermore, though lip service is given to exposing and challenging discriminatory policies, neither the *APEF ELA Foundation*

⁷⁶ Emphasis is mine.

document nor the *English 3201* curriculum guide contains practical guidance or suggestions for *how* to “redress educational inequities”. The element of agency is definitely lacking in many cases. Moreover, Kincheloe and Steinberg (1999) note that even when “educators speak of empowerment as a central goal”, they “often ignore the way power operates to subvert the empowerment of teachers and students” (p. 81). Unfortunately, the structure of the educational system itself is often the major stumbling block to “the empowerment of teachers and students” and to adapting practices more conducive to emerging cognitive and educational theories.

The limitations placed on students and teachers by the existing educational system hinders their ability to adopt practices that acknowledge complex learning theories and that promote the ideals of Progressive English or Critical literacy (see Chapters One and Four). There is a series of disconnects between stated goals and curriculum content and methodologies. ELA curriculum guides are extremely prescriptive – imposing a common curriculum, delineating minimum content requirements, presenting a canon of limited textual choices, and outlining specific expectations of learning outcomes and for student achievement. Furthermore, the system’s pervasive use of standardized tests,⁷⁷ to measure the achievement of students at key stages of their development and to hold teachers accountable, negate any professed acknowledgement of individual ways of learning or forms of knowledge and discourage teachers from challenging existing practices rather than “teaching to the test”. However, perhaps the greatest obstacle to achieving meaningful change is the fragmentary and isolationist approach to education – or what Graff (1986) refers to as the “field-coverage model” of education and of English studies.

⁷⁷ In Newfoundland and Labrador, comprehensive standardized tests for ELA students are administered in grades three, six, nine, and twelve.

Though Graff refers specifically to a university setting, the major points of his argument are pertinent to the entire educational system. Students and teachers (who were students themselves) appear to be at the mercy of a system which supports the belief that all aspects of a necessary education can be met if students, over a period of time, can “cover” all their fragmented, educational needs by attending isolated, educational institutions or classes that specialize in various areas. In secondary school, as in university, subjects are organized departmentally and are taught in isolation from one another. Consequently, it is less likely that a consideration of the economic, social, or historical context of the text, as anything more than a superficial establishment of background, will become an integral component of an ELA classroom. Furthermore, and especially significant for teacher education, the university also lacks meaningful opportunities for students to participate in interdisciplinary studies and often maintains a disconnect between theory and practice. For example, a prospective ELA teacher in Newfoundland and Labrador will likely leave high school with little – if any – exposure to theories of cognition or to literary theory and criticism. As an undergraduate, this student will study a variety of “English courses”, primarily divided into distinct categories according to genre, time period, or national identity. Consequently, Graff (1986) notes, “the way we organize and departmentalize literature is not only a crucial theoretical choice but one that largely determines our professional activity and the way students . . . see it or fail to see it” (p. 2061). Furthermore, although Corner Brook’s Sir Wilfred Grenfell College campus of Memorial University requires all English majors to complete at least one theory course, English 4105 (Memorial, 2006, p.89), English students at the St. John’s campus are not required to study literary theory or criticism

unless they are completing an Honours degree in English (pp. 171-172). Therefore, for many English students, the first exposure to theory may occur in an undergraduate education course. However, in undergraduate education courses, the study of theory is largely confined to theories of cognition and curriculum development – often in isolation from English as a subject or from historical and cultural studies. This “field-coverage model”, which Graff (1986) asserts “is neither self-evident nor inevitable” (p. 2062), is pervasive and is perhaps the most significant hurdle to be overcome in any attempt to reconcile theoretical developments with classroom practices. As products of the current system, teachers and students are often unaware of the theories they practice and promote. As it is crucial to investigate and reflect upon theories (perceptions) and practices in the process of transforming discriminatory and unjust practices, the existing educational system is in need of dramatic changes. Otherwise, educators, remaining unconscious of their own perceptions and the theories that potentially challenge them, are unlikely to integrate practices that are more consistent with complex learning theories and with the goal of creating ELA classrooms that are more than training grounds and/or sites of indoctrination to produce a civilized, obedient, skilled labour force.

The Possibilities

Clearly, the first step to reconciling the division between theory and practice is the reformulation of teacher education and of ELA programs. As Kincheloe and Steinberg (1999) note, “[t]eacher education [can] no longer separate technique from purpose, reducing teaching to a deskilled act of rule-following and concern with methodological

format” (p. 61). An examination of theory fosters a critical awareness of the relationships between professed goals and the realities of educational practices. It also provides students and teachers with the means of examining and reflecting upon their own theories and practices. Therefore, it is imperative that teachers and students are encouraged to participate in interdisciplinary courses of study that illustrate the interconnectness, the contradictions, and the interdependence of theories from currently isolated and fragmentary fields of study. Perhaps it is time to adopt a reformulation of English as a subject that is similar to Morgan’s (2000) concept of cultural studies (see Chapter One). For ELA teachers and students, a program in which English becomes a component of cultural studies affords the opportunity to recognize that texts are not created in a vacuum and that there is nothing to be gained by considering them in isolation from the historical, cultural, economic, and theoretical contexts in which they were created and in which they still exist. Furthermore, as Graff (1986) observes, it is only by allowing students to investigate and reflect upon points of conflict and consensus among various theories that they may participate in the debate and acquire a genuine understanding of them. That is not to say that differences among theories must be resolved; Graff (1986) insists that “[t]he unfortunate thing is not that our conflicts of method and ideology have often proved unresolvable but that we have been able to exploit so little of the potential educational value of our unresolved conflicts” (p. 2064). Indeed, recognizing the “unresolved conflicts” among competing theories is beneficial in any attempt to come to terms with the multifaceted relationships among various theories and practices. Perhaps the main reason for the persistence of these “unresolved conflicts” among diverse theories and practices is that, as many complex theories advocate, there is no one

correct answer or no best frame of perception. Perhaps the closest teachers and students can (or should) come to reconciling the disconnects between theory and practice is to reject binary – all or nothing – notions between cognitive theories and educational paradigms. An integrated, complex, cross-boundary approach to investigating hybrid theories and practices allows students and teachers to expose the intersections and contradictions in various theories and to challenge inappropriate and discriminatory elements of each while incorporating relevant and beneficial elements of each into their own conscious ways of thinking and acting. Consequently, embracing methodologies and practices characteristic of complex cognitive theories does not necessitate a whole scale rejection of all the foundations of complicated theories. For example, an adherence to complexity theories does not mean that lesson plans, instructional methodologies, and classroom management strategies become obsolete; they must merely be open to examination and criticism while being flexible enough to allow for the various needs of students. For example, Jackson (1990) identifies classroom routines and management strategies as part of the hidden or implicit curriculum which influences students' attitudes, values, and behaviours by tacitly reinforcing the legitimacy of hierarchical relations (between students and teachers) and following the rules established by those in power. In this way, according to Jackson, traditional education teaches students that success largely depends upon their ability to conform to institutional expectations that require them to be patient, resigned, and passive. There is a lot of truth to Jackson's statements. However, as Rorty (1996) writes, "[e]ven ardent radicals, for all their talk of 'education for freedom,' secretly hope that the elementary schools will teach the kids to wait their turn in line, not to shoot up in the john, [and] to obey the cop on the corner" (p.

209). The imperative in such cases, rather than absolutely rejecting particular practices and theories, is to critically examine, and, if necessary, challenge implicit and explicit curriculum to ascertain which theories and practices are conducive to meeting the diverse needs of students and to promoting equity. Clearly, the goal of educators should be the establishment of integrated, holistic, and balanced theories and practices.

This same aspiration of achieving a balance may be useful in establishing assessment strategies, and a critical pedagogy can be instrumental in this process. Though the current evaluation system must be challenged and changed, dichotomies are unnecessary. Educational goals that promote the diverse needs of the child and strive for social justice need not mean an acceptance of unbridled relativism. However, there is a serious need to reassess the current system's view of achievement standards. Though Portelli and Vibert (1995) acknowledge the concerns those in favour of standards have about the questionable practicality of maintaining different criteria of assessment and of the confusion that may be caused by having multiple, flexible means of assessment, Portelli⁷⁸ charges that "these objections ultimately divert the focus from what we consider to be crucial educational concerns, such as what values and whose values should direct the [assessment] practices, and why" (p. 12). Indeed, as Vibert contends, "educational standards are not 'natural', but socially constructed; therefore, we need to ask who constructed them for what reasons and whose values are included and excluded from them" (Portelli & Vibert, 1995, p. 14). Again, a critical pedagogy is valuable in exposing whose interests are being served by the current system of standardized assessment, in challenging inequitable assessment strategies, and in negotiating a process of

⁷⁸ Though the source is co-authored, the text consists of a dialogue between Portelli and Vibert; therefore, I identify the speaker of this speech rather than both participants of the dialogue.

transforming assessment procedures to make them more equitable, inclusive, and relevant to complex as well as to complicated theories of cognition.

These new procedures, allowing for diversity, need not be a complete rejection of any form of standardization. Indeed, Portelli and Vibert (1995) assert that an acceptance of plurality does not mean accepting all values without question and that there are some standards basic to human rights. Furthermore, it is not necessarily the utilization of standardized tests to indicate achievement that is the problem; it may be the narrow concept of "achievement" that needs to be re-evaluated. As the authors of *Adjusting the Course Part II* state,

[b]y emphasizing achievement a clear statement is being made that the primary function of the schools is intellectual development. This does not mean, however, that this goal is narrowly confined to attaining high scores on tests of basic skills. Achievement also means understanding broad concepts, ability to analyze and synthesize knowledge, ability to think critically, and understanding the processes involved in generating, locating and utilizing knowledge. (Government, February 1994, p. 2)

Perhaps, as part of the process of reconciling theory and practice, teachers and students may participate in a dialogue to negotiate the characteristics of new indicators of achievement that are more in line with the inclusive and eclectic objectives stated in the curriculum guides. Educators, striving for social justice and insisting upon the legitimacy of the diverse voices of their students, are also concerned with intellectual achievement. Therefore, broadening the conception of what constitutes achievement does not have to entail discarding all forms of standardization. However, there is a desperate need to

incorporate more flexible and varied forms of assessment, many of which acknowledge the importance of process as much as product and the validity of what Vibert labels “situational standards” as much as (if not more than) the so-called universal standards. Unfortunately, even when students and teachers negotiate more flexible and pluralistic assessment values and standards for classroom practices, they must still work within the institutional structure of bench mark criterion reference testing and 50% public exams. There is clearly a need to revamp this part of the educational system, to provide a more balanced and equitable system of assessment. The Department of Education must also acknowledge that standardized tests are neither the sole nor the primary arbiter of determining student achievement. Consequently, though the current practices of standardized assessments need not be totally abolished, they need revision to include additional achievement indicators, more in keeping with the ELA’s new cognitive and social theories and its more inclusive view of achievement.

Another important concern for Newfoundland and Labrador teachers is how to effectively reconcile the various goals of education and the ELA program. The *APEF ELA Foundation* (1996) document states that one of the purposes of developing the new ELA curriculum is to “meet the needs of both students and society” (Atlantic, 1996, p. 3). Increasingly, ELA teachers are confronted with the unenviable – yet potentially rewarding – task of promoting a complex array of educational goals. Again, it is essential to avoid dichotomies that insist upon adherence to one paradigm at the exclusion of another. The forms of English (discussed in Chapter One) of “English as skills”, “English as the Great Literary Tradition”, “Progressive English”, “Critical literary”, and “English as Cultural Studies” may all find a place within the ELA

classroom. However, of the five, “Critical literacy” may possess the most potential for achieving an equitable balance and providing students with educational opportunities that promote social justice and meet the needs of their informed participation in society. A critical examination of and reflection upon the “English as skills” form allows students to uncover elements of this paradigm that reinforce inequitable socio-economic hierarchies. However, once students become consciously aware of the potential pitfalls of the “English as skills” approach, they may adapt the skills they acquire to access the necessary tools to challenge inequitable and exclusionary social structures. Secondly, engaging the “English as the Great Literary Tradition” paradigm from a critical perspective, teachers and students may expose the exclusionary and elitist characteristics of the traditional canon, making explicit the absence of diverse voices. From this point, students and teachers may challenge the canon and participate in a transformative practice of establishing their own literary traditions. Furthermore, many of the basic principles of “Progressive English” are shared with “Critical literacy”. The importance of students’ various experiences, interests, aptitudes, and situatedness as well as the value of meaning-making strategies and the recognition of learning as a process are common to both paradigms. Similarly, the principles of “English as Cultural Studies” is conducive to a critical pedagogy (see Chapter One). Indeed, the emphasis of cultural studies upon an interdisciplinary approach to study and upon dissolving traditional cultural boundaries facilitates critical literacy’s goal of exposing inequitable power relations among diverse socio-economic and cultural groups in its oppositional stance to challenge those inequities. Therefore, there is little need of privileging one paradigm at the expense of the others. However, there is one key element that elevates critical literacy above the

other paradigms; this is its promotion of curriculum as praxis. Mark Smith (1996) distinguishes between the process and the praxis models of curriculum theory. He writes:

Curriculum as praxis is, in many respects, a development of the process model. While the process model is driven by general principles and places an emphasis on judgment and meaning making, it does not make explicit statements about the interests it serves. It may, for example, be used in such a way that does not make continual reference to collective human well-being and to the emancipation of the human spirit. The praxis model of curriculum theory and practice brings these to the centre of the process and makes an explicit commitment to emancipation. Thus action is not simply informed, it is also committed. It is praxis. (pp. 12-13)

It is this commitment to raising awareness of multiple theories, paradigms, and social structures as well as empowering students and teachers to participate in transformative methodologies, that has the most potential for exposing and reconciling the series of disconnects between theory and practice in the current educational system. Indeed, the very premise of critical literacy is to connect theory to informed, transformative practice.

A Final Thought

In September of 2001, a new senior high English language arts program was introduced in Newfoundland and Labrador. As Barrell (2000) notes, this new curriculum seems to constitute a dramatic paradigm shift for many of the province's ELA teachers. Fundamental to the new curriculum are expanded notions of text and broadened concepts

of what it means to be literate; an acknowledgement of the complexity of the learning process and of knowledge creation; a vast array of new instructional methodologies and assessment strategies; a recognition of the value of diversity; and calls for greater student voice. However, a study of the history of education and of English as a subject reveals that this “major paradigm shift” and the new ELA curriculum are neither as dramatic nor as new as they may appear. Educational theories and paradigms are dynamic. New ideologies and paradigms repeatedly emerge from previous ones and the dominance of one over the other swings back and forth, influenced by the political and social climates in which our schools exist.

Recalling that Newfoundland and Labrador’s early educational system was largely imported from England (see Chapter Two), it is interesting to note the shifts in the social and political climate of Britain and how those shifts are influencing current educational reform in that country. Woolf (April 30, 2007) reports on the current situation in England:

Children in secondary schools are to be taught ‘emotional intelligence’ as part of the national curriculum in an attempt to combat a growing tide of rudeness, violence and lack of respect.

With the debate about the lack of civility among young people reaching a new pitch, ministers are planning to roll out ‘social and emotional’ intelligence classes to help children to cope with frustration without resorting to violence or swearing. . . .

The new moves to instil good manners in young people is the latest attempt to deal with what many politicians and commentators bemoan as a

blight on British society, making streets, schools and communities unsafe and unpleasant. The worry is that children no longer have the authority figures to look up to and that the state has to an extent take on the responsibilities that belong to parent.

From September secondary school children will learn basic values and 'golden rules' such as: 'We are gentle, we are kind, we work hard, we look after property, we listen to people, we are honest, we do not hurt anybody.' (p. 16)

As is customary in the light of evolving paradigm shifts and educational reforms, there are critics of Britain's new "Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning Classes (Seal)" and fears that this focus will detract from an emphasis "on the core subjects of academic education" (p.16). However, referring to "Seal" as part of an evolving paradigm may be a misnomer – perhaps it is more reflective of a return to the promotion of a moral ideology (see Chapter One). To be sure, "Seal" is reminiscent of Raikes' 18th century Sunday schools in London (see Chapter Two). The purpose of these schools was to transform the "swearing, rudeness, and unruliness" of poor children who "let out all their rowdiness and mischief" on Sundays – the only day they did not have to work in factories (Christian, 2007). Apparently, educational reform has come full circle. Yet, while debates rage on as to the validity of the educational system's current concentration on the moral behaviour of its youth, it is unlikely that British schools will discontinue their efforts to prepare students for the technical global economy. Meanwhile, those who are embroiled in the arguments sometimes miss the most important thing: that is that debate

does occur.

For years, educational theorists have debated the principles associated with various educational paradigms as well as with the multiple purposes of education and the study of English. The debate is not the problem; traditionally, the problem has been that many teachers and students have remained unaware of these debates. Therefore, educational practices have often lagged far behind developments in educational theory, and, unfortunately, teachers have often been complicit in reproducing ideologies of which they have not been consciously aware. Perhaps, the introduction of this new ELA curriculum, that explicitly outlines necessary changes in teaching and learning practices, may motivate teachers and students to question the basis of and theories behind these “shifts” and behind our own ways of seeing the world and acting within it.

The new ELA curriculum, which requires teachers to modify traditional teaching practices, has the potential not only to change the way teachers act, but also to expose and alter the way we think. Indeed, to facilitate the transformations required by the new curriculum, educational stakeholders must become critical readers, and our text is the world, this includes the school as well as our own personal theories and practices. Indeed, we, too, are texts. The result of our critical reflection and the deconstruction of the beliefs that are embedded in our own educational theories and how they determine our behaviour as teachers may be more than a little disconcerting. We may discover that, as noted in Chapter One, “English teaching has sometimes been on the wrong side of the struggle for self-determination” (Willinsky, 2000, p. 3), and we have been unconsciously complicit in reinforcing inequitable power relations by creating hegemony.

Adopting a pedagogy of critical literacy may be the first step to finding our way to the correct side of that “struggle for self-determination”. Indeed, critical literacy, as a

pedagogy, is an essential attribute in any classroom aspiring to foster an environment in which all students have equitable opportunities for success. Students and teachers, in a mutually negotiated, shared effort, must investigate curriculum documents, prescribed texts, the existing educational structures, and our own participation in them. No doubt, we will discover the complexity of the sometimes complementary and sometimes contradictory, hybrid ideologies at work in our lives. Annette Kolodny (2001) compares negotiating a path through literary theory, practice, and policy to walking through a minefield. Though she is specifically referring to feminist literary criticism, her comment is apt for any critical study of theory, practice, and policy that exposes and challenges a literary program that employs implicit as well as explicit forces to maintain the strength of the dominant ideology. Like walking through a minefield, the practice of critical literacy requires us to stray from a linear path, to become more consciously aware of the consequences of our actions, and to improvise. Furthermore, the practice of critical literacy is sometimes a very uncomfortable process, but it does provide the catalyst for positive change as it encourages teachers and students to examine their own ideologies and those of others, while, at the same time, empowering students and teachers to question and to act upon this new information.

Admittedly, critical literacy's potential as an agent of change is hampered by systemic obstacles in educational structures, by practices that are resistant to change, and by inconsistencies and contradictions existing within curriculum documents and educational policies. Yet, this does not justify our complacency or complicity in maintaining the status quo. Delpit (2003), citing Herb Kolh's "Stupidity and Tears", comments on the

terrible dilemma [teachers] have allowed ourselves to be drawn into – being forced to act in ways that defy our common sense. [Kolh] differentiates between plain stupidity (the kind of stupidity inherent in some of the decisions made by individual teachers as well as systems) and the kind of stupidity that is a ‘form of institutional and social coercion that traps people into acting in ways which they consider to be stupid and, in the context of teachers, counter to the work they feel they must do to help their students.’ (p. 14)

As teachers, we must not allow systemic obstacles to prevent us from adopting the critical pedagogy that will allow us and our students to recognize and challenge these unjust structures. Indeed, a critical pedagogy is essential to initiate this change as it enlightens and empowers both teachers, who are part of the system, and students, who may one day control the system. The educational theories and practices that are introduced and promoted in our classrooms today, will influence the educational system of the future; therefore, as indicated in Delpit’s (2003) title, educators can be “‘Seed People’ Growing a New Future”.

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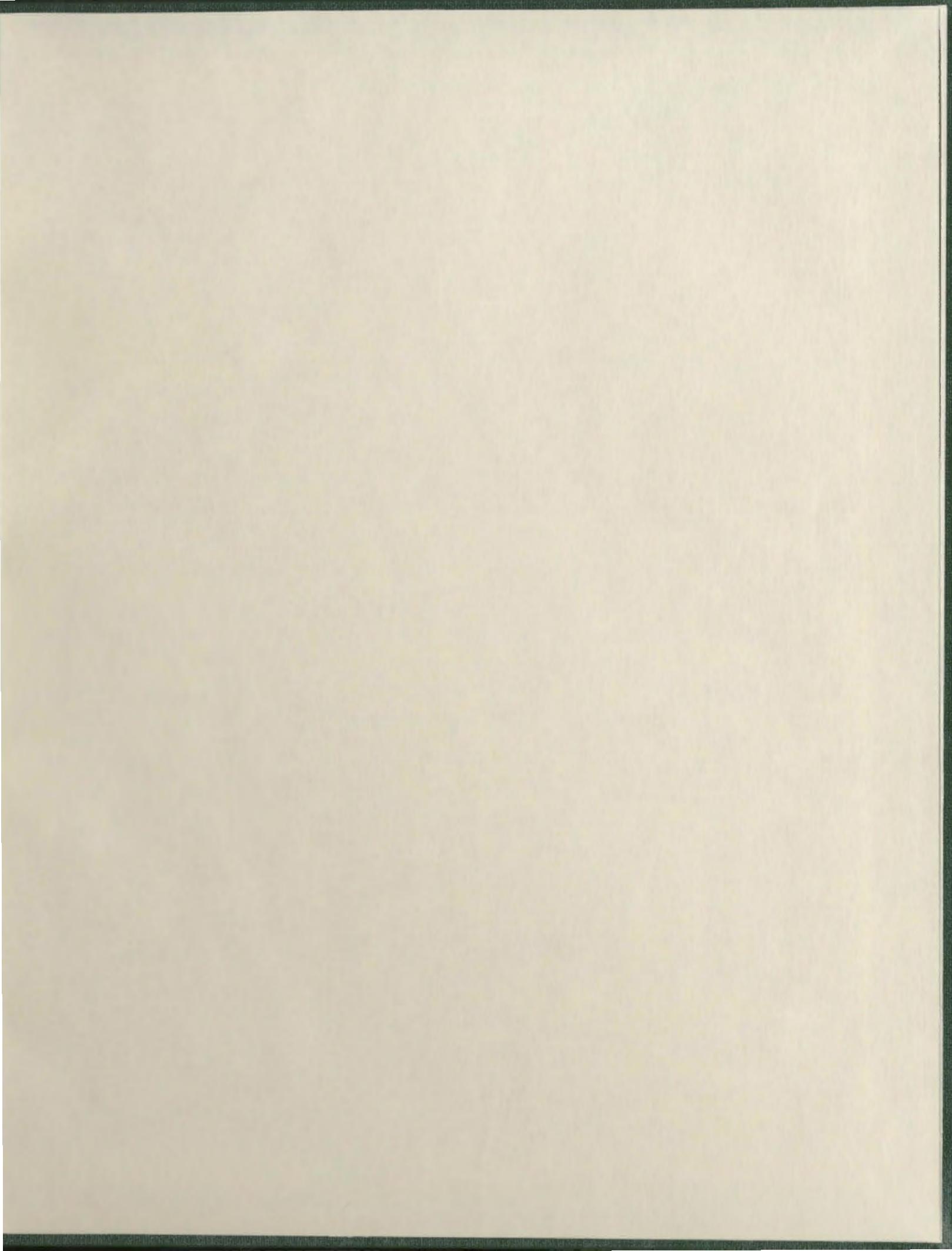
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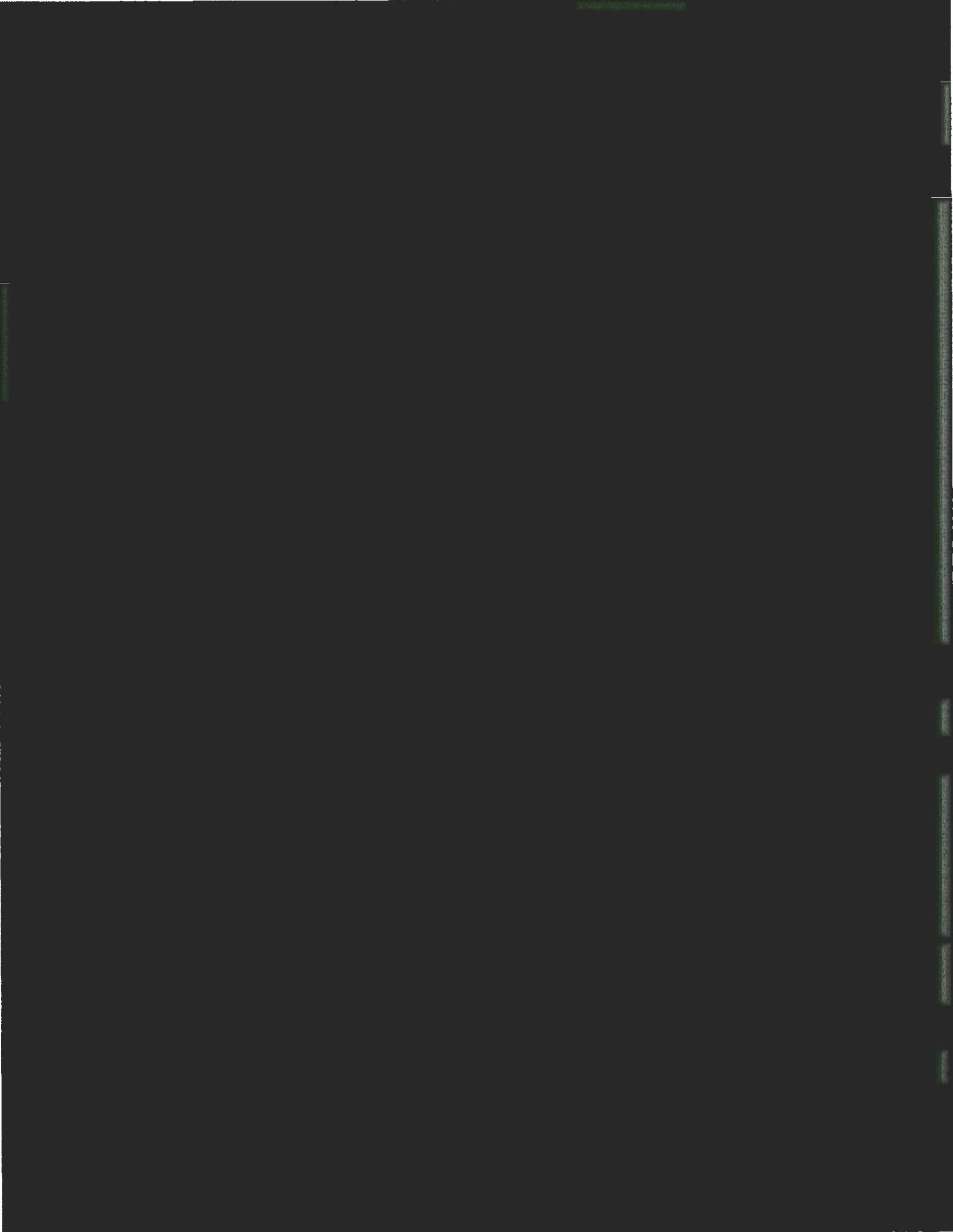
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that existing economic disparities can be challenged. Furthermore, the traditional assembly-line approach in education and the conventional “skills” that were required to meet the needs of the “old” capitalist system are not adequate to address the demands of what the New London Group (2000) refers to as the “postFordism” or “fast capitalist” era of the twenty-first century (see Chapter Five). Indeed, the necessary skills required by fast capitalism are some of the same skills students may use to challenge exclusionary or unjust policies that threaten democratic ideals (see Chapter Five). Again, teachers must approach the pros and cons of the new curriculum by trying to establish a precarious balance between complex and, sometimes, contradictory educational goals.

Complex Balance

However, before this precarious balance can be established in the ELA classroom, teachers will have to adjust to the expanding conception of literacy and to reconcile what some may feel is the demotion of “literature from its place of privilege” (Barrell, 2000, p. 36). According to Barrell and Hammett (2000), “curriculum planners in all subject areas” have “embarked on broad reconceptions of their disciplines” and, for

secondary English language arts (ELA) planners this [means] a new understanding of the meaning of literacy in a rapidly changing world.

English curriculum specialists began by acknowledging the globalization of the publishing, communications, information, media, and entertainment industries. They saw the increased use of technology in the workplace and in the daily lives of Canadians. They understood the