#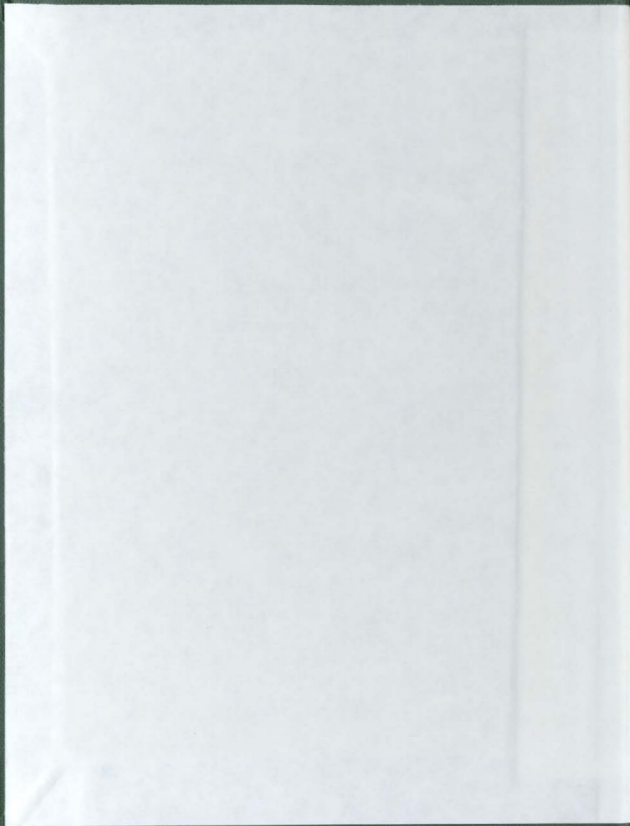 DECENTRALIZATION OF EDUCATIONAL DECISION-MAKING IN THE NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR EDUCATION SYSTEM REFORM PROCESS: ILLUSION OR REALITY

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Decentralization of Educational Decision-Making in the Newfoundland and Labrador Education System Reform Process: Illusion or Reality

By

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ABSTRACT

Decentralized Decision-Making (DDM) in educational governance has risen to the forefront of the education reform agenda. Autonomy of educational decision-making at the local school site crescendos with each sounding call for greater stakeholder involvement and the capacity toward more meaningful voice for change. This thesis provides a critical analysis on the degree of decentralized educational decision-making and the nature of the legislated role of the School Council, the intended DDM model, in the Newfoundland and Labrador education reform process.

Primary sources of data collected and analysed in the study included the Newfoundland education reform documents, more specifically provincial legislation and government policy statements relevant to the study. Other sources of data included Hansard discourse, Ministerial statements, notes taken during a key informant presentation and follow-up meeting, print and television media, and personal communications.

The researcher's examination of the relevant government documents and current literature pertinent to the research study took the form of a critical analysis and exegesis emanating from an empirical phenomenological perspective. Using Ethnograph 4.0, a data retrieval computer software program, the researcher deconstructed various terms and elaborative text contained in the gamut of

governmental policy statements and documents on the reform of educational decision-making and DDM.

A DDM Critical Discourse Analytical Typology (DDM CDAT) was compiled and created by the researcher, based on the theoretical framework revealed in the literature. The DDM CDAT was used to examine the segments of data provided by the Ethnograph single code discourse cross-searches. A revised DDM CDAT was constructed as a result of the study to reflect the study's findings and possible contribution to the research base.

Subsequent developments in government policy show that School Councils have been deemed, by legislation, as *advisory* bodies for the Newfoundland and Labrador school system and have not been given decentralized power and authority.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated

in loving memory to my brother

Ron Kelly

(1966-1995)

"I must study politics and war

that my sons may have liberty

to study mathematics and

philosophy...in order to give their

children a right to study

painting, poetry, and music."

John Adams (1735-1826)

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Background to the Study

Not since the Royal Commission of the 1960s has the education system of Newfoundland and Labrador seen such a dramatic effort to implement wide-range sweeping reform. In August 1990, a Royal Commission of Inquiry was mandated by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council to conduct an inquiry into the delivery of programs and services for primary, elementary, and secondary levels of education in this province. Our Children, Our Future , the Royal Commission Final Report, was submitted to government in March, 1992 (Royal Commission Final Report, 1992).

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, without hesitation, expediently adopted the Commission Report as their catalytic engine for reform. The government's swift response to the Royal Commission's final report, by way of the documents Adjusting the Course I (1993) and II (1994), is an overwhelming endorsement for educational reform. The course mapped and charted by the Liberal government under Premier Clyde Wells strongly evokes exegesis, probing, analysis, and recommendations from a critical perspective. Many questions, ideological in origin, must be asked in order to "dig beneath the surface of appearances" (Doyle, 1994, p. 6).

The following critical questions served as the primary research questions, framed the context, and paved the way for the thesis' research, illumination, and analysis:

1. Is the proposed transference of power and authority for educational decision-making, from the current centralized structure to a decentralized one, an illusion or a reality?

2. How much of the decision-making will be actually decentralized? Which specific areas in education will be and should be decentralized to the local levels? What types of decisions will fall within each front line level?

3. Will the theory of decentralization, as presented in Adjusting the Course I and II (1993, 1994) and called for in the Commission Report, Our Children, Our Future (1992), translate into relevant, meaningful practice at the school and classroom level?

This study will employ a macro to a micro lens in order to focus critically on the ideological underpinnings that, according to Fairclough (1995), show that "ideology is located, then, both in structures which constitute the outcomes of past events and the conditions for current events, and in events themselves as they reproduce and transform their conditioning structures" (p. 72). The proposed context of decentralized decision-making will be studied on two levels. The macro level, the wider political arena (Mazzoni, 1991), and a micro level, the

local school site. Several secondary questions, which arise from and inform the primary research questions, will be discussed later in this chapter.

Cody (1994) presents a detailed analysis of the political arena of a Royal Commission and its role in educational decision-making. This thesis study is an effort to add to the existing research base. The next section presents a brief quasi-chronological political overview, post-Royal Commission,1993-1997 inclusive, to outline, what Bolman and Deal (1991) refer to as, the *political framework* within the political arena that comprises the "...underlying political forces that set the stage for conflict and power plays..." (p. 186).

Post-Royal Commission political arena framework: 1993-1996.

Under the former administration of then Honourable Clyde Wells, Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador from 1988-1996, a Royal Commission Implementation Secretariat was formed. The Secretariat was headed by Dr. Robert Crocker, former Dean of the Faculty of Education at Memorial University of Newfoundland, for the express purpose of implementing the Commission recommendations. The Secretariat has published several policy documents outlining the route for the province's educational reform.

Government's proposed decentralized decision-making process will take form through the legislated requirement of the establishment and formation of

a School Council at each school in the province by the end of the 1997-98 school year (Newfoundland Government, Department of Education, Working Together For Excellence, 1996). By providing for the creation of School Councils in each school, government claims to implement a recommendation of the Royal Commission Report: to provide for increased local *involvement* in educational decision-making (Royal Commission Final Report, Our Children, Our Future, 1992). It is necessary to examine, critically, the nature of the term "involvement" in an effort to determine the illusion or reality of DDM in light of the proposed School Council format in the form of secondary research questions:

4. What will be the jurisdiction and decision-making level of the proposed School Council? Will School Councils be advisory or full decision-making in structure and design? Which decision-making structure will allow School Councils to effect substantive meaningful change at the school level? How will the proposed School Council model differ and substantially improve on the existing PTA model?

5. Will School Councils, the proposed principal vehicle of decentralized decision-making, have exclusive jurisdiction over their mandated areas?

6. What will be the relationship of the School Council to the existing education governance structures? Will School Councils be dictated to or

intimidated by the current levels of bureaucracy, namely School Boards and the Department of Education?

7. Will School Councils prove beneficial to the Principal and faculty of each school in collaboratively achieving the intended goals or will School Councils simply provide another bureaucratic level of political rhetoric and impediment to the education process?

8. What will be the parameters of the decentralized role of School Councils in contributing to the improvement of teaching and learning in the respective school(s)?

9. In what ways will School Councils be able to exercise authority in bringing about school improvement, higher levels of student achievement, and academic performance?

10. Is government shirking some of its fiscal responsibility for educational funding by legislating the raising of school funds as part of the School Council's mandate? Will clear boundaries be established to define the degree of fiscal responsibility School Councils will be required to assume?

11. What decision-making role will School Councils play in curriculum, staffing assignments, interpretation of Board policy, and development of local school policy?

12.   How will the School Council, through a decentralized decision-making role, help or hinder the Principal's role as instructional leader in curriculum implementation at the school level?

The secondary questions listed above inform the primary research questions that formed the backdrop for the researcher's critical exegetic study on the proposed decentralization of educational decision-making in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Political Rite of Passage. Brian Tobin, who succeeded Clyde Wells as government and Liberal party leader, was originally first sworn in as Newfoundland's sixth Premier on January 26,1996. Tobin was officially elected as Premier by the Newfoundland electorate on February 19, 1996. Roger Grimes, a cabinet minister in the previous administration, as well as a former teacher and past president of the Newfoundland Teachers Association union, was appointed the new Minister of Education in the Tobin cabinet.

The Tobin administration has pledged to move forward with the reform efforts outlined by its predecessor. Many of the Royal Commission's recommendations, Government believed, could not be implemented until the question of denominational education and Term 17 of the Canadian Constitution had been amended to allow the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to

assume full administrative control of the provincial education system. To avoid a constitutional legal challenge from denominational stakeholders, the Tobin administration proceeded to act on and implement, through legislation, only those Royal Commission recommendations on which consensus was reached by all parties. Reduction of the province's school boards received consensus. The time line for the introduction of legislation to reduce the 27 provincial school boards to ten regional boards was moved up from September 1996 to July 1996. Government's intention was to have the 10 new regional boards operational by December 1996, with full transfer of administration from the old to the new boards by January 1997. Appendix A contains a listing of the 10 new regional school districts.

The issue of the denominational role in education, still enveloping and dominating the reform context, remained unsettled. Tobin had to deal with the denominational resistance on a front-line level. Considerable political pressure was exerted on several levels by strongly backed clerical and lay-formed lobby groups. Locally, the Alliance for Choice in Education, the Catholic Women's League, the Knights of Columbus, the Yes Means Yes Committee, the Parents and Students for Gonzaga, the Avalon Consolidated School Board, and the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers Association (NLTA) were some of the most vocal (The Evening Telegram, 1996, October 16). Newspaper and local

news broadcasts of the day reported that both the clerical and government sides had national affiliation that provided widespread support in the launch of a federal political lobbying campaign on all Members of the House of Commons and Senate.

In the Fall of 1995, Newfoundland decided in a provincial referendum, by a marginal lead vote, that schools were to become interdenominational rather that denominational. For this change to occur the provincial government in November 1995 sought federal approval of a Constitutional Amendment to restrict denominational administrative rights of the province's education system as outlined in Term 17 of the Canadian Constitution. The Amendment had been voted on and passed by the House of Commons in June 1996. Motion 3243, <u>An Amendment to the Canadian Constitution, Section 43 of the Constitution Act (1982)</u> had been forwarded to Senate for its approval. Senate decided to hold public legal and constitutional hearings in Ottawa and Newfoundland during July 1996. The surge of newspaper accounts during the winter and summer of 1996 echoed government's sentiment for a speedy federal approval of their provincial education reform plan for Newfoundland. Such was not to be the case, for Tobin's administration found themselves in somewhat of an awkward and precarious moment as this latest political vignette of their education reform agenda unfolded.

The Tobin administration found itself pitted against its national party and federal political allies. Premier Tobin, in an interview with the The Evening Telegram (May 7, 1996) expressed disillusionment and frustration with the federal government's unnecessary delay in reading and passing the Motion. In a similar vein, Premier Tobin, in a CBC television interview on the same day, reiterated his government's firm commitment to move forward with educational reform despite the current Term 17 situation.

Even though the House of Commons had passed the Term 17 Amendment resolution, the Term 17 Amendment request still required Senate approval before it could become reality. The Amendment request was deferred by Senate veto for a six-month period. While the Senate process was underway, the Newfoundland government proceeded with the structural portion of their reform agenda through the reduction of the twenty-seven provincial school boards to ten regional boards. Considerable downsizing of central board personnel, board offices, and facilities occurred. As a result, many jobs were lost through attrition, redundancy, and elimination.

Senate returned the Term 17 Amendment Motion to the House of Commons for reintroduction, reading, and voting on December 4, 1996. The House passed a Resolution to the original Amendment on that day and overrode the Senate recommendation of many senators who felt minority religious rights

were being compromised. The province of Newfoundland and Labrador attained its transfer of central powers. Administrative powers have now been transferred from the churches to the government (<u>Ministerial Statement</u>, 1996).

Government has significantly reduced the number of school boards and reassigned some staff to schools. The goal at this juncture clearly is cost efficiency, first and foremost. Will the Tobin administration redirect to the school classroom level the monetary savings achieved through administrative cuts and downsizing? As enshrouding and predominantly forefront as the issues of denominational administrative control, Term 17, and cost efficiency were on government's education reform agenda, other reforms such as the pilot School Council project - part of the purpose for this thesis study - proceeded on course.

Purpose of the Study

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has decided its reform process mandate will attain cost efficiency and improved system effectiveness in program delivery. In government's view, education reform will bring about higher levels of student achievement and significantly increase the province's ability to meet its fiscal policies for the future economy of the province (<u>Adjusting the Course I</u>, 1993).

Collins (1995) states that "in most western industrialized countries during the 1990's...there has been almost universal agreement that education is in crisis and reform is needed" (p. 6). Adjusting the Course I (1993) and II (1994) sees the urgency of educational reform in this province as an economic one. All subsequent policy statements on educational reform focus on a restructured education system designed on the basis of attaining economic prosperity as one of its primary goals. The view of the Wells administration was that the future economy and wealth of the province is directly linked to educational reform (Adjusting the Course II, pp. 4-5). In government's view, educational reform must attain both the significant improvement of student achievement in math, science, and language arts; and a cost effective and fiscally efficient education system (Adjusting the Course II, 1994, p. 5).

To effect increased achievement in the *core subjects* (Adjusting the Course II, 1994, p. ii) of math, science, and language arts, the government agrees that parental involvement is crucial (Policy Statement on School Councils, 1995, p. 1). The government further acknowledges the Royal Commission recommendation that a collaborative partnership of all major stakeholders must take place to ensure student achievement. The Royal Commission report (1992) called for "a new partnership in education" among parents, teachers, and the local school community to ensure student

achievement and success (p. 222). Eaton (1996), in discussing "the context for changing school governance and decision-making," thinks that "School Councils are a partnership approach to making decisions at a local level which can be situated within the broader context of a decentralization phenomenon..." (p. 37).

Hilary Rodham Clinton, in a televised address to the 1996 National Democratic Convention, stated her views on this partnership between the major stakeholders in the education of all children by citing the African Proverb "it takes an entire village to raise a child" (National Democratic Convention Address, 1996). To achieve this end of partnered collaboration, the Newfoundland government is essentially proposing a decentralization of educational decision-making to the local level. Such a devolution of decision-making will encompass new roles for the whole school community through the School Council model. The concepts of decentralization and the School Council are explored in the literature review in Chapter 2.

In its purest form, would a decentralization of educational decision-making be heralded by all major stakeholders in the province? Murphy (1991) contends that there is a recognition on the part of various governments that " a more decentralized governance structure is needed so that schools, as unique entities, can offer their local communities the services, programs, and activities they desire" (p. 63). To what extent will the Government of

Newfoundland and Labrador decentralize educational decision-making in the province? In terms of educational decision-making, what did the Royal Commission recommend to government?

The Royal Commission (1992) report states that "Recent studies show that schools flourish when all groups are brought together in the pursuit of a common cause, and are given the *power* to initiate change..." (p. 222). Will the School Council be given the *necessary* power, authority, and *level* of decision-making to carry out a meaningful role that will effect substantial positive change at the school level? Decentralization attempts by some governments have been viewed as a contradiction. Much of the critical literature on decentralization points to a trend of further recentralization of power in an organization's attempt to decentralize (Slater, 1993; Stinette, 1993; Weiler, 1990; Wotherspoon, 1991).

Is the trend of increased centralization of educational decision-making, (Stinette, 1993), occurring in Newfoundland's education reform decentralization efforts? Where on a centralization/decentralization continuum does the government's decentralized decision-making efforts fall? In terms of decentralized decision-making, is one particular ideological vision dominating and shaping political discourse on educational governance in Newfoundland's education reform documents?

As educational reforms are made public, the agenda of self-interest groups becomes increasingly apparent. One blatant example of a continuation of non-consultative centralized governmental decision-making is the prioritization of curricular subjects as core, secondary core, and non-core curriculum (Adjusting the Course II, 1994, p. ii). In effect government is establishing a curriculum hierarchy (Barlow & Robertson, 1994; Cantwell, 1995; Kelly, 1995;). One relevant critical question at the forefront of such government action is whether or not a particular subject should receive priority over another in the school curriculum? Government did, through its appointed Royal Commission, receive briefs from a variety of major stakeholders in Newfoundland's education system, yet chose to ignore the views of certain groups such as the arts sector and music education. Not one recommendation or reference to the arts is made by the final report of the Williams Commission to government (Cantwell, 1995, p. i).

Wide-sweeping changes of education reform to the province's educational curriculum, for example, would not become legislated reality without considerable public debate and discussion. Seemingly irreversible decisions are being made by the centralized structures that might significantly limit any autonomy for the major stakeholders. Hence the need is imperative for a critical analysis and study of the illusion or reality of the decentralization of educational

decision-making, along with proposed School Council format as the principal structure for decentralized decision-making.

This research study focuses on an examination of the School Council as the proposed autonomous structure through which government makes the claim that increased local involvement in educational decision-making will be facilitated through greater local control of schools. In government's view, as perceived from the claims of the education reform documents, higher levels of student achievement will be the result of increased local involvement of parents and the entire school community (Adjusting the Course I, 1993; Adjusting the Course II, 1994). Issues of education reform, areas of authoritative jurisdiction, government educational reform policy, and legislation such as the revised Schools Act, (1996), as they related to the School Council, embodied the research study's focus. This focus allowed the researcher to examine and analyse, from a critical perspective, government's claim that a decentralized educational decision-making process will emerge through the School Council governance structure.

Significance of the Study

The research study derived its impetus from the imperative for a critical examination of government's educational reform agenda as revealed in

Adjusting the Course I (1993) and II (1994). Critical research must be conducted on the timely issues of education reform placed before all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians by the government.

Harvey (1990), as cited in Doyle (1995), outlines the basic elements of critical research to include abstraction, totality, praxis, ideology, history, and structure. The starting point for critical educational research is the probing and examining of "abstract generalizations" (Doyle 1995, p. 8). As a starting point *critical questions*, that move from the *abstract* to the *concrete*, are essential in a critical study (Doyle, 1995).

While change is inevitable in any government process and agenda, the collective consensus of concerns and interests of all stakeholders should dictate government's final course of action in implementing educational reform. The word, reform, itself must be critically analyzed. Whose values and beliefs are spearheading Adjusting the Course II (1994)? Why has the Royal Commission chosen to ignore the views and beliefs of many while selectively addressing those of a particular interest group? Has the public bought into the very same mindset of the business sector that has found a sympathetic ear in government - a call for a 'back to the basics' philosophy of education (Barlow & Robertson, 1994).

The implementation of the Royal Commission's recommendations will substantially change and irrevocably impact on the education system in Newfoundland and Labrador. Such wide-ranging reform to the province's education system should not be allowed unchallenged passage into legislated existence without critical analysis and exegesis from at least one sector of the major stakeholders.

The researcher's literature search has revealed that little scholarly research has been produced on the subject of decentralization and educational reform of *Newfoundland's education system*. A void exists in graduate thesis research on government's claim that a decentralized process of educational decision-making will prevail as a result of its educational reform efforts. Furthermore, it is the researcher's intention that this thesis study will serve as a catalyst for subsequent studies to test the various claims put forth by government's educational reform agenda for the Newfoundland and Labrador education system.

Limitation of the Study

The subject of decentralization in education governance is inherently complex and intricate. The focus of the study is to establish the degree of decentralized educational decision-making for the post-reform education

governance structure for Newfoundland and Labrador. Through ideological discursive deconstruction and reconstruction of government's education reform policy, the researcher focuses on the proposed governance structure: *the School Council*. The decentralization of educational decision-making, through the claimed autonomous structure of the School Council, will be studied.

According to current literature, decentralization of educational decision-making can be achieved through various approaches. The literature identifies decentralized approaches that claim to create new, as well as similar, forms and models of educational governance. These approaches include some of or any combination of the following: School-Based Management, Site-Based Management, Shared Decision-Making, Charter schools, Magnet schools, and the School Council. Charter schools and Magnet schools, viewed as recent and more radical forms of decentralization, are not relevant to the context of the thesis study. This study most specifically focuses on the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's claim to decentralize educational decision-making through the Site-Based Decision-Making (SBDM)/Shared Decision-Making (SDM) approach and the School Council Model (Collins, 1995).

Summary

Chapter 1 presented an overview of the historical and political backdrop that set the contextual stage for the thesis study. Post-Royal Commission, the Newfoundland government embarked on setting a plan and possible timeline for implementation of some of the Williams Report recommendations. As time passed, the Commission recommendations would see an election change in government players not political parties. The Decentralized Decision-Making and School Council portion of the educational reform agenda continued onward in piloted form.

The timely issue of educational decision-making has received widespread attention in the literature. A discussion of the relevant literature for the thesis study is presented next in Chapter 2.

CHAPTER 2

Review Of Related Literature

Introduction

The vast quantity of literature currently available on the reform of education systems, their governance structures, and approaches towards educational decision-making demonstrates the multifaceted nature and inherent complexity of the reform movement of the 1980s to the present. Many forums, Royal Commissions, and educational reform initiatives have identified the need to restructure education governance and decision-making through some form and degree of decentralization (Hannaway & Carnoy, 1993). The nature of decentralization, the primary concept under study, necessitates a macro to micro critical approach to all facets of the study beginning with the literature review. In the course of the literature review, many critical questions arise and are posed sequentially to assist the reader in gaining a deeper, richer understanding of the critical literature concepts that inform the thesis. The thesis research questions, which are under study, are dealt with in Chapter 3.

The researcher's literature review begins with a survey on the question of why is educational reform, and, more specifically, in what form, shape, and degree, is decentralized education governance receiving top priority on

government agendas. To posit a literature-supported rationale for the trend toward decentralization of education decision-making, it is essential to examine the current trend of a decentralization of decision-making in the Canadian federal governance structure. The researcher briefly outlines some of the paradigms and ideological positions currently influencing the decentralization of Canadian federal and provincial government programs, services, and fiscal policy decisions. Also highlighted are the consequential effects of such ideology on provincial education reform policy and initiatives in the area of educational governance and decision-making. An initial question to consider is: What has escalated the public outcry for change in the decision-making structure within educational governance?

Further in this chapter the researcher provides a discussion of the major concepts of decentralized decision-making in education relevant to the research study. While the literature was found to survey the concept of decentralization on many levels, the decentralization of educational decision-making, the focus of the research study, is primarily reviewed. The researcher's intention then is to discuss the tenets of decentralized decision-making within educational governance and the context of the research study. Through what kind of governance structure(s) can DDM be achieved?

The School Council is currently the most prevalent governance model for DDM in education systems worldwide (Collins, 1995; Peterson del Mar, 1994; Rideout, 1995; Stinette, 1993). School Councils and the nature and distribution of DDM via the approaches of School-Based Management and Site-Based Decision-Making will be presented to highlight the current trends and themes of the educational governance reform literature. In doing so, the researcher will frame the discussion of the current literature within the concepts of DDM, School Council, SBM, and SBDM.

The literature review contains three sections. Section 1 focuses on an investigation of the dominant ideology aiding government in its legitimation of education reform policy and discourse. Current paradigms shaping education reform and government fiscal *'restructuring'* are discussed. Section 2 surveys the concepts of decentralization and decentralized decision-making (DDM) in education governance reform. Section 3 seeks to establish where the literature stands on the concept of the School Council as a DDM governance structure. Several studies in other education systems that test the School Council as a DDM structure are highlighted.

To frame the literature relevant to the researcher's thesis, the following questions were used as a guideline:

Section 1: In what context is a paradigmatic shifting in Canadian political and social policy affecting Newfoundland's education reform initiatives? Is a similar pattern of ideological underpinnings threading provincial education reform across Canada?

Section 2: What definitions does the literature provide on the decentralization of educational decision-making, SBM, SBDM, and the School Council? What are the tenets of DDM? Does the literature outline stakeholders' roles and parameters of power and authority in a DDM school district?

Section 3: What is the historical and structural backdrop that has escalated the public outcry for increased local involvement in education governance? Can the School Council structure facilitate greater stakeholder involvement and/or roles of authority for education stakeholders? Is the level of stakeholder satisfaction with SBM, SDM, and the School Council highlighted? What examples are provided to illustrate success or failure rates of DDM through the School Council?

Paradigmatic Shifting, Ideological Legitimacy, and Education Reform

Changing social, political, economic, cultural, and historical trends bring about major shifts in paradigm (Doyle, 1994 and 1995). Bennis & Nanus (1985), as cited by First (1992), view the current paradigm shift in the following manner:

"The fact is that as difficult, frustrating and fearful as these times are, they are also interesting, catalytic and crucial...A new paradigm is being born" (p. 5). First (1992) sees the paradigm shift on a global scale: "As the world view shifts to the new paradigm complex, societal and educational issues are generated" (p. 5). The researcher cites John Naisbett's (1982) *Megatrends* to indicate the parameters that define and shape the current paradigm shift. Naisbitt (1982) describes a society once totally reliant on an industrial-based economy that has been transformed into a technologically-driven, information-hungry society that places high demands on decentralization and participatory democracy.

Bennis & Nanus, as cited by First (1992), view the paradigm shift as "a major turning point in history, [where some new height of vision is sought, where some fundamental redefinitions are required, where our table of values have to be reviewed]" (p. 5). Evidence of this global shift in paradigm is spiralling its effect towards the local community.

Barlow & Campbell (1995) posit a cogent and well-founded case on the magnitude of effects this global shift will have on Canadian society. In their view the globalization of the economy is agenda-driven by an elitist group: the wealthy corporate sector, most specifically the huge transnational corporations.

According to Barlow & Campbell (1995), a neo-liberalist ideology shapes government and business discourse in policy rationale and formulation.

Dominant language given by the authors to exemplify the ideologically-based control mechanisms of current public policy include "deregulation, downsizing, limited government, reinvented government, competitiveness, globalization, structural adjustment, inevitability, fiscal responsibility, tight money, sound currency, and personal responsibility" (p. 237). Barlow (1997) contends that the *cultural devastation* of such governmental ideological discourse on all of society is *imminent*.

Apple (1995) indicates that such discourse is not only permeating education but that the language of " bureaucracy, of the colonization of all of our lives by the metaphors of markets, profit, the accountant's bottom line..." (p. xv), is defining a "...wider set of ideological commitments" (p. ix). Corporate lobbying of government has been identified as the key towards disenfranchising government's role in social program spending and crown corporations by successfully convincing governments to abandon the policies that might protect and attempt to equalize the collective good of society's majority by promotion of the free market; a privatization agenda is openly challenged by many as culturally repressive and class dominant (Apple, 1995; Barlow, 1997; Barlow & Campbell, 1995; Barlow & Robertson, 1994; Giroux, 1981; Maynes, 1996; Watkins, 1983).

Considerable pressure has been exerted on public policy by the Business Council on National Issues (BCNI), a lobby group whose membership includes corporate giants and "family empires - the Bronfmans, the Thomsons, the Irvings, Conrad Black, Paul Desmarais..." (Barlow & Campbell, 1995, p. 43). Governments at all levels experience the weighted influence of the BCNI, given that the "corporate sector [under the umbrella of the BCNI] dominates the myriad business organizations that seek to influence public policy - from broad-based organizations such as chambers of commerce and boards of trade, to sectoral organizations from banking and insurance to forest products, chemicals, and computers" (Barlow and Campbell, p. 43).

Governments at all levels have zeroed in on social program spending as their target for fiscal reform (Barlow & Robertson, 1994; CCSD, 1996; Maynes, 1996). Alberta and more recently Ontario have wielded the sharpest and deepest cuts in social program spending of all the Canadian provinces (Maynes, 1996). Initial analysis of federal and provincial budget reports by governments in power for the last decade indicate that the cuts do not appear to be the agenda of one political stripe, for the federal and the provincial Liberal and Progressive Conservative parties place top priority on deficit reduction through decreased social spending and public service cuts (Locke, 1997). What

is the underlying rationale for the federal government's inability to maintain social program funding levels of the 1970s?

Apple (1995) and Maynes (1996a) speak candidly to the effects of the "New Right" ideology influencing Canadian social policy and the subsequent federal fiscal policy formulation (Maynes, 1996a, p. 12). The "New Right" has been defined by Davies (1991) as " the entire collection of conservative and neo-liberal movements which have grown up in Europe and North America since about 1960..." (p. 187). Robertson (1993) states that the New Right is "...usually applied to the ultra-conservative movement in the USA which came to political prominence around the time of Ronald Reagan's election to the presidency in 1980..." (p. 348).

Apple states that "a new alliance has been formed, one with increasing power in social and educational policy" (p. viii). Apple goes on to explain that "this power bloc combines business with the New Right, with neoconservative intellectuals...it aims to provide the educational conditions believed necessary for increasing our international competitiveness, profit, and discipline..." (p. ix). The ideology that shapes government policy is tantamount to its current fiscal course. Maynes (1996) states that:

> what is relevant is the definition of the new right which we hear
> from our politicians, and which we are experiencing. The most

common theme in this definition is pragmatic and is evoked when politicians speak of being forced to the right by huge deficits (p. 13).

Maynes (1996) lends support to the argument by Barlow & Robertson (1994) that governments have lost their collective ability to maintain and control a fair, equitable, and balanced personal and corporate federal taxation system. Rather than admit to such a loss of corporate tax revenue, governments have turned to an ideological mindset based on increased consumer taxation, social program cuts, and deficit reduction to achieve their fiscal goals (Locke, 1997).

Transnational corporations are dictating government fiscal agenda at a time when Canada's social spending is dropping rapidly while its personal taxation level has risen dramatically (Barlow & Campbell, 1995; Barlow & Robertson, 1994; CCSD, 1996; CCSD, 1984; Maynes, 1996; Teeple, 1995). Historically, the Liberal Party of Canada has had a vocally strong base of members supportive of social policy. This base represents the social conscience of the party and serves to balance the corporate elitist agenda found at times dominating current party policy formulation and direction (Barlow & Campbell, 1995).

In their discussion and view of the Liberal Budget (February 1995) and subsequent abandonment of Red Book election promises (Barlow & Campbell,

1995), state that it is a "strange irony that the Liberals would deliver a budget that would, like no other before it, diminish the ability of the federal government to be an active force for economic and social development in Canada" (pp. 126-7). Considerable effort is being exerted by groups and agencies to illustrate, for governments, the reality of their current fiscal course.

The Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD) has endeavoured to keep before the federal government the devastating effects of the continual erosion of Canada's social programs on the nation's most vulnerable: its children. In its 1996 report to government entitled, <u>The Progress of Canada's Children</u>, the CCSD highlighted both the accomplishments and shortfalls of Canada's progress in terms of the provision and standard of social programs for its children. Steven Lewis, Deputy Executive Director of United Nations International Children's Education Fund (UNICEF), offers the following summative commentary on the CCSD report:

> <u>The Progress of Canada's Children 1996</u> identifies Canada as a
> country of enormous riches that is still short-changing too many of
> its children...This is not an issue of politics or ideology; people of
> all political stripes want what is best for their children. The issue
> is the obligation of Canada's government to fashion and enforce

better social and economic policies - policies that...put children at
the heart of our country's priorities (p. 4).

Invariably, government discourse and language solidify and legitimate
their ideologic position on fiscal restraint and deficit reduction in the public mind.
For example, Alberta's premier Ralph Klein has been re-elected essentially on
a "keeping the house in order" platform. Klein's deficit reductionary agenda,
represented by his analogous reference to a house, seems overwhelmingly
endorsed by the Alberta electorate as Klein's recent 1997 majority win would
suggest.

Maynes (1996a) states that it is language such as "workfare" that is the
"logic-in-use in most policy-making arenas in Canada" (p. 12). Maynes points
out that such language, formative of the federal and provincial policy discourse,
is accepted by Canadians in large measure as a necessary evil in deficit
reduction through less social spending and downsizing of government services
and personnel.

Armed with the skill of rhetoric and the ideological persuasion of the *new
right*, Ralph Klein revealed the "stay the course" direction his new government
will maintain by reiterating his analogous reference to the purchase and
maintenance of a house. In response to a question posed by the media, Klein's
logic for his government's fiscal restraint is formulated on an analogy to a

person's ability to purchase and maintain the size of dwelling to which that individual's income and budget can comfortably afford. *Small government* rather than big government, along with fiscal prudence rather than increased public spending, is seen by Klein as maintaining the *house* government can comfortably afford.

Locke (1997) disclaims such discourse as an inadequate and misleading rationale for a newly elected premier to adopt, given that it does not seem to serve as a justification of the record high profits of multinationals when unemployment and welfare levels are also record high in many of Canada's provinces. Locke's (1997) position is congruent with the view of Barlow & Campbell (1995), who argue that social spending in Canada, as a proportion of federal spending and Gross National Product (GNP), is significantly lower than in most OECD countries.

Many would argue that Klein's *small government* ideology is representative of the power, domination, and subordinating effect such language holds and exudes. Such language has the power to persuade the public to buy into government's fiscal policies for reduced social programs at a time when, internationally, the growing problem of transnational corporate fiscal control is stifling any federal government leverage to maintain Canada's social fabric and cultural values (Apple, 1995; Barlow, 1997 cited in Graham, 1997; Barlow &

Campbell, 1995; Calvert, 1993; Kennedy, 1996; Locke, 1997; Maynes, 1996; Teeple, 1995).

Maynes (1996) quotes a recent study by the Fraser Institute (1995) to emphasize the point that Canadians on average do not adhere to the New Right ideology of deficit reduction, minimal government, and reduced social spending at a cost of *detrimental erosion* of Canadian social programs. Both Maynes (1996) and Barlow (1995) pose a similar question: Are Canadians fully informed as to the real nature of the uncontrollable deficit and to federal government rationale for reducing federal government transfer payments to the provincial governments?

"Most Canadians have been misinformed by politicians" (Barlow, 1995). As reported by Barlow (1995) and cited by Maynes (1996), federal finance minister Paul Martin, when questioned sequentially by Barlow, did admit that the federal deficit was not caused by social spending. Barlow, then countering with the question as to why social programs are taking the largest hit, states that she did not receive a response from the Minister of Finance as he was called away and the meeting ended (Maynes, 1996). Barlow has established that the federal government is well aware of the stronghold its free trade agreement, North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and relaxed corporate tax

regulations have bestowed upon multinational and transnational corporations (Maynes, 1996).

The reduction in collection of corporate taxes, the transborder migratory freedom of multinational corporations, and consequent job losses, reduced wages, and lost federal corporate tax revenues have left the federal and provincial governments in a position of enormous vulnerability (Barlow & Campbell, 1995; Maynes, 1996). Their response has been to regain some semblance of control by looking inward to: reduce the deficit by slashing social programs; and consequently at the federal level to lower transfer equalization payments to the provinces. In doing so, the federal government is further compounding the problem by bowing to the corporate stronghold *'elitist'* New Right ideology (Maynes, 1996).

Maynes (1996) postulates that the days of multinational "allegiances," in the role of good corporate employer citizens to nations, have come to an abrupt halt. The international playing field of the global market has set a globally competitive climate that allows transnational corporations to "...move their production units to the country that offers them the most. For transnationals, 'the most' means the fewest regulations, the lowest wages, and the lowest corporate taxes " (Maynes, 1996, p. 14).

Barlow & Robertson (1994) refer to government fiscal action to date as "restructuring from the Right" (p. i). Governments, at all levels have abandoned the increase of corporate taxation as a means of revenue generation. Instead, the deficit reductionary ideology placed before Canadians, is currently expressed, in both federal and provincial budgetary agendas (Locke, 1997; Barlow & Robertson, 1994; Barlow, 1995; Maynes, 1996; Barlow & Campbell, 1995).

Provincial governments throughout Canada are struggling to adapt to these changes in the global economy through internal reorganization, restructuring, and deficit reductionary measures (Treasury Board Statement, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador 1995, p. 3-4). During the Wells administration, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador had attempted to respond to the national and global paradigm shift through its *Strategic Economic Plan* and the creation of an *Economic Recovery Commission (ERC)*. Tobin's government eliminated the ERC, retained the EDGE program, and created a new provincial Department of Rural Development to develop Newfoundland's economy (Throne Speech, 1996).

The EDGE program essentially provides reduced taxation as an incentive for a ten year period, to attract companies to set up operation in Newfoundland, if certain criteria such as local job creation, are met. Such a move is

representative of similar responses by other provinces to attract transnational corporations to operate in their respective area.

What effect will the political and fiscal shift in paradigm have on Canadian education, and on Newfoundland's education system in particular? As noted in Chapter 1, the assumption has been made that education systems are in crisis and in need of reform. Maynes (1996b) puts forward the idea that "the claim is simply that perceived crisis in public education is an illusion that has been created to serve political purposes" (p. 11). Maynes then paraphrases a statement by Ontario's Minister of Education, John Snobelen, "that it would be useful to invent a crisis in education in order to justify educational reform" (p. 11). Maynes identifies the common features of education reform agendas as those that are based on the need to eradicate illiteracy, and to reduce the proportion of high school dropouts versus graduates and underachievement by *international comparisons*. Maynes contends that data, of an extremely high proportion required to substantiate education reform agendas, does not exist to "support their claims" (p. 11).

Barlow & Robertson (1994) have countered the education reformist arguments by illuminating what they see as the "assault on Canadian public education" (p.i). The hidden agenda buried beneath government ideology is fleshed out by Barlow & Robertson, and also by Barlow & Campbell (1995).

Two brief political vignettes, chosen by the researcher, illustrate government attempts to mask downsizing, reduce the deficit, and further centralize power.

Political "egg-on-face" has been experienced by Newfoundland's former Minister of Education Chris Decker in trying to cite data to support their respective positions on educational reform. Decker, in addressing the International Mathematics Education Conference held in St. John's in 1995, berated the province's denominational education system by specific reference to his paper trail of supposed "data" to support one of his claims, low mathematics achievement standing by Newfoundland students (Participant, International Mathematics Education Conference, 1995).

Less than a year later, Roger Grimes, the new Minister of Education, released the results of the Third International Mathematics and Science Study. The study focused on Grade 8 students. The Minister indicated that Newfoundland Grade 8 students' performance indicate that "there has been considerable improvement in mathematics and science achievement since 13-year old Newfoundland students last participated in international testing in mathematics and science in 1991" (Ministerial Statement, Third International Mathematics and Science Study, 1996). Newfoundland students scored higher than the provinces of Ontario and New Brunswick (Ministerial Statement, 1996). The Minister went on to report that "in mathematics, Canadian students did as

well or better than students in 30 countries, with a score of 59. Newfoundland

had a score of 56...[and ranked higher than the countries of]...Australia, United

States, Germany, New Zealand, Ireland, Scotland, and England" (Ministerial

Statement, 1996).

Austin Hawley, a school principal who participated in the conference,

wrote the following response in a letter to Chris Decker:

> Ironically, Mr. Decker, your distasteful after dinner diatribe on
>
> denominational education and our Mathematical standing in the
>
> country were also a highlight of the conference. As teachers we
>
> were once again amazed at your lack of insight into what is
>
> appropriate and acceptable at an event of this nature.   As
>
> Newfoundlanders we were embarrassed that you would use this
>
> setting to rail against the denominational system and recycle your
>
> referendum rhetoric (p. 3).

Another revealing political vignette that demonstrates the lack of concrete

research to substantiate government educational reform through fiscal reduction

is summarized by Maynes (1996a):

> The manner in which Premier Klein rationalized cutting
>
> kindergarten in Alberta would have been amusing if the result had
>
> not been so ominous. He began by claiming that he had research

to demonstrate that children could do as well with half the kindergarten they had in the past. When asked to produce this research, he sent his bureaucrats out to find it. I guess he's not accustomed to having his bluff called. Of course they could find no such research. He confessed, but still claimed to be correct because there was no research to demonstrate that what was achieved in 400 hours of kindergarten could not be achieved in 200 hours! What he could not achieve in smoke, he achieved with mirrors! (p.18).

With the ability to influence and ultimately control government fiscal agenda, business will be able to wield considerable influence on policy formulation in many areas of education (Barlow & Robertson, 1994; Maynes, 1996; Calvert, 1993). The role of business and management theory has risen to the forefront in educational thought and government agendas (Calvert, 1993; Wotherspoon, 1991; Barlow & Robertson, 1994 and 1995). The *back to the basics, global competition, and free trade* principles define and influence much of current philosophy and ideology demonstrating government economic policies at all levels (Barlow & Robertson, 1994).

Governments are embracing the ideology that equates economic success with educational achievement (Barlow & Robertson, 1994). Language has

become a powerful and persuasive tool for both political corporate-hired lobbyists and for the politicians themselves whose ideology is inevitably translated into government policy. Bearce et al, as cited by Chapman (1994), sums up the change in ideological discourse shaping government education reform agendas by stating:

> In recent years those connected with education have grown used to the words efficiency, effectiveness, excellence, and equity - as though the four E's have replaced the four R's. Even so the vocabulary signals a profound shift, for it means that the contributions which education makes to the country's productivity, its competitiveness in international trade, its social stability and its political competence has at least been recognized. Unless education performs the country cannot prosper (p. 2504).

The reader is referred to Cody (1994), The Role of a Royal Commission in Educational Decision-making, for further discussion on the four E's discourse and government ideological embracing of human capital theory for education. For an in-depth analysis of the impact of the North American Free Trade Agreement, (NAFTA), on Canadian education, the researcher recommends Calvert's Pandora's Box: Corporate Power, Free Trade, And Canadian Education (1993).

Increased student achievement and decreased education funding of educational resources are viewed as being incompatible and paradoxical. Terms such as fiscal restructuring, downsizing, and adjustments continue to dominate government discourse. Immense literature disputes the achievement equation; the 'do more with less' idea (Barlow & Robertson, 1994; CCSD, 1996; NLTA, 1993, and 1994; Mayne, 1996; Wotherspoon, 1991). The political era of Reagan and Bush, former United States presidents, saw the infusion of additional funding for educational resources as unnecessary (Fowler, 1995). The improvement of education systems from within seemed to be the dominant theme (Fowler, 1995). Hence the transformation and subsequent reform of education systems worldwide would take place through economic rationalization (Barlow & Robertson, 1994; Calvert, 1993; Kennedy, 1996; Teeple, 1995; Wotherspoon, 1991).

Wotherspoon (1991) states that "educational reorganization is presented by business and political leaders as a necessary component in Canada's struggle for continued social and economic survival" (p. 16). Wotherspoon states that "the message is clear - education and other social services are deemed to be expendable, and need to be cut back, in the face of what has come to be defined as the growing need for Canada to streamline its economy

to compete in an international setting driven by rapid change and high technology" (p. 21).

The shift in paradigm defining the federal Liberal government's social and fiscal policies cannot mask its spiralling social and fiscal effects on the local level couched in the language of global competition. As the provinces experience reduced federal transfer payments for education and other social programs, the inward turn to *reform* the *expendable* features of provincial programs is too great to resist the fiscal chopping block.

In view of the shift in paradigm, the education system of this province will be substantially reformed. Government intends to reorganize and restructure educational governance and decision-making in Newfoundland's education system (Adjusting the Course I, 1993; and II, 1994). Government's intent to restructure is based on attaining both cost efficiency and system effectiveness (Adjusting the Course I, 1993; and II, 1994). In attempting to achieve fiscal and structural reform, will government's restructuring of educational governance put more educational decision-making at the local level?

The literature on the decentralization of educational decision-making was reviewed to establish the theoretical framework for finding possible answers to the research questions under study. The following list of pertinent questions guided the researcher's initial literature review on the decentralization of

educational decision-making: What are the basic tenets of a decentralized educational decision-making structure? How has DDM been achieved by other education systems? Does the literature indicate the degree of decentralized and centralized decision-making that has emerged from education reform in other systems?

Decentralized Decision-Making In Education

Decentralization: A Precursor. The literature provides several definitions of decentralization and its relevance to educational decision-making. In its glossary of terms, Education Week (1991) provides the following definition of decentralization: "In education, the term is most frequently used to describe the transfer of school policy making authority from the federal to the state [provincial] level, or the transfer of decision-making authority from the state level to districts or schools" (p. 1).

The literature has relative consensus in the definition put forth by Brown (1990) and (1994). Decentralization by definition refers to a "devolution of authority from a higher level of government, such as a department of education..., to a lower organizational level, such as individual schools" (Brown, 1994, p. 1407); it essentially means removing some or all power from the centre

to facilitate lower level decision-making, usually at the school-community level, in some or all decisional areas related to school-based decision- making. Some common examples suggested by the literature include resource selection and provision, curriculum, staffing, budgeting, and school policy formulation (Brown, 1990 and 1994; Dixon, 1992; Elmore, 1993; Rogers, 1992).

There are some theorists who view decentralization efforts by governments in terms of the broader contexts of political and social dynamics shaping educational reform. Slater (1993) contends that "the most important and significant fact about centralization and decentralization is that they are about power and its distribution (p. 175). Weiler (1990) maintains that decentralization of educational decision-making is embraced by governments in times of great educational change as a means to manage conflict, thereby allowing the "state to diffuse the sources of conflict, and to provide the additional layers of insulation between them and the rest of the system" (p. 440). Slater (1993) provides another rationale for government's use of centralization and decentralization as a way to "rationalize discourse" in an effort towards "obscuring the presence of power" and further centralizing power at the top (p. 176). In this manner Slater views government discourse on centralization and decentralization as an attempt to "buffer power's irrational effects...[and

to]...concentrate power without making the implications of this power apparent" (p. 177).

Lunenburg (1995) views power as a corollary to decentralized decision-making in education. He states that "decentralization is systematically dispersing the power and decision-making throughout the school district...[whereas] ...centralization is systematically concentrating the power and authority near the top, or in the head of a school (the principal) or school district (the superintendent)" (p. 54). The redistribution of decision-making indicates a transfer of power and authority among the levels of an organization (Bolman & Deal, 1991; Brown, 1994; Lunenburg, 1995;). Restructuring education governance calls for a reorganization of educational decision-making in a broader context. Educational restructuring addresses two rationales of decentralization identified in the literature as political decentralization and administrative decentralization (Brown, 1990; Laugo, 1995; Zimet, 1973).

Political decentralization occurs when the boundaries of educational decision-making are extended and broadened to include stakeholders not currently a part of that decision-making arena (Zimet, 1973). Rogers (1992) states that "political decentralization moves decision-making authority <u>outside</u> of the system to an elected body whereas administrative decentralization refers to decision-making authority delegated to subordinates <u>within</u> a system" (p. 58).

Political decentralization is based on the rationale that the arena of power can be widened or shortened with the goal of either "maintaining or extending political power (Lauglo & McLean, 1985). The authors draw the conclusion that "educational decentralization may be a means for those who grant or demand power to extend their political influence or diffuse political opposition" (p. 9).

According to Lauglo & McLean (1985), administratively rationalized decentralization takes place because of efficiency of goal achievement; and also because "the means rather than the ends... are the focus" (p. 9). These authors indicate that administrative decentralization is employed when it is deemed that greater goal efficiency cannot be attained through "centralized control" (p. 9).

Lauglo & McLean (1985) posit a third type of rationality for decentralization: "ideological" (p. 9). Ideologically, governments are proposing increased parental involvement in educational decision-making as a recognition of the significant role parents can play in contributing to increased student achievement. Does this recognition foreshadow the Newfoundland government's rationale for a decentralization of educational decision-making? What are the reasons documented in the literature for decentralizing educational decision-making?

Hanson (1991), in citing Morphet et al, speaks to a rationale for

why certain decisions should be decentralized or centralized: (1) Those things should be done centrally that do not require or involve local initiative and responsibility and can be done more efficiently and economically on a centralized basis; (2) Those things should be decentralized and carried out on a local level which require decisions relating particularly to local needs and which, if done centrally, would prevent or limit desirable initiative and handicap the development of effective local leadership and responsibility" (p. 32). Internationally, what developments are currently underway in the decentralization of educational decision-making?

International developments in DDM. North American and European countries are now embracing, to varying degrees, some or all of the original tenets of decentralized decision-making originally pioneered in Australia and New Zealand. Worldwide, the trend toward developing and adopting decentralized decision-making models of education governance systems is forefront in education reform efforts on an international scale (Beare and Boyd, 1993; Caldwell, 1989; Chapman, 1994). Internationally, the demand for stakeholder involvement in local educational decision-making has been a headliner on political agendas for the past two decades (Cody, 1994; House, 1992 and 1995; Weiler 1990). Politicians and their representative parties have

heard a resounding call from parents, teachers, administrators, and communities for local control of education (House, 1995). In countries such as Argentina and Spain, the call for democratic access and governance of their education systems has been unrelenting (Hanson, 1995; Hanson & Ulrich, 1994). The efforts of the Argentinians and the Spanish in effecting a shift from absolute centralized government decision-making, as an extreme polarization on the centralization-decentralization continuum, to a more equitable, balanced decisional structure - not only in their education system but within state government itself - is indicative of the never ending struggle for bottom-up grassroots participatory democracy (Hanson, 1995; Hanson & Ulrich, 1994).

The literature predominantly illustrates a continued drive among stakeholders in education for greater local level participation in educational decision-making. Parents, students, principals, teachers, business leaders, and members of the local community are expressing higher levels of interest in obtaining a greater role in educational decision-making and governance (House, 1995; Walsh, 1995).

Local school management is now one of the major developments of education reform worldwide. The trend towards self-management and decentralized decision-making at the individual school site is occurring in such countries as Finland, Denmark, Sweden, New Zealand, Spain, the United

Kingdom, and the United States (Beare & Boyd, 1993; Brown, 1990; Chapman, 1994; Levin & Young, 1994; Swanson, 1993). Researchers have found similarities among these countries that are attempting to decentralize educational decision-making.

Beare & Boyd (1993) list the following as recurrent themes of international developments in decentralized decision-making: freedom from the constraints and distance of large bureaucratic central boards; alteration of educational governance structures; and adoption of some form of School-based Management. Many countries have embraced these developments in some form and degree. England, by far, has the most decentralized system of education governance on a national scale to date (Beare & Boyd, 1993).

The quest for decentralized decision-making in education, while unwavering and resolute, is "marked by paradox" (Caldwell, 1989, p. 3). Literature of immense international scope on the concept of decentralization and its pendulum stance on the centralization-decentralization continuum of educational governance is extensive (Brown, 1990; Caldwell, 1989; Chalough, 1992; Chapman, 1994; Chapman & Boyd, 1986; Conyers, 1984; Hanson, 1994; Lauglo, 1995, Lauglo & McLean, 1985; Murphy, 1989; Murphy, 1991; Weiler, 1990;).

Chapman (1994) found two major international education governance trends for decentralization: the local school site is the focal point for successful implementation of reform policy on educational decision-making; and a new role for the school board as "the centre for the source of objectives and guidelines, and...where quality control is monitored" (p. 2506). Internationally, researchers have been mapping the inherent trend of government and school district re-centralization initatives while attempting to decentralize decision-making to the local school site (Caldwell, 1989; Slater, 1993; Stinnette1993; Weiler, 1990).

Paradoxically, Caldwell (1989) found the pendulum swinging in both directions on the centralization and decentralization continuum. In an international study of governance reform patterns, Caldwell determined that a centralizing and a decentralizing trend are occurring simultaneously: Governments at national and state or provincial levels are centralizing policy formulation on standards, accountability, and graduation outcomes while decentralized decision-making roles and responsibilities for strategic planning and resource allocation are developed by the central office. In Caldwell's view, this dichotomy presents a paradox whose eventual effect is uncertainty and tension. This paradoxical view is seen by Murphy (1991) as a:

> dynamic, ever-changing system of decentralization *and*
> centralization [which] balances the benefits of local administrative

autonomy with the pursuit of unified goals and blends local leadership with central leadership in a system that helps each level to understand its responsibilities, limitations, and prerogatives (p. 809).

Lunenburg (1995) sees a balanced scale of centralized and decentralized decision-making. Lunenburg does not hold to the view that an education system should be totally centralized or completely decentralized. Lunenburg's position seems representative of the emerging pattern of education governance identified by Caldwell (1989) as: "a substantial capacity for self-management at the school or institutional level within a centrally-determined framework" (p. 16).

Murphy (1991) believes that the purpose for decentralization must be put into clear context. Murphy admits that "decentralization is not a bad idea" (p. 809). By way of contextual discussion, however, Murphy then asserts that "school districts have become rule-bound, and decisions made far from the scene of the action [the school site] have stifled initiative and flexibility" (p. 809). In reframing the centralization - decentralization debate, Murphy calls for a balanced system, which he terms "integrated decentralization" (p. 810). The Royal Commission (1992) adopted Murphy's concept in its recommendations on educational governance. Like many others, Murphy has called for a "rethinking of the roles" of central office (p. 811). Murphy envisions this process of

"rethinking" of board roles to include: a change in traditional managerial leadership style; reallocation of most of the central office staffing and fiscal resource provision to the local school level; shared vision, goals, and objectives between all stakeholders; redefinition of the purpose of the elected board in policy direction of teaching and learning to share power with the local level and a more facilitative advisory role for the school board to "build the capacity of schools to take advantage of the opportunities of decentralization" (p. 811).

How can such a broad redefinition of the school board's role be achieved? Murphy (1991) states that:

> through a combination of technical assistance, staff development,
> extra resources, and released time for teachers and principals, the
> centre can play a significant role in improving the quality of local
> programs, in encouraging school staffs to rethink their roles and
> responsibilities, and in developing local leadership (p. 811).

Murphy summarizes the paradox by indicating that "school boards can gain more control over teaching and learning by sharing control with the schools" (p. 812). In other words, the district goals and provincial achievement expectations can be met by a partnership, between all levels of educational governance, that shares the necessary power and authority needed for

educational decision-making at each decisional site. What is another element that must comprise an educational governance partnership based on DDM?

Trust is a key element required for DDM. The establishment of trust among all stakeholders and governance levels is constantly documented in the literature as a building block of successful educational change and organizational renewal (Fullan, 1991 and 1993; Murphy, 1991; Senge, 1990; Sergiovanni, 1994). Conversely, a lack of trust, disillusionment, disinterest, and a rigid stifling of central rules applied to all schools are some of the reasons identified in the literature for the call for greater roles in and control of educational decision-making at the local school community level (Murphy, 1991; Walsh, 1995). It is necessary then to examine the centralization-decentralization trend across Canada. What DDM efforts are taking place in Canada on a national level?

Centralization and Decentralization: Precursors in National Context.

Canada does not maintain federal decision-making control of education. Instead, the provinces have control and responsibility for educational decision-making in Canada. Unlike many other countries, Canada does not have a national office for education (Gallagher, 1995); it instead maintains something of a federal presence through the Council of Ministers of Education, which is

comprised of each respective provincial minister of education (Gallagher, 1995). The federal government indirectly provides funding for education through transfer payments to the provinces (Gallagher, 1995; Levin & Young, 1994). Province by province, Canada is beginning to investigate devolving decision-making, in some form, to the local school site. Consistency of decentralized education governance, however, is not found. Some provinces decentralize decision-making to a greater scope and extent than do others.

A select number of school districts in Edmonton, Alberta, and Quebec were among the first to initiate and incorporate a considerable degree of decentralized decision-making (Chalouh, 1992; Rodgers, 1992). Schools in Edmonton are an example of budget decentralization. Responsibility for budgeting at the school level was the particular feature of School-based Management and decentralized decision-making. The Edmonton Public School district decentralization initiative, in particular, has become an international model of study and example for many countries in determining their own governance reform efforts (Brown, 1994).

Rideout (1995) conducted a province by province study on the current Canadian context of School Councils and educational governance reform efforts. The School Council is a local school-level governance structure and will be discussed later in more detail. Rideout found that all ten provinces were

engaged in the School Council concept to varying degrees and at varying levels of reform implementation. Rideout indicates that present Canadian education legislation currently permits the formation of "any kind of advisory committee to be established by individual school boards" (pp. 12-13). Subsequently, all provinces and territories, with the exception of the Yukon and Quebec, have proposed some form of an advisory parent and community representative group at the local school level.

Rideout (1995) and Collins (1996) noted that Quebec and the Yukon are the most decentralized of Provincial education decision-making systems utilizing the School Council structure. The Yukon Education Act (1990) permitted the evolution from advisory to full decision-making School Councils in areas including "budgeting, curriculum, student attendance, principal hiring, and dispute resolution" (Rideout, 1995, p. 17). Rideout also notes that "the Quebec legislation is very precise in providing for a systemic shift in the balance of power required to effect real parental participation" (p. 15). Why are school districts and provincial governments considering some degree of local school governance? Murphy (1991) indicates that school districts have much to gain by tapping the creative and energetic process of local decision-making at the school level. To what degree has educational decision-making been decentralized and school autonomy achieved in respect to the central office?

Degree of DDM in Selected Examples of Education Governance Reform. The decentralization of educational governance and management is receiving widespread attention on an international scale. Increased lobbying, public pressure for maintaining quality while exercising fiscal prudence, and the widespread call for de-bureaucratization or reduction of needless educational bureaucracy are causing governments to respond to grassroots requests for locus of control and greater autonomy in educational decision-making (Elmore, 1993; Peterson del-Mar, 1994; Stinnette, 1993; House, 1992). Governments are recognizing the advantages of increasing the amount of stakeholder involvement in decision-making (Royal Commission, 1992).

Lunenburg (1995) views the concept of decentralization in education as "the degree to which authority is dispersed or concentrated" (p. 54). Hanson (1991) also views decentralization of decision-making in terms of its degree by stating that "Decentralization is not an all-or-nothing concept...[but rather]...occurs in measured doses" (p. 32). The degree to which authority and types of decisions are decentralized is pivotal to ascertaining where on the centralization-decentralization continuum a school district lies (Brown, 1990; Lunenburg, 1995).

The degree of decentralization of decision-making afforded the stakeholders is where education systems diverge (Brown, 1990). Murphy (1991) states that "determining the appropriate degree of centralization [and decentralization] has bedevilled managers - from ancient rulers to modern chief executive officers" (p. 809). To what degree have some school districts been decentralized? One such model employing a degree of decentralized decision-making is identified in the literature as the School Council (Collins, 1995; Peterson del-Mar, 1994).

Stinette (1993) conducted a study on how decentralization has been implemented and is operative in 13 school districts in the north central region of the United States. Stinette found that great variance was present in the degree to which decision-making had been decentralized to the school level. Even though all school districts embrace the School Council model, Stinette also found that a disproportionate amount of School Council representation existed. In Rochester, New York, teachers have major control over decision-making; this is in sharp contrast to Chicago, where decentralization has given parents the majority decision-making control. Yet in Columbus, Ohio, the central office maintains considerable decision-making in key areas such as budgeting, staff hiring, and curriculum.

The School Councils of the northeastern states, while differing on the degree to which decision-making is decentralized, show concurrence on the following: (1) the use of SBM/SBDM; (2) focus on school improvement overall; and (3) particular focus on partnership among stakeholders to improve student achievement (Stinette, 1993). What types of decisions should be decentralized?

Current literature on precise decisions for School Council governance varies by the decision-making context of the School Council mandate. School Council governance was presented in the literature in both advisory and full decision-making contexts. The European literature predominantly presents full decision-making School Council governance models. The American literature presented both contexts, whereas the Canadian context of School Council governance, while found to be advisory in most provinces, is not heavily documented in the literature at the present time. The researcher believes that discussion of decentralized decision-making and the School Council concept will increase in Canadian literature as provincial education reform efforts reach final implementation stages.

One current research direction for Canadian educational governance sees a move toward an emerging business-influenced paradigmatic direction that may embrace some degree of organizational learning, facilitative leadership, and collaborative, team-based decision-making. Brown & Sheppard (1997),

Sheppard & Brown (1996), Sheppard & Devereaux (1997), and Dibbon (1997) are generating such research for Newfoundland schools in the context of learning organizations, a concept developed by Peter Senge (1990). Regardless of whether the approach for educational decision-making emanates from an administrative body internal or external to the local school, the thematic consensus of the literature focuses on *partnerships* between all stakeholders.

Stoll & Fink (1996) cite Earley (1994a) to warn that "the term partnership is...a much overused word and subject to a great deal of rhetoric; so there is a need for governing bodies to decide what is the precise nature of that partnership...[and]...how it might be achieved" (p. 138). How much of a decision-making role will each partner hold in the partnership? As indicated previously, Canadian provinces vary in the degree of decision-making power and authority devolved to School Councils (Rideout, 1995).

New Brunswick has abolished its school board structure in favour of what would appear to be a more decentralized form of governance at the school level (A Renewed Education System For New Brunswick, 1996). The Yukon; Alberta, in the form of school-based budgeting; and Quebec have embraced decentralized educational decision-making for years (Chalough, 1991; Rideout, 1995). Provinces that have embraced the advisory decision-making School Council context appear to favour a compromise with the firmly entrenched "top-

down" bureaucratic educational governance in the form of a collaborative partnership with an advisory degree of participation in educational decision-making. This compromise could represent an early sign of a modest ideological shift indicative of the reluctance of higher levels of educational governance to share power and authority with School Councils.

Researchers generally discuss which decisions to decentralize in terms of School Council mandates. Cody & Doyle (1995) suggest that a School Council's mandate could include "protecting local educational interests such as setting the pupil-teacher ratio for classes, determining which specialty programs would be offered..., ...and having a say in ...the development of local courses..." (p. 41). Stinette (1993) insists that legislators, policy-makers, directors, parents, teachers, and principals carefully consider the following when considering decentralization in education:

1.   Decision-Making Parameters: Stinette calls for clearly defined boundaries for any decentralized decision-making role. Stinette (1993) cautions that "otherwise well-meaning...[stakeholders]...will become engaged in the task of restructuring only to find that they have little authority to institute substantive change" (p. 5).

2.   Real Distribution of Authority Versus Rhetoric: Stinette maintains that for "true decentralization" to occur at the local level School Council, control

and authority over funds and resources must be devolved: "Too many school districts have embraced the rhetoric of decentralization without doing the tough work of (a) redistributing authority over the budgeting process..., professional development, and curriculum...;and (b) building the leadership and decision-making capacities for the new roles that decentralization implies" (p. 5).

3.   Impact on Teaching and Learning: Stinette strongly advocates a real devolution of the necessary power and authority to carry out any decentralized initiative such as a School Council mandate to improve teaching and learning.

Some SBM School Councils have been given the necessary power and authority to make decisions in areas such as pupil-teacher ratio formulae and budgetary control, and teacher hiring that would allow for creative program offering (Delaney, 1994; Rogers, 1992). Rogers (1992) cites a comment by Strembinsky, a Superintendent of an Edmonton school district utilizing SBM for more than a decade, to show the positive effects of full decision-making in school budgeting by School Councils: "I continue to see the ingenuity - ...the creativity - and different solutions that have come out ...of individual schools. It is rewarding to see people come alive. There is just no comparison to the way we operated previously" (p. 67).

An official with the <u>Pilot School Council Project</u> (personal communication,1996) is concerned about the maintenance of district by district province-wide adherence to educational standards and equality if School Council authority and decision-making were completely decentralized. Other writers echo similar themes on standards and equality. Stoll & Fink (1996) acknowledge that some schools will seize the opportunities afforded by decentralization, while others may not: "While more effective schools, free from constraints, can move in their chosen direction without being held back by district policies, less effective schools are left to flounder without system-level 'checks and balances' to ensure they do not decline" (p. 56). Concern continues to be expressed that public schools will enter the domain of "...survival-of-the-fittest..." that will place public schools in "direct competition with one another for limited funds" (Geraci, cited in Stoll and Fink, 1996, p.51). This concern has been noted in the literature as valid and has been elaborated on by Kelly (1995). Kelly observed that schools are already engaged in such a competition: inequity of funding for teacher units and specialty programs currently exists between public schools of the same school district.

The traditional hierarchical top-down decision-making control, that still rests with school boards and government education department bureaucrats in key areas of budgeting, teacher allocations, pupil-teacher ratios, curriculum

development and general policy making limits the scope, degree, and type of decision-making that can be devolved to a School Council (Rideout, 1995). Murphy (1991) calls for a more balanced approach to the centralized - decentralized decision-making continuum. Murphy (1991) calls such an approach **integrated decentralization.**

To decentralize educational decision-making to the local level all stakeholders must feel empowered by the emerging governance structure. Stinnette (1993) affirms that individuals will take ownership of the issues, problems, and school site if efficacy of decision-making is present. Empowerment of all stakeholders at the local level has been identified in the literature as a crucial factor in the successful implementation of any educational reform initiative (Fullan, 1993; Murphy, 1995). Stakeholders feel empowered when a meaningful decision-making role has been devolved to the local level (David, 1994 and 1996; Stinnette, 1993).

Will the major stakeholders in education be empowered by a decision-making model that devolves decision-making to the local school site? School Councils worldwide have embraced some form and degree of Site-Based or School-Based Management. Site-Based or School-Based Management, a form of educational governance encompassing decentralized educational decision-making, is presented next.

Site-Based Management and Decentralized Decision-Making. Site-Based Management (SBM), a reform model that gained widespread prevalence during the 1980s, is discussed extensively in the literature as a major tenet of the decentralization of educational decision-making. SBM's basic premises include in some form, and to varying degrees, a devolution of policy-making and decision-making authority to a local School Council over decisional areas such as school budgeting, curriculum, and personnel issues (Sergiovanni, Burlingame, Coombs, & Thurston, 1992).

The variance of decision-making authority devolved to School Councils that embrace SBM is worthy of consideration. School districts vary significantly in the range, scope, and type of educational decision-making devolved to local schools within their jurisdiction. In the United States, the school districts of Chicago devolve considerable amounts of power to local School Councils. The mandate of the Chicago School Councils includes "the power to review the school principal and remove the incumbent" (Sergiovanni, Burlingame, Coombs, & Thurston, 1992, p. 261). School Council decision-making authority is markedly diverse, for Sergiovanni and others also state that "in some other districts, School Councils have been formed but are given little real authority by which to exercise influence on the important policy issues facing the schools" (p. 262).

Sergiovanni, Burlingame, Coombs, & Thurston (1992) speculate that "Site-Based Management may mean nothing more than giving more authority to building principals in a traditional hierarchial structure" (p. 262). Several critical questions must be asked in light of the disparity of School Council authority documented by the current literature. Is decision-making decentralized to all local stakeholders, or have the administrative roles and duties of the school principal been expanded? Has the necessary decisional power and authority for School Council effectiveness been devolved to the School Council? What should be the locus of control and parameters of authority for each level of educational governance in a DDM system of governance?

There is no support in the literature for a particular definition of Site-Based Decision-Making. Variations of the term include "Site-Based Management, school-based budgeting, collaborative school management, local school management, and school-based governance" (Collins, 1995, p. 6). Levin & Young (1994) identify a shift in authority as a way to identify Site-Based Management: the rationale for School-Based Management (SBM) has to do with *moving authority* to the same level of organization where responsibility resides, in order to achieve optimal results (Levin & Young, p. 309).

David (1995) states that "for all its guises, Site-Based Management is basically an attempt to transform schools into communities where the

appropriate people participate constructively in major decisions that affect them."
(p. 4). David describes Site-Based Management further by indicating the
purpose some see in its application to education: "To some, Site-Based
Management is a governance reform designed to shift the balance of authority
among schools, districts, and the state" (p. 5).

David (1995) describes some "underlying motives" for "Site-Based
Management as educational reform" (p. 6). David indicates that SBM and
reform can be synonymous with "weakening entrenched and distrusted local
school boards;" "creating the illusion of reform without investing additional
resources;" "putting a positive spin on central office downsizing by calling it
decentralization;" or "simply trying to shift the blame for failure to the school
itself" (p. 6). In summarizing her article, David contexualizes the purpose for and
positive benefit of decentralized educational decision-making and participatory
Site-Based Decision-Making by writing that:

> the goal of transforming schools into communities where everyone
> has a voice goes beyond issues of school reform to the heart of
> our democratic society. The creation of models of collaboration
> and participatory decision-making for students to witness and
> become involved in - not only in classrooms but also in their

community - ultimately benefits not just the school community but
our entire society (p. 9).

School Council: Claimed Model of Decentralized Decision-Making For Educational Governance

In a background paper commissioned by the Royal Commission (1992), House (1992) found that a commonality of purposes existed in the use of the School Council model by many education jurisdictions. The first purpose of adopting the School Council model is to allow for a "reorganization of the school district's decision-making structure so that many important decisions that directly or indirectly affect the education of children are made at the level of the school" (House citing the National Committee for Citizens in Education, p. 43). The second is that the call for increased parental and community involvement in educational decision-making can be *successfully* accommodated through a structure known as the School Council model.

A School Council has been defined in the literature as a local school site group of elected representatives in an advisory or full decision-making capacity, or some combination thereof, that provides local school governance to its respective school (Brown, 1990 and 1994; Collins, 1995 and 1996). Composition of School Councils varies significantly, even though formation

generally occurs through local nomination and election. A term of service is set; a two-year commitment is average. Some education systems and school districts give parents greater member representation; others give the school staff more membership. Some councils try to achieve a more balanced approach by electing equal numbers of members, so that all stakeholders can perceive School Council representation as democratic and fair (School Council Policy Statement 1995 and 1996). How can the School Council operate at the local level?

The School Council could serve as the catalyst for fostering, rebuilding, and strengthening the tie between the local community and the school. Sergiovanni (1994) believes that successful schools emphasize community building:

> Community building must become the heart of any school
> improvement effort. Whatever else is involved - improving
> teaching, developing sensible curriculum, creating new forms of
> governance, providing more authentic assessment, empowering
> teachers and parents, increasing professionalism - it must rest on
> a foundation of community building (p. xi).

Decentralization of educational decision-making has been prevalent in the literature for some time (Zimet, 1973). New York has had decentralized

decision-making in educational governance for decades. For more information on DDM and a thorough analysis of the effects of the 1969 Decentralization law passed in New York see Zimet, (1973) <u>Decentralization and School Effectiveness A Case Study of the 1969 Decentralization Law in New York City</u>.

The School Council is utilized by some school districts as a decentralized decision-making governance structure. DDM, through a School Council, is not an entirely new form of educational governance (Caldwell, 1988; Townsend, 1994 cited in Rideout, 1995). The literature features several examples of district and local school initiative in DDM. The states of Kentucky and Chicago have been widely discussed in the literature for their efforts to decentralize educational decision-making to the local level through the School Council model (Daniels, 1996; David, 1994 and 1996; Kannapel et al, 1995; Rist, 1990; Rogers, 1992; Stinnette, 1993; Van Meter, 1991).

The School Council concept, while in existence in other education systems for decades, is relatively new in Newfoundland's education system (Collins, 1995; Earle, 1997; Hodder, 1994). The School Council, proposed by the Royal Secretariat (1994), has chosen Site-Based Decision-Making (SBDM), as its decision-making mechanism for council operations (Collins, 1995). Earle (1997) found that the literature bore some common ground on the criteria of SBDM, noting that SBDM involves "a shift in authority where the process of

schooling is moved from a top-down model to a more collaborative bottom-up mode of collective decision-making" (p. 5). Is the school community ready to embrace the School Council structure?

Senge (1990) has identified an organization's never-ending quest towards learning and renewal, individually and collectively in a team-oriented approach, as the key to a successful organization in what the researcher previously cited as a 'learning organization'. Stoll & Fink (1996) see the success of the School Council hinging on Senge's learning organization concept. Stoll & Fink advocate that the adoption of a School Council brings to fruition "entirely new areas of need for learning" (p. 163). In light of the research of Stinette (1993) and Sheppard and Brown (1997), will the provincial government provide the sustained support and professional development necessary for education reform, renewal, and maintenance of such reforms?

The government of Newfoundland and Labrador has identified the need to improve student achievement levels in the province through education reform (Adjusting the Course II, 1994). Guskey & Peterson (1995) feel that "before school-based decision-making can change teaching and learning for the better, we must make some changes in the reform itself" (p. 10). Guskey & Peterson identify four key areas of concern that may answer the question of why School Councils are often ineffective in, and at times outrightly avoid, focusing their

mandate on teaching and learning issues, instruction, and curriculum; these four areas Guskey & Peterson term as "expertise, cultural constraints, avoidance problem, and the motivational problem" (p. 12).

According to Guskey & Peterson (1995), these four areas are more interrelated than isolated, and therefore contribute to either positive or negative effects on teaching and learning in the school. Lack of expertise in current research on curriculum and instruction cause many council members to avoid these two crucial areas, thus avoiding a viable role that could have an impact, teaching and learning (Guskey & Peterson, 1995). The avoidance problem is further compounded as reluctant staffs, stagnant administrators, or status quo school cultures are perpetuated at all costs.

This reluctance towards educational change is noted by Fullan (1991), who states that "if there is any changing to be done , *everyone is implicated* and must face it in relation to his or her own role" (p. 143). Guskey & Peterson (1995) call for a redefinition of "traditional school roles so that teachers and parents can work collaboratively on school wide decisions" (p. 12). Motivation, however, may well prove to be the most crucial area on which all else tests.

Motivation is identified by Guskey & Peterson (1995) as most significant in School Council success and operation. The authors show that parent turnout and voting in Kentucky School Council elections is extremely low for a state that

has "85 percent of schools...[with]...Site-Based Decision-Making councils" (p. 12). Why such a result? Guskey & Peterson proport stakeholder perception of School Council participation in proportion to School Council success as the major reason, given that: "...the effort and responsibilities are substantial, the rewards few, and the outcomes often fraught with controversy" (p. 12).

Guskey & Peterson (1995) offer eleven steps to increase the opportunity for School Council success through Site-Based Decision-Making:

1. Begin with a clear mission that focuses on teaching and learning.

2. Set clear and explicit goals for the decision-making process.

3. Ensure that school-based decision-making is seen as a process for bringing about a broad set of reforms, not as a goal in itself.

4. Alter governance structures to give administrators, teachers, and parents real power and authority. They will need this power and authority if they are truly to work together to make major changes in established educational practices.

5. Be responsive to parents' concerns, and involve them in the school community.

6.   Redesign schedules to give teachers time to participate in decision making.

7.   Invest in high quality professional development, and significant changes in the way these activities are planned, organized, and carried out.

8.   Obtain the necessary expertise on which to base decisions.

9.   Ensure active support from all levels of the organization.

10.   Reward accomplishments large and small.

11.   Work to establish a collaborative school culture focused on improvement (pp. 12-14).

Murphy (1995) examined several Texas School Councils, as well as each School Council's decision-making discourse to determine the impact of the School Council on curriculum and instruction in their respective schools.

The issue of *power* emerged as a major finding in the Murphy (1995) study on the School Council as a change agent for instruction. Stakeholder perception of the new decision-making role prior to council election and the reality of the actual role was significant in Murphy's findings. Murphy found that stakeholders were confused and frustrated with both the vagueness of decision-making parameters for the School Council, and the eventual realization of perceived power versus actual power to make decisions in relation to central

board authority. Murphy discovered that one board reversed a School Council instructional decision to implement a grade three reading program. An interviewee in Murphy's study indicated that the School Council soon discovered the actual decision-making parameters of School Council authority. The Texas School Council model and implementation experience provides a significant baseline for the researcher's study on the proposed School Council decision-making context for Newfoundland's education system. Murphy determined that the School Councils were not able to effect any significant change in classroom instruction as a result of a lack of sufficient decision-making authority at the local level. This finding is congruent with Fullan (1994), who advocates that SBDM School Councils have not made any measurable connection between SBDM, teaching and learning, and instructional change. Yet the literature continues to resound with the theme of change agency through local stakeholder involvement in educational decision-making (Collins, 1997). The literature clearly confirms the public outcry for a meaningful role in educational decision-making and the relentless call for change and restructuring in the current hierarchically centralized model of school governance, program delivery and educational policy decision-making (House, 1995; Russo, 1995; Walsh, 1995). A study conducted by House (1995) on *Parent Power: Participation in Educational Decision-Making* demands consideration in light of the researcher's study.

House (1995) traces and examines from a legal perspective the current legislation in existence for School Councils, and the decentralized educational decision-making approach adopted by such countries as Australia, United States, Britain, and Canada. House focuses on an examination of the two structures of authority: the "top-down" and the bottom-up" models. House highlights the unequivocal disparity and discordance between government legislation and the ideological political rhetoric currently in existence in various education governance models worldwide.

House concludes her study with an examination of selected Canadian provincial efforts to decentralize education decision-making. Her findings have contributed immensely to the thesis study by providing a comparison level on which to gauge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's education reform efforts to decentralize educational decision-making.

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador proposes to legislate School Councils as a mandated requirement for all schools in the province by the 1997-98 school year. Collins (1995) conducted a study funded by the Canada-Newfoundland Cooperation Agreement on Human Resource Development entitled Enhancing Local Involvement in Education Through Quality Leadership; the focus of the study was a Pilot School Council Project "to test the conditions needed for the effective functioning of School Councils in the

province" (p. iii). The findings of the Collins study will enable the researcher to make some early observational forecasts on the effectiveness of government's stated theoretical base as a possible translation into field practice and application.

Summary

The literature review on the decentralization of educational decision-making generated primary concepts, for the data analysis, that formulate a conceptual framework for the study. The concepts of Ideology, Power, Authority, Influence, Interest group agenda, Empowerment, Stakeholder Involvement, Decisional Areas, and DDM and the School Council form the conceptual framework for the study (Apple, 1995; Bailey, 1992; Barlow & Campbell, 1995; Barlow & Robertson, 1994; Bolman & Deal, 1991; Brown, 1990 and 1994; Fullan, 1991 and 1993; Guskey & Peterson, 1995; Sergiovanni, 1992 and 1994). These concepts served as the elements of a critical typology by which the data was analyzed.

The discussion of these concepts is thorough and consistent. The literature review enabled the researcher to summarize the following critical statements for the theoretical framework in this study:

1.   School Councils need substantial scope in *power* and *authority* to create and enact school level decisions relative to the goal of improved teaching and higher student achievement.

2.   A void exists in the literature to conclusively prove that fully advisory/influential School Councils are superior and more effective than fully decentralized decision-making School Councils.

3.   There is a lack of conclusive research to demonstrate the transformative success and subsequent increase in student achievement levels as a direct result of School Council effort and impact in curriculum and instruction at the school site.

The literature review resulted in the identification of some of the possible tenets of DDM and corollary concepts such as power and authority, the centralization-decentralization continuum, SBM, and stakeholder autonomy and empowerment. Hodder (1994) states that " School Councils are viewed as a means of decentralizing school governance by shifting some of the control..." for educational decision-making to the local level (p. 30). The illusion or reality of a decentralized governance shift, through the proposed School Council, in Newfoundland's education reform context, is the premise for this thesis study.

Current literature on decentralized educational decision-making, School Councils, and Site-Based Decision-Making led the researcher to a critical study

on the possibility that a discordant duality may exist between the theory and the practice of the Newfoundland government's efforts towards the decentralization of educational decision-making for the post-reform education governance structure. The primary critical question at the forefront of the research study is as follows:

Is the proposed transference of power and authority for educational decision-making, from the current centralized structure to a proposed decentralized one, an illusion or a reality for Newfoundland's post-reform education governance structure?

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

Introduction

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical concepts that emanated from a literature review on the Decentralization of educational decision-making formulated the framework for a critical analysis of the data. The primary concepts advocated by the related literature for this study include decentralization, the School Council Model, Ideology, Power, Authority, Influence, Interest group agenda, Empowerment, Stakeholder Involvement, Decisional Areas, and DDM (Apple, 1995; Barlow, 1995; Barlow & Campbell, 1995; Barlow & Robertson, 1994; Bolman & Deal, 1991; Brown, 1994 and 1990; Fullan, 1991 and 1993; Guskey & Peterson, 1995; Maynes 1996; Sergiovanni, 1994 and 1992). These concepts served as the elements to formulate theoretical statements for a critical typology by which to analyze the data.

Design of the Study

The study utilized a critical discourse analysis of Newfoundland education reform documents, notes taken during a key informant presentation, and various

other print and non-print media. Ethnograph 4.0 aided in the retrieval of the data for a critical analysis. Research questions, emanating from an in-depth review of related literature for this study were developed. In order to address both the macro and micro nature of the study, on the illusion or reality of a decentralization of Educational Decision-making, the research questions were developed on two levels, primary and secondary.

<u>**Primary Research Questions**</u>

The primary research questions were devised as a result of the theoretical framework suggested by the related literature on the decentralization of educational decision-making. The following questions guided the study:

1.   Is the proposed transference of *power* and *authority* for educational decision-making, from the current centralized structure to a decentralized one, an illusion or a reality in the Government's education reform policies and documents?

2.   How much of the decision-making will actually be decentralized? Which *specific areas* in educational decision-making will be and should be decentralized to the local levels? What types of decisions will fall within each front-line level?

3. Will the theory of decentralization, as presented in <u>Adjusting the Course I</u> (1993) and <u>II</u> (1994), and called for in the Royal Commission Report <u>Our Children, Our Future</u> (1992), translate into relevant, meaningful practice at the school and classroom level?

Secondary Research Questions

The secondary research questions, which are an extension of the primary questions, are also suggested and guided by the literature. This level of questioning allows for an exploration of the issues pertinent to this thesis at a more concrete level:

4. Will School Councils, the proposed principal vehicle of decentralized decision-making, have exclusive jurisdiction over DDM's mandated areas?

5. What will be the jurisdictional boundaries for the decision-making level of the proposed School Council? Will School Councils merely be advisory in structure and design, or will School Councils effect substantive meaningful change at the school level? How will the proposed School Council model differ and substantially improve on the existing Parent - Teacher Association (PTA) model? What will be the role for the current provincial Home and School Association?

6.   What will be the relationship of the School Council to the existing education governance structures? Will School Councils be dictated to and intimidated by the current levels of bureaucracy, namely School Boards and the Department of Education?

7.   Will School Councils prove beneficial to the Principal and faculty of each school in collaboratively achieving the intended goals, or will School Councils simply provide another bureaucratic level of political rhetoric and impediment to the education process?

8.   What will be the parameters of the decentralized role of School Councils in contributing to the improvement of teaching and learning in the respective school(s) within their jurisdiction?

9.   In what ways will School Councils be able to exercise authority in bringing about school improvement, higher levels of student achievement, and academic performance?

10.   Is government shirking some of its fiscal responsibility for educational funding by legislating the raising of school funds as part of the School Council's mandate? Will clear boundaries be established to define the degree of fiscal responsibility School Councils will be required to assume?

11.   What role will School Councils play in curriculum, staffing assignments, and interpretation of Board policy?

12.   How will the School Council help or hinder the principal's role as instructional leader in curriculum implementation at the school level?

The current literature on decentralized education decision-making, reviewed by the researcher, led to the formulation and proposal of a hypothetical expected outcome. The literature review and the hypothesis are essential steps that may inform a possible formulation of a critical theory upon completion of the study.   Through a critical analysis of the government's education reform documents and other data, the researcher expects to find an espoused decentralized process that does not, however, translate into practice at the local school-community level.   Instead, the education reform initiatives suggested by government policy might further entrench and solidify the archaic, centralized, literature-identified bureaucratic process of educational decision-making, identified in the literature, and which is currently in existence.

The researcher undertook, from a critically investigative perspective, an analysis and exegesis of the current related literature and data available for this study in a concerted effort to arrive at the underlying meaning and motive behind the proposed education reform process of decentralized educational decision-making for the Newfoundland and Labrador education system.   Doyle

(1995) states that "if part of the mandate of critical research is to burrow beneath the surface of institutional practices and structures it is necessary to ground such work in empirical material" (p. 6). Doyle subsequently cites Harvey (1990):

> Critical social research requires that empirical material be collected. It does not matter whether it is statistical materials, anecdotes, directly observed behaviour, media content, interview responses, art work, or anything else. Whatever provides insights is suitable. But whatever it is, it must not be taken at face value...data are important in order to ground inquiry but data must not be treated as independent of their socio-historic context (p. 7).

Data Collection

Primary data collected for the research study included government documents and policy statements on decentralization of educational decision-making. The list of all data can be found in Table 1 on page 84.

The secondary data was comprised of a key informant presentation and follow-up meeting, and personal communications. The key informant who consented to participate in the study was a high ranking ministerial government official from 1994-1996. The key informant data is reflective of direct participation in and thorough legislative knowledge of the formulation of

government education reform policy and thereby provided significant baseline data for the thesis. Government policy statements germane to the author's research study comprised the largest portion of the data for the thesis study.

Table 1.

Data Collected For The Thesis Study

* Adjusting the Course I, 1993

* Adjusting the Course II, 1994

School Council Pilot Studies I (1995) & II (1996)

Key Informant Presentation, Subsequent notes of that presentation and follow-up meeting,

Department of Education Bulletins,

* School Council Handbooks,

School Protocol Agreements from the School Council Pilots (1995, 1996)

Personal Communications

*Newfoundland Government Education Reform Documents

Mode of Analysis

As a critical researcher the data, as identified above, was analyzed through a macro to micro lens. Government's intended reform efforts on educational decision-making at the local school-community level were examined by an analysis of the language and discourse of the reform documents. These documents included <u>Adjusting the Course I</u> (1993)& <u>II</u> (1994) and the <u>School Council Policy Statement</u> (1995); respectively framing the macro to micro parameters of the study's data analysis. The examination of all relevant government documents pertinent to the research took the form of a critical discursive and exegetical analysis emanating from an empirical phenomenological critical perspective.

The researcher deconstructed various terms and elaborative text contained in the gamut of governmental policy statements on educational decision-making, using a data retrieval computer software program called Ethnograph, which allowed him to carry out a coding and categorizing process of the data. This format of data analysis also enabled him to conduct a critical analysis of education reform text in an effort to "peel back the layers and get beneath the surface" of ideological underpinnings shaping government's education reform discourse (Doyle, 1995). This mode of analysis, a deconstruction and reconstruction process, facilitated the emergence of

recurrent and generalizable themes, due in part to literature support and multiple document cross-data comparison and validation of coded discourse segments.

Weber (1995) refers to such a process of analysis as one form of content analysis employed "to draw valid inferences from text" (p. 12). Weber indicates that the use of content categories enables the researcher to analyze and synthesize large quantities of text-based data into relational groupings of meaning, connotation, and themes. Thematic implications can then be formulated. The content classification of data text thereby facilitates the presentation of the data for discussion in a logical, organized manner (Weber, 1985).

The theoretical and conceptual framework for the data analysis was synthesized and constructed as a result of dominant themes and concepts provided by the review of related literature on the decentralization of educational decision-making. The primary theoretical construct under study is Decentralized Decision-making (DDM). Some of the possible tenets of decentralized decision-making identified in the literature are power, authority, stakeholder participation, and decisional areas. Goals of DDM include school improvement, positive impact on teaching and learning, and overall student achievement.

The researcher created a critical analytical typology, based, primarily on the literature of Brown (1990 and 1994), Guskey & Peterson (1995), Keefe

(1992), Slater (1993), and Stinette (1993). The DDM Critical Analytical Typology

aided in the selection of code words to deconstruct government policy discourse

on DDM and School Councils. The researcher saw the use of the typology as

a way to guard against the possibility of oversight and to validate the selection

of code words for the data analysis. The DDM Critical Analytical Typology is

presented in Table 2 on page 88.

Table 2 .

DDM CDAT For The Data Analysis

Factor	Possible Outcomes	Result
Ideology	Dominant Ideology, Shared Ideology, Conflicting, or Combination	
Decision-Making Scope and Role	Full Decision-Making or Advisory	
Parameters of Decision-Making	Necessary Degree of Power and Authority	
Mandate, Vision, Mission, and Goals	Clear Definition or Vague Outline	
Council Participant Composition and Representation	Equal, Balanced, or Disproportionate	
School Council Roles	Clear Definition or Vague Outline	
Tenor and Degree of Support by School and District for DDM	Full, Moderate, None	
School Protocol Agreement	Degree of DDM or Re-Centralization Approach	

Seidel (1995) highlights the belief shared by both Corbin and Strauss (1990) and Weber (1985) that in coding the voices of the data, its meaning can then be reconstructed by:

> the naming and categorizing of phenomena through close examination of the data...[that is]...broken down into discrete parts, closely examined, compared for similarities and differences, and questions asked about the phenomena as reflected in the data (p. E7).

As a result of the researcher's critical study of Newfoundland's education reform discourse, the thematic patterns that emerge from the data may represent the ideology shaping education reform policy on educational decision-making and the School Council governance model.

Cherryholmes (1988), as cited in Doyle (1995), highlights the importance of determining the real meaning behind the jargon and terminology:

> The way in which power precedes and invades speech is often ignored. In this way it is very easy for the ethical and ideological aspects of speech to be glossed over and the true significance of the terms to be missed.

Fairclough (1995) concurs with this line of thinking in that language, ideology, and power are intertwined in a critical study on discourse. The language of the

provincial government documents and policy statements on education governance reform, DDM, and the School Council was critically analyzed to determine both the impact of government ideology on DDM and the illusion or reality of DDM, as expressed by government ideology, through the legislated requirement of School Councils. To determine the outcome of the study on DDM, the methodological elements provided by Harvey (1990) were employed. These elements are discussed next.

Methodological Elements

Critical social research aims at an analysis of social processes, delving beneath ostensive and dominant conceptual frames - in this case decentralization as seen through School Councils - in order to reveal the underlying practices, their historical specificity, and structural manifestations. Harvey (1990) suggests that the following elements need to be present when doing critical social research:

1. Abstraction: In this study it means that it is necessary to investigate the taken-for-granted underpinnings of decentralization.

2. Totality: Decentralization, as a social phenomenon, is interrelated with the whole. Therefore, decentralization cannot be analyzed in isolation. There is a need to relate empirical detail to a structural and historical whole.

3.   Essence: It is necessary to ask what is the essential nature of decentralization; it is essentially a giving away of power from the centre.

4.   Praxis: For the purposes of this study praxis means a practical reflective activity as it applies to decentralization. In this study, reflection on the example of School Councils as a practice of decentralization is necessary. School Councils may or may not reflect an engagement of the concept of decentralization.

5.   Ideology: For this study ideology is an analytical and critical tool which can help deconstruct the concept and practice of decentralization. Ideologies get borne out in governmental educational policies and practices. Ideology is locked into these policies and practices. The examination of such governing ideologies calls for a deconstruction and reconstruction of both decentralization and centralization as each is lived out in School Councils.

6.   Structure: In this study, structure is basically the complex set of interrelated elements that are interdependent and can only be adequately conceived in terms of a complete structure. As far as this study is concerned, the concept of School Councils can be seen as part of a structure of educational reform, which is part of a structure of economic, social, and political reform, which is operational today in a given provincial history.

7.   History: The history of reform cannot simply be accepted as *factual*. History is an interpretative process. The analysis of School Councils as a moment of decentralization is an interpretative process. The task is to dig beneath the surface of School Councils as the manifestation of decentralization. In other words, the historical genesis of a social system, such as School Councils, is examined to see how prevailing structures are sustained through them.

The literature review revealed a dominant theme on DDM: decentralization of educational decision-making must entail a transfer of the required degree of *power* and *authority* to empower stakeholders to make meaningful local decisions that will facilitate and ensure effective action to improve teaching and learning. Subthemes of Decision-making role, Degree of DM, Degree of Involvement, Ideology, Personal Agendas, and New Stakeholder Roles are present in the literature.

Doyle (1995) states that "part of the mandate of critical research is to burrow beneath the surface" (p. 6). Doyle explains that various institutional levels in the educational field can put forth their own particular interpretation of events through ideologically loaded terminology that promotes their own particular value-driven spin (p. 7). The critical education researcher must interrogate the discourse relevant to the investigation and "place such terms and

concepts in a more holistic context...[to further the process of]...the cultural construction of meaning" (Doyle, pp. 7-8).

Summary

The critical methodolgy underscoring the research study enabled the researcher to reconstruct some possible significant meanings and implications of the DDM policies as they apply and translate into educational practice beyond their rhetoric and ideology. By saying "...ideology...is successful to the extent that it is able to represent its own fundamental interests as the **unquestioned universal interests of society**..." Livingstone (1983) offers insight into the command and ability of ideology to dominate policy formulation (p. 106).

The reseacher's data analysis of DDM government policy documents reveals the implications of government's efforts towards decentralization of educational decision-making as it translates from its theoretical base, outlined in education reform policy documents, to field application and practice through legislated School Councils. The data analysis is presented next in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

Presentation and Analysis of the Data

Introduction

The study of people, ...[their discourse]... and of their world of
things can start with any remark heard or read, or with anything
taken into account. With wonder about that remark or that thing,
inquiry begins (Rose, 1991 as cited in Seidel, Friese & Leonard,
1995).

Historically, Newfoundland has, for the most part, operated a system of
educational governance based on a high degree of centralized decision-making
(Delaney, 1996). The churches had complete educational decision-making
control in their respective denominational settings through constitutional rights
that guaranteed their right to operate denominational schools and school boards
(Treslan, 1992). The provincial government, through the recently amended
Term 17 of the Canadian Constitution obtained the right to administer school
boards (An Amendment to Term 17 of the Canadian Constitution, 1982).

During the period of 1993 to 1996, the Royal Commission Secretariat was
mandated, by government, to issue major policy agenda documents and

statements on the direction and shape that the Royal Commission recommendations would take. Government's primary policy documents for the implementation of the Royal Commission (1992) recommendations for education reform are entitled: <u>Adjusting the Course I, (1993): Restructuring the School System For Educational Excellence</u>, which, according to government," presents the structural model for a reformed education system" and <u>Adjusting the Course II, (1994): Improving the Conditions for Learning</u>, which "outlines government's plans for improving system performance and student achievement" (Royal Implementation Secretariat, 1994, p.1).

The Royal Commission Report (1992), <u>Our Children Our Future</u>, called for reform of educational governance to share the *power* of educational decision-making with the major stakeholders at the school community level. The legislated requirement of the establishment of local School Councils for all Newfoundland schools was mandated and enshrined in legislation on December 19, 1996. To what extent was the Royal Commission's recommendation on Decentralized Decision-Making implemented? Primary and secondary research questions provided the analytical backdrop for conducting the study on the decentralization of educational decision-making. The three primary research questions under study are:

Research Question 1

How much of the decision-making will be actually decentralized? Which specific areas in education will be and should be decentralized to the local levels? What types of decisions will fall within each front-line level?

Research Question 2

Is the proposed transference of power and authority for educational decision-making, from the current centralized structure to a decentralized one, an illusion or a reality?

Research Question 3

Will the theory of decentralization, as presented in <u>Adjusting the Course I</u> and <u>II</u> (1993, 1994) and called for in the Commission Report, <u>Our Children, Our Future</u> (1992), translate into relevant, meaningful practice at the school and classroom level?

This data is presented by document name and Ethnograph-generated line number. Categories were formulated from the research questions and used to organize the data analysis of the education reform discourse. Table 2. contains the categories that were used to organize and reconstruct the data on the *illusion* or *reality* of a decentralization of educational decision-making for the

post-reform governance structure in Newfoundland's education system. Presentation and analysis of the data follows next.

Critical Discursive Analysis

Research Question 1

How much of the decision-making will be actually decentralized? Which specific areas in education will be and should be decentralized to the local levels? What types of decisions will fall within each front-line level?

As indicated in Chapter One and in the introduction to Chapter Four, the Royal Commission (1992) recommended, to government, that decentralized decision-making be devolved to School Councils. The Royal Secretariat Implementation Bulletin (1994) declares that:

> finally a new role is envisaged for parents within the school, one
> that places them at the centre of their child's learning as a
> member of the extended school community" (Royal Secretariat
> Implementation Bulletin, APR94-1, lines 234-239).

The Royal Secretariat Bulletin, further states:

> legislation will be introduced for the establishment and operation
> of school councils. These councils, in addition to providing a

formal role for parents in the operation of the school, will take on
as their primary mandate, issues relating to parental and
community involvement (APR94-1, lines 240-247).

The discourse of Adjusting The Course II, (1994) suggests that school
effectiveness is contingent upon reducing stakeholder perception of decision-
making isolation by increasing stakeholder participation in school level decision-
making. Government plans to achieve increased stakeholder participation in
school-site decision-making through the establishment of the School Council
governance model. Government acknowledges that:

the bureaucratic nature of the system is seen by many as the
cause of this isolation...[therefore]...following specific
recommendations of the Royal Commission, it is proposed that
School Councils be established as the main vehicle for promoting
parental involvement...[by passing]...legislation...to provide for the
establishment and functioning of School Councils (Adjusting the
Course, 1994, lines 6-10).

The formation of School Councils suggests that Government is committed to
involving parents and other stakeholders in the decision-making process at the
school level. Elaborating on that commitment, Government states that in
reducing the number of school boards the model allows for a devolution of

[many central office functions and] responsibilities to schools…" (<u>Adjusting the Course I</u>, 1993, lines 221-223).

Curriculum, budgeting, and personnel are identified by the Royal Commission (1992) as the areas for decision-making that should devolve to the school level. Curriculum implementation, and monitoring system performance and student achievement are identified as the School Council roles and areas for decision-making (<u>Adjusting the Course II, 1994</u>; <u>School Council Policy Statement, 1995</u>; the <u>School Council Handbook, 1995</u>; <u>Schools Act, 1996</u>). In stating the rationale for School Councils, the <u>School Council Policy Statement, (1995)</u> indicates that School Council decision-making will generally involve responsibility for:

> working with education professionals to set the future direction of
> the school, identify education priorities, and determine strategies
> for achieving goals…[so as to]…increase local involvement in the
> education process and subsequently improve teaching and
> learning (lines 44-52).

The generality and vagueness of the discourse on School Council decision-making in the government's <u>School Council Policy Statement</u> (1995) was a major roadblock for the School Council two year Pilot Project. The absence of authority for School Council decision-making indicates the limitation

and cap placed on School Council decision-making from the onset of the School Council imitative. The degree of decentralized decision-making School Councils will legally operationalize was parametered in the School Council Policy Statement, prior to the passage of provincial legislation in that:

> All directions, priorities, and strategies [devised by the School
> Council] will be subject to district planning, board policies, and
> budgeting processes (lines 53-56).

Furthermore, the idea of "subject to" the school board strongly suggests that decision-making within the key areas of curriculum, budgets, and staffing will remain centralized, at the School Board level.

Adjusting the Course I (1993) in realizing the implications of its policy directive to cut school board staff allocations, reiterates the point that:

> As indicated in the section on school board organization, it would
> be expected that boards would delegate much of the responsibility
> for maintaining high quality programs to the school level.

Most of the pilot School Councils did not engage in decision-making in the areas of curriculum, budget, and personnel (Pilot School Council Project Study Report #1,1995; #2, 1996). The pilot project report attributed the School Councils' lack of decision-making to two factors: (1) that the structural formulation and related implementation process of the pilot School Councils consumed the majority of

the councils' agenda and mandate for the duration of the pilot study; and (2) the lack of a clear definition of School Council authority, outlining the types of decisions councils can make, and the decision-making parameters within which to operationalize those decisions, prevailed throughout the pilot study. In fact:

> legislation clarifying the areas of responsibility and degree of authority of school councils was expected during the second pilot year. This has been delayed and confusion surrounding the mandate of councils remains (<u>Pilot School Council Project Report #2</u>, lines 320-328).

The Pilot Project on the whole therefore was not able to test decentralized decision-making whereby School Councils could exercise decision-making power and authority, for example, in curriculum and instructional budgeting. Therefore, an example of a curricular decisional area, reflective of decentralized decision-making, was not tested by the majority of the piloted School Councils. So it remains for School Councils and boards to test the premise put forth by <u>Adjusting The Course II</u>, (1994) that:

> a more centralized approach to curriculum development [is needed] but a much more decentralized approach to [curriculum] implementation...[can occur for]...School districts will be given

greater scope to select their own textbooks and related support

material (<u>Adjusting the Course II</u>, 1994, lines 15-23).

Of particular note in the above-stated discourse is the fact that the decision-

making areas of curriculum resource selection and funding are examples of a

widening of centralized decision-making from government to School Boards and

not a direct devolution of decision-making to School Councils.

The initial start-up, election, and continual training inherent in the School

Council implementation process, is identified in the literature and the Pilot

Project reports (1995, 1996), as crucial factors in the successful establishment

of School Councils. Undoubtedly, the time factor of such an implementation

process, coupled with the unresolved school designation process, could delay

the remaining schools from delving immediately into their legislated School

Council governance functions and mandate (Department of Education Official,

1997, personal communication).

The School Council role in decision-making at the school site has been

defined by government, in terms of council functions. The decision-making

parameters are boundaried by these legislated functions:

- advise on quality of teaching and learning

- facilitate parent and community involvement

- approve school improvement plan

- approve and monitor fundraising

- assist in monitoring performance

-monitor implementation of recommendation to improve performance (School Council Policy Statement, lines 180-201).

The School Council Policy Statement (1995) and the key informant discourse highlights the School Protocol Agreement as the negotiation tool for School Boards and School Councils. The researcher found that the protocol agreement negotiated between School Boards and School Councils is pivotal to the successful performance of School Council roles and functions and ultimately School Council effectiveness. As noted in the data collection discussed in Chapter 3, the study must examine the School Protocol Agreements, formed between the School Boards and each Piloted School Council during the 1994-95 school year.

The researcher found that two of the protocol agreements took considerable time to negotiate due to the inability of the School Board and respective School Councils to find consensus on School Council authority and decision-making (Department of Education Official, 1996, personal communication). The problem of School Protocol Agreement negotiation is representative of the insistence by many School Council members for School Council legislated decision-making authority. The findings of the Pilot School

Council Project offer corroboration on the issue of decision-making authority in that:

> Council members were again asked in 1996 how much decision-making authority councils should have in various areas. Responses did not vary significantly from the first year. Council respondents again agreed that councils should have decision-making authority on every item listed with the exception of hiring. Items on which there was agreement included: school budgets, scheduling, professional development, staff requirements, and instructional practices (Pilot School Council Project 1996, lines 432-448).

The <u>School Protocol Agreements</u> are defined in the discourse as:

> a statement of intent, on behalf of both partners, as to the roles each will undertake in working to improve the school. It is also the mechanism by which a Board may delegate additional areas of Council involvement and/or responsibility, beyond those mandated in legislation (<u>Working Together For Educational Excellence</u> 1996, lines 111-121).

The majority of the School Protocol Agreements' discourse did not vary in the degree to which decision-making was decentralized to the School Councils. With one exception, the remainder of School Protocol Agreements had no decentralized decision-making authority for budgeting, curriculum, or hiring. The key informant for the study revealed that the degree of decentralized decision-making and the specific areas for School Council involvement in decision-making, are prefaced and parametered by the revised Schools Act (1996). The key informant also indicated that School boards would have control over the degree to which decision-making is devolved to School Councils in that "a Board may delegate additional areas of Council involvement and/or responsibility, beyond those mandated in legislation" (Working Together For Educational Excellence 1996, lines 119-217). Therefore, the School Council legislation affords some latitude of interpretation at the School Board level.

The key informant and the School Council Policy Statement (1995) discourse show that School Boards will determine the degree of decentralized decision-making for School Councils. The key informant states that the decision-making role of the School Council:

hinges on how hard-nosed the board wants to be. If the board wants to be extremely narrow in its interpretation of the [School Council] legislation...I guess [the School board] can be that way and get away with

it. We'll have to see if that causes any friction and whether in fact

government would change legislation in order to make it play out

differently (lines 110-124).

The discourse, just presented, suggests that the new School Boards do have

broad control over the degree of decentralized decision-making for School

Councils. An indication of the variance of School Board interpretation of School

Council legislation and subsequent willingness of the boards to decentralize

degrees of decision-making to School Councils can be found in the key

informant's admission that:

in the pilot project on School Councils we saw quite a bit of

variation in how willing the board was to engage in a reasonable

negotiation [of the School Protocol Agreements]. There were

boards that wanted to be extremely tight about it...[decentralized

decision-making]...on the grounds that, you know, they had the

ultimate responsibility and accountability, and so on, and they

can't turn that...[decision-making power and authority]...over to

School Councils. There were some other boards who were more

than willing to turn many of these things over to School Councils;

so whether the legislation is written as it is written, whether a very

liberal or very restrictive [School Board] interpretation gets put on

it, it's going to be interesting to see the tale that gets told when [all]

the protocol agreements are negotiated (lines 503-537).

The above discourse strongly informs the study's research question on the illusion or reality of a transfer of power and authority for decentralized decision-making to the School Council.

Research Question 2

Is the proposed transference of power and authority for educational decision-making, from the current centralized structure to a decentralized one, an illusion or a reality?

The research category for question 2 focuses on the issue of devolution of decision-making power and authority to the local level - the school site. It has been established earlier in this thesis that the School Council structure has been chosen by the Government of Newfoundland as the model for stakeholder participation in School-Based Decision-Making. The literature review showed that the major tenets of decentralized decision-making include the devolution of *power* and *authority* to School Councils for decision-making.

If the School Council structures are to become fully autonomous at the local school site, the transfer of decision-making power and authority, from the top bureaucratic level to the bottom level, where decisions are implemented, must occur. This research question is essentially asking whether or not the Newfoundland Government will establish decentralized decision-making School Councils by transferring decision-making power and authority to School Councils.

Adjusting the Course I, (1993), the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's first policy document following the Royal Commission (1992), formats its discussion of the reform policy directives on education decision-making and governance in the context of three organizational levels; the document's order of discussion begins first, with the School Board level, second, the provincial level, and third, the school level. The fact that the government did not begin discussing the top level of the organizational pyramid - the Department of Education - is suggestive of a possible ideological change in policy direction for education governance and decision-making. This flanked order might suggest the foreshadowing of a more flattened, linear organizational approach to education decision-making for Newfoundland's education system.

Furthermore, Government not only acknowledges the decentralized decision-making vision of the Royal Commission, but affirms government's

commitment to that vision by accepting it as the mandate for education reform. This affirmation is suggested by the chronological flow of discourse presented in Adjusting the Course, (1993) where the following statements confirm the above-noted point that:

> Government is committed to reforming the education system to ensure that our children will, in the future, attain a level of educational excellence comparable to the best in the world...[and therefore]...major changes have to be made in the way in which education is governed and organized (Adjusting the Course I, lines 162-165; 170-172).

Government further states that:

> Restructuring the system is not an end in itself. The purpose of restructuring is to streamline the system to make it easier to attain our basic goal. The most effective structure is a simple one, which minimizes the number of administrative bodies, and facilitates decision-making (Adjusting the Course I, lines 180-186).

The above statements show that Adjusting the Course I (1993) shows that government intends to reduce excessive education bureaucracy. As

evidenced by the discourse segment extracted from Adjusting the Course I, government states that it will "keep the number of decision-making and administrative entities to a minimum" (lines 190-192). These statements are suggestive of a move toward a "bottom-up" approach representative of a possible decentralization initiative.

Further strength for the researcher's initial analytical pattern of a possible decentralization agenda is found in some of the reform principles stated in Adjusting the Course I (1993) that education governance reform will:

facilitate greater parent involvement in the education [decision-making] of their children, improve school-based leadership and decision-making, provide for participation in governance for citizens who do not belong to the denominations now holding rights, ...[and]...keep the number of decision-making and administrative entities to a minimum (lines 187-192).

The researcher found, however, that Government operationalized its education governance reform commitment in a *politically correct* middle-of the road approach. Government implemented the Royal Commission recommendation to reduce the number of provincial school boards from the original 27 to ten. Government later increased the number of provincial school

boards from ten to 11 by giving approval to establish the province's first Francophone school board. The reduction of provincial school boards would further suggest government has taken an initial step towards realizing the Royal Commission's decentralized decision-making recommendation.

Government considered the stakeholders' call for a greater devolution of power to the School Councils but, as the key informant points out:

> In reading the Act, the Royal Commission and all the things leading up to it, there was some argument whether school councils should take on the power or some of the powers of the boards but the answer finally was "no", it should not take on the powers of the boards (Key Informant , lines 37-44).

In terms of School Council decision-making power and authority the key informant maintains that:

> the only real powers that exist in the sense of the ability to control the system are: (1) powers to spend money and (2) the powers over personnel and the SC has not actually been given any of these things (Key Informant, lines 333-341).

The key informant reiterated that within the nature of the legislated role of the School Council "there really isn't any power" (line 342). The key informant indicates that the issue of power should be seen in terms of *influence* and that influence needs to be reframed with the question posed differently to ask:

> Is there any influence?...If the school council wants to press its
> influence to the maximum degree, it should, in my estimation, be
> able to have a considerable amount of influence over what goes
> on in the school (lines 343-351).

Further clarification can be derived from the comment:

> I think there is a fundamental distinction to be made between
> power and influence, and that distinction sometimes gets lost and
> people will say, "Well they [School Councils] haven't any power
> therefore, they're useless" (lines 352-360).

Research Question 3

Will the theory of decentralization, as presented in Adjusting the Course I and II (1993, 1994) and called for in the Commission Report, Our Children, Our Future (1992), translate into relevant, meaningful practice at the school and classroom level?

The decision-making areas of emphasis for School Councils at present are the promotion of greater levels of parental involvement in the school, improvement of student achievement, and policy advisement to the higher bureaucratic levels. A strong communication link between home and school prefaces the promotion of parental involvement in School Councils. An examination of the 1994-95 <u>School Protocol Agreements</u> developed in conjunction with the <u>Pilot School Council Project</u> (1995, 1996) showed clearly that the decision-making status for post-reform School Councils is advisory. Some of the protocol discourse is presented to support the finding of advisory status. The <u>School Protocol Agreement (A)</u> stipulated that their School Council will "advise the school board on school level decisions, such as curriculum implementation, student evaluation, funding, staffing and student support services" (lines 50-56). The <u>School Protocol Agreement (B)</u> stated that "the School Council will make decisions at the school level and advise the school board on matters that affect the school...[and will have]...input in the hiring of the school principal and in filling staff vacancies" (lines 66-74). In discussing the general responsibilities of their School Council, the <u>School Protocol Agreement</u> <u>(C)</u> indicated that their council may be able:

> to adopt some policies and programs to be implemented by the
> principal and staff of the school, such policies and programs not

to contravene those of the Government and school board, nor any sections of the Schools Act or other legislation (lines 70-80).

One protocol agreement, <u>School Protocol Agreement (D)</u>, did speak to the issue of decentralized decision-making for curriculum and instructional budgeting where "Council will be granted the authority to control the disbursement of the instructional budget received from the...board, monies received through fundraising, and from other sources" (lines 80-90).

One school district's <u>School Council Handbook</u>, adapted from the Department of Education <u>School Council Handbook</u> prototype, indicated that:

> School Councils do not have the authority to impose decisions upon schools...but rather, Councils can influence the decision-making process at the school level; the processes of review, monitoring, and assessment of school operations and the submission of recommendations for either school staff or board governance consideration (lines 334-346).

The handbook consistently stated that "the prime role of School Councils is advisory by definition" (lines 10-11; 24-25; 66-67).

The devolution of and subsequent effectiveness of a meaningful School Council decision-making role is uncertain and difficult to gauge at this time due to two factors found in the analysis of this study: the lack of decentralized power, authority, and control over curriculum and budgeting in the <u>School Protocol Agreement</u> and subsequently the latitude of legislative interpretation of School Council legislated functions afforded to the School boards. This path of advisory status for School Council decision-making began with Government's interpretation of the Royal Commission's vision for the devolution of decision-making power and authority and subsequent vagueness of a decentralization role in the <u>Adjusting the Course I</u> (1993) discourse. Government's view on restructuring educational decision-making is premised on having schools assume greater responsibility for program delivery and making schools more accountable (<u>Adjusting the Course I</u>, lines 230-233).

The analysis of the key informant discourse provides crucial information to answer research question #3. The key informant postulates that there is the "inherent danger that government will consider their job done once structural reform has been achieved" (lines 340-344). In reference to government's reform legislation, the key informant states that the legislation is "notable for an emphasis on structure and a lack of emphasis on substance" (Key Informant, 285-287).

This discourse is representative of the generality and broadness of discourse statements in the government education reform documents that appear to lack substantive details that would enable implementation of decentralized decision-making at the School Council level. Government does not, in the course of subsequent policy statements, clear up this cloud of elusive discourse. The Pilot Project School Council Report (1996) noted School Council difficulty with the vagueness of their role definition and functions and saw the need for "legislated decision-making authority..." at the School Council level (line 11).

The purpose of reform of educational governance and decision-making was not decentralization of educational decision-making according to the key informant:

> But in my experience and that goes back to the Royal Commission and my responsibility for implementing that report we did not approach the whole thing from the point of view that decentralization was the main goal (lines 89-95).

The discourse shows that the post-reform governance structure will not result in a decentralized School Council governance model:

Certainly I don't see anything but the most minimum of moves in that direction [DDM] in the province at the moment, certainly not between School boards and School Councils (Key Informant, lines 118-123)...[and]...I think that we are a long way away from any kind of extreme or moderate version of decentralization particularly administrative decentralization" (Key Informant, lines 132-136).

Consequently, the School Council legislation is advisory in definition and levy to wide interpretation by the School boards:

In terms of the protocol agreements, the board is forced to adhere to a minimum set up in legislation. That minimum does not include block funding to the schools. If the board wants to go beyond the minimum, it is free to do so. There's nothing in the legislation to prevent the board from being more liberal in that respect. It's ultimately between the boards and the councils, and the school council can't rely on the legislation for anything more than the functions outlined in it (Key Informant, lines 290-303).

The School Council Policy Statement (1995) was revised in 1996. The School Council Policy Statement (1996) states that "the primary role of the school

council is advisory by definition" (lines 1189-1190). With Royal assent given by the Lieutenant Governor to the revised <u>Schools Act 1996</u>, School advisory status is entrenched in law whereby they will advise on the quality of teaching and learning in the school…(Schools Act, 1996, 1.b), [and]…advise the board on matters of concern to the school and community (<u>Schools Act</u>, 1996, 26, 1.d). The key informant says the post-reform governance structure should be viewed **"more as a decentralization of influence and advocacy, rather than of power"** (lines 32-37).

Clear evidence to answer the researcher's key research questions is summarized in the following statement that School Councils:

> have been given a fair bit of responsibility for advocacy for trying
> to ensure high quality of education in the schools but they [School
> Councils] haven't been given control of personnel or money and
> given that, it can't be argued that there is any real decentralization
> of power" (Key Informant, lines 52-59).

The key informant does still believe in the potential effectiveness of government's School Council model but cautions that "Prospects for substantive change [are] very uncertain. Except for School Councils, legislation [is] short on provisions which will act as [a] spur to higher performance" (lines 337-341).

The key informant strongly advocates for giving School Councils time to establish themselves and test their advisory role defined in legislation:

> The necessary time will have to be allotted for the process to yield any measurable effects. The key informant asserts that "we will have to give School Councils a chance to get up and running before we can evaluate their effectiveness (lines 444-445).

Fullan (1993) lends support here by drawing attention to the fact that educational change in any form is a time dependent process conditioned by stakeholder buy-in and validation.

Discussion of the Findings

The data extracted from a critical analysis of the education reform documents, ranging from Adjusting the Course I (1993) up to the revised legislation, the new Schools Act 1996, clearly demonstrates that the government does not intend a guaranteed direct transfer of power and authority for education decision-making to School Councils. At this point in the study, the completion of the data analysis, it is necessary to return full circle to the macro level. This is done to highlight the significant issues, arising out of the data, that inform government ideology for centralization-decentralization policy formulation. The post-study discussion of the macro political arena is presented next.

Discussion of the Macro Political Arena. Government ideology, for major education governance restructuring of Newfoundland and Labrador's education system, must be reconstructed to illuminate government's decentralized decision-making agenda. The deconstruction and coding process of data analysis saw periodic refinement of the coding, throughout the progression of the data analysis, in an effort to unravel the layers of the education reform discourse. This macro to micro process facilitated the emergence of the significant issues that informed the findings. These issues, when reconstructed, focus and synthesize the critical mosaic patterned by the data analysis on the illusion or reality of a decentralization of education decision-making for the post-reform education governance in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Adjusting the Course I (1993), by far, presented the richest discourse of the major issues formulative of government's ideological basis for its substantive reform initiatives. The major issues that emanated from the data analysis of government's ideology are: *economy and power*.

Economic rationalization is adopted wholesale by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador for its extensive structural reform agenda. Government legitimizes the need for massive restructuring of the province's

education system on the basis that "It has become increasingly evident that improved education is crucial to our social and economic well being" (p. 1).

The Newfoundland Government policy discourse for educational reform is primarily based on a lexicon of business and economic terminology as evidenced in Adjusting the Course I (1993) and II (1994). The discourse of both documents is predominantly representative of the New Right ideology, identified in the literature review. "Streamline", "restructuring", system "efficiency", "core and secondary core areas", and "performance" are examples of the restructuring discourse inherent in government's New Right ideological position. Other examples abound in the government education reform discourse that represent a recurring thematic pattern of the New Right ideological position advocated by corporative agendas to mask the effects of fiscal cuts and market competition. "Restructuring, streamlining, high expectations, standards, monitoring, accountability, assessment, transform our society, social and economic well-being, core areas of language, mathematics, and science" are some recurring examples of the conceptual words and phrases emanating from government's carte blanche application of the corporate-influenced New Right ideology to its education policy discourse.

Government discourse links economic performance with education performance. In government's ideological view, one is interdependent on the

other for its progress. In <u>Adjusting The Course II</u> (1994), Government rationalizes its economic foundation for education reform on the premise that improved system performance and increased student achievement are central to an improved provincial economy:

> there is little doubt that the economic potential of the province cannot be increased without a substantial increase in its educational performance...[most notably]...education must become a core element of our strategy for both economic and social development...[for] a strong case can be made that higher levels of educational achievement can, in itself, yield considerable economic and social gain (<u>Adjusting The Course II</u>, 1994, pp. 4-5).

Government denotes curriculum change as a key element if education system improvement is to effect positive growth and development for the economy. Government proposed substantial curricular modification based on its economic performance ideological principles. Government's view in <u>Adjusting the Course II</u> (1994) outlines curriculum change as a crucial factor, if Newfoundland is to "...catch up to other parts of Canada...", (p. 4), and subsequently, "...transform the economy of this province from one of the weakest to one of the strongest in Canada" (p. 5).

The discourse of the policy documents reproduces a hegemonic struggle for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in the form of conflicting ideologies. Cody (1994) established the framework and frequency of the major issues that dominated the Newfoundland Royal Commission hearings. Cody (1994) and, in turn, Cantwell (1995), indicate that viewpoints placing the role of education in a global competitive context for economic gain dominated the Royal Commission Final Report to the Government of Newfoundland. Subsequent government policy statements, most notably, Adjusting the Course I (1993) and II (1994) called for a reform of the provincial curriculum to bring about substantial economic improvement. Change & Challenge (1992) outlined the former Well's administration strategic economic plan. The government wants to establish "new partnerships with public and private sectors based on common interests and mutual interdependence...[so as to]...mobilize business, labour, and the education community" to improve education by prioritizing curriculum subjects (pp. 27-28).

Curriculum based on assumed economic needs, rather than learner needs and interests, prefaces a hegemonic struggle for society. The ideology of a liberal education for all students, accompanied by the inherent expectation and right to choose courses that match one's interests, is challenged openly by

the vocational education ideology advocated by business and furthered by government.

Government has designated math, science, and language as "core areas" in the provincial curriculum. All students must now demonstrate and attain defined performance standards of evaluation. This is a monumental change and ideological shift from the former educational aim of all students performing "to the best of their ability" (Program of Studies, 1996). The Atlantic Canadian provinces have reached consensus on establishing core curriculum, outcomes, and performance standards for the "core" subjects of math, science, and language (Fagan, 1995).

Government's ideological stance emanates from more than a lexical New Right position. Fairclough states that "presuppositions, implicatures, [and] metaphors..." not only have a place in, but are necessary and valid in critical discourse analysis (p. 74). Adjusting the Course I (1993) presumes that Newfoundland's education system has been failing to educate its students to a level that can "rank with the best in the nation" (p. l). Government's stated goal of transformation from "persistent under-achievement" to national achievement standards is premised on government's belief that all stakeholders will assume their delegated role and freely participate in the concept of 'the whole village raising the child'.

This consistent usage of "achievement" and "standards" thematic discourse, found in the data, is representative of the "presuppositions, implicatures, [and] metaphors..." emanating from the Newfoundland Government's education reform discourse; this discourse enabled the researcher to reconstruct the ideological underpinnings of social and cultural reproduction that inform the post-reform education governance context for Newfoundland and Labrador.

Government is basing success of the School Council model on the assumption that parents, teachers, community representatives, and other education stakeholders will invest the necessary time to operationalize School Councils. Stoll & Fink (1996), in citing Creese (1995), lend support to the time investment issue by maintaining a practical, realistic stance: "In a changing world with new roles and responsibilities, there is a lot of uncertainty about the part school councils play. Many members are in full-time employment and do not have considerable amounts of time to visit schools..." (p. 138).

Government's ideological stance takes further shape in the policy statement on its commitment to education reform: "Government is committed to reforming the education system to ensure that our children will, in the future, attain a level of educational excellence comparable to the best in the world" (Adjusting the Course I, 1993, p. 2). Government has affirmed their commitment

to all Newfoundland and Labrador students in the discourse of <u>Adjusting the Course I</u> (1993). As mentioned earlier, the key informant indicated that government education reform legislation does not address the classroom level to any great degree of verifiable substance.

Government's ideological stance is premised on the belief that system improvement will evolve once an administrative transfer of power occurs through a structural re-centralizing shift of power and authority. An administrative re-centralization of system administration, power, and authority is viewed by government as the only way to reform Newfoundland's education system: "The new Term 17 limits the powers of the Churches substantially compared to the previous powers" (Key Informant, lines 316-318). What has occurred is "the movement of control from one central force, namely the Churches, to another central force, namely the government" (Key Informant, lines 323-326).

Table 3, on page 127, provides a snapshot of the Newfoundland education reform agenda issues.

Table 3.
Education Reform Agenda Issues Identified In The Data Analysis

- Power and Decision-making Control
- Reduction of Church Control
- Choice of School
- Democratic School Board participation/representation
- Minimum Bureaucratic Structure
- Provincial School Construction Board
- Economy
- Higher Achievement
- Standards
- Curriculum Changes
- System Accountability
- Claimed Spirit of Collaboration, Partnership, and DDM
- Increased Stakeholder Role in Educational Decisional-Making

Structural Reform of Educational Governance and Decision-Making.

The education reform discourse spoke to the issue of power and authority for educational decision-making in the post-reform governance structure in one main context: structural reform. Structural reform of the education system's governance is the primary context emerging from the data for the reason to centralize or decentralize decision-making control. Structural Reform of Newfoundland's education system is translating into a recentralized power at the top of the organizational pyramid. The key informant for the thesis study, states that "the powers of the Churches will never be the same" (lines 334-335). In furthering this point, the key informant comments that the "...new

Term 17 limits the powers of the Churches substantially compared to its previous powers" (lines 316-318).

The power and authority of the Churches may have changed. The key informant states:

> If you think of the new term 17 as being a centralizing rather than as a decentralizing force...it is the movement of control from one central force, namely the Churches, to another central force, namely the government (lines 316-326).

The key informant indicated that "government did not back the Royal Commission" but rather "gave in and made some substantial concessions" (lines 258-260). In the key informant presentation, attended by the reseacher, the key informant highlighted the major areas of decision-making control that government conceded to the Churches in an effort to reach a negotiated settlement on the Term 17 Amendment. These concessions included: (1) the right of the Churches to form School Board level Denominational Education Committees (DEC) for the purpose of hiring denominational teachers for designated unidenominational schools; and (2) two-third religious denominational school board representation. These are substantial concessions. The Churches' loss of administrative control, power, and authority

in educational decision-making at the provincial level has been appeased and offset at the school board district level with the right to both establish district level DEC's and maintain local religious denominational schools called uni-denominational schools; the operation of any school is subject to school viability guidelines that will set the rules upon which schools will be accredited to operate. Essentially then an administrative re-centralization has been the essence of the structural reform. The Churches retain "jurisdiction over religious education and pastoral care" (Adjusting the Course I, 1993, lines 57-60) .

What will be the role of the School boards given the re-centralization of administrative powers from the Churches to the government?

The key informant responds:

Yes, interestingly enough none of that has changed much in the new regime as compared to the old one with one exception. There is a greater degree of centralization in the hands of the government at the expense of the Churches, not the school boards (lines 309-315).

The key informant goes on to state:

With respect to financial responsibilities, curriculum, or hiring of teachers the relationship between board and government hasn't

changed all that dramatically. But with respect to governance and who controls school boards, boards are clearly creatures of the government whereas previously they were creatures of the Churches. That is a substantial change... (lines 340-350).

Centralization - Decentralization Continuum. The Royal Commission (1992), as noted earlier, stressed the need to devolve power to the local school site for a meaningful stakeholder decision-making role. The piloted School Councils recommended that the councils not have full decision-making authority in the area of personnel and hiring. School Councils did stress, however, the need for the necessary power and authority to make key decisions in the areas of curriculum and budgeting. Decentralized educational decision-making for School Councils is contingent upon the degree of decentralized decision-making that can be negotiated with the School Boards in the areas of curriculum and budgeting.

Specific Areas of Decentralized Decision-Making for the School Councils And School Council Decisional Areas. The power to decide and the authority to effect decisions on the key areas noted in the literature for DDM: budgeting, curriculum, and personnel have not devolved to the School Council.

Collins (1996), research chair for the Pilot School Council Project in Newfoundland, lends corroboration in an interview with The Globe and Mail, (June 10, 1996), that School Councils in Newfoundland:

> do not have the authority for example to hire and fire staff, set budgets or curriculum. Control over these key schooling issues still rests with elected local school boards and provincial ministries of education (p. A.6).

The key informant intimates that an increased decentralized decision-making role from the School Boards to the School Councils *"could be negotiated in the School Protocol Agreement (SPA)"* (lines 282-284):

> The board does have more flexibility to what it decentralizes to the school...the board is free to be highly centralized or highly decentralized with such things as purchasing, maintenance, or any other things on which boards spend their money. It will be interesting to see how all of this will play out with the boards. Once they get their money ...it is up to the board...how to spend it (Key Informant, lines 268-281).

School Council power, authority, decision-making parameters, and participant role in relation to the School board were key issues for Council members. Clear definition in each of these areas was strongly called for by Council participants (Pilot Project School Council Report, 1995; 1996). The power and authority for effective decision-making was a significant issue for all councils (Pilot Project School Council Report, 1995).

School Council Role - Advisory or Full Decision-Making. All data showed that the decision-making role, status, and parameters of the School Council, as defined in current legislation, will be advisory to the School Board. The discourse analysis has shown that the School Council advisory status theme has grown gradually from the government's ideological seeds, contained in Adjusting the Course I (1993), cultivated and nurtured in the Pilot Project, (1995, 1996), School Council Policy Statement (1995), and School Council Handbook (1995, 1996) and reached full blossom in the provincial legislation, the Schools Act (1996).

The School Council handbook is currently in its third draft revision. A Department of Education official identified that a third revision was necessary to bring the handbook more in line with the School Council section of the Schools Act (1996) legislation. School Councils have not been granted full decision-

making roles. Rather, the Schools Act legislation mandates an advisory role. The legislated functions of the School Council for Newfoundland's education system are open to School Board interpretation and negotiation through the School Protocol Agreement.

The pilot School Councils did in the first year of the study adamantly express the need for full decision-making in all areas except the hiring of personnel (Pilot School Council Project Report, 1995). School Council feedback indicated an advisory input role into staffing requirements and personnel hiring (Pilot School Council Project Report, 1995; 1996). The Pilot study report, (1995), in discussing the authority of School Councils, highlights School Council member dissatisfaction with the lack of power and authority realized in their role on the piloted School Councils. Legislated decision-making power and authority for Newfoundland School Councils was called for by pilot School Councils. School Council ideology is represented in the report by one council member's comment extracted from the Pilot Project report which states:

If that's all we are - an advisory group - these councils will very quickly disappear...councils are expected to have a certain amount of authority...every one of us wanted to get on this council so that we could affect some changes which would be for the

betterment of students...If we're not doing that, then councils won't last (Pilot School Council Project Report, 1995, p. 13).

In contrast, one former school board, in a presentation to government on School Board autonomy, expressed their ideological stand as represented in the board's comment that:

> The proposed legislation provides an enormous centralization of power to the Minister [of Education]. The School Board is concerned that this threatens the fundamental interplay of checks and balances between various levels of Government, so vital to our Canadian democracy. Also, it poses a risk that school boards will become merely advisory in essence. If this occurs, the boards will be severely hampered in their abilities to meaningfully relate to their local community and to recruit strong candidates to serve as trustees committed to education (School Board Education Reform Document A, 1996, lines 323-47).

The above School board discourse could represent a foreshadowing of a future argument and rationale from the advisory School Councils once each school across the province has operationalized the School Council advisory model.

As indicated earlier, an official at the Department of Education has indicated that the need has been recognized to bring the School Council handbook in line with the new legislation to reflect the legislated School Council's advisory role. The official acknowledges that the Department is currently in the process of draft feedback on an updated version of the handbook that is expected to be in final draft for school districts for September 1997.

It is very probable that all provincial schools will not have School Councils in place by the designated time frame - the end of the 1997-98 school year. The Minister of Education placed top priority on the School Designation process and many school boards have placed the School Council formation on the back burner due to the required attention for school designation, school consolidation, and new district formation workload (Department of Education Official, 1997, personal communication). Table 4, on page 136, highlights the probable results and implications evident from the data analysis.

Table 4.

DDM CDAT Results of the Data Analysis.

Factor	Possible Outcomes	Result
Ideology	Dominant Ideology, Shared Ideology, Conflicting, or Combination	New Right Ideology Hegemonic Struggle
Decision-Making Scope and Role	Full Decision-Making or Advisory	Advisory/Influential Role
Parameters of Decision-Making	Necessary Degree of Power and Authority	Possible Conflicts and Power Struggles
Mandate, Vision, Mission, and Goals	Clear Definition or Vague Outline	Increased Chance of Consensus
Council Participant Composition and Representation	Equal, Balanced, or Disproportionate	Territorial Conflicts
School Council Roles	Clear Definition or Vague Outline	Uncertainty
Tenor and Degree of Support by School and District for DDM	Full, Moderate, None	SPA will show the degree of School District Support;
School Protocol Agreement Human and Fiscal Resources	Degree of DDM or Re-Centralization Approach Sufficient Or Non-Sufficient Resources to Implement DDM	Political Advocacy Role

Government's ideological rationale for attaining its stated goal, cost efficiency, hinges on structural reform (<u>Adjusting the Course I</u>, 1993):

> Restructuring is only the first step in a much broader program of reform and is necessary to streamline and refocus the system to make it easier to attain the province's educational goals. It is also necessary if we are to make the system accessible and accountable to the public. This model will help us reach our goals by *simplifying* decision-making, *allowing* resources to be shifted to teaching and learning, and *ensuring* accountability, [emphasis added], (lines 108-120).

Among the primary discourse in government's statement are the words "Simplifying, Allowing, and Ensuring," extracted from the above reform discourse segment. These words suggest rhetorical connotation and could be largely representative of government's hidden manifestations of their reform initiatives.

Could "simplifying" translate into *downsizing,* a New Right ideological component? The use of the word "Allowing" might connotate hierarchial ownership and positional power. The term could suggest devolving the decision-making for resource provision to the School Board level as opposed to a full devolution of decision-making control to the School Council level.

Paradoxically, education reform discourse has repeatedly stated that decision-making will devolve to the level of decision-making implementation - the school level. "Ensuring" could pertain to legislatively mandating all-system accountability for student achievement and system success to the school level, thereby devolving any governmental role and responsibility for system effectiveness.

The continual trail of education reform events will tell the tale. Will School Boards become the bearer of bad news constrained by reduced budgets for teacher units and curriculum resources? Early signs of reform implementation are showing massive teacher layoffs and program cuts in physical education and music education throughout several areas of the province. This finding supports the theoretical position of Harris & Berger (1997): the implications of the reality of government restructuring by downsizing is based on a broadly based neo-liberalist agenda. Consequently, Newfoundland rural schools will suffer the deepest cuts due to government's elimination of the two-percent clause that guaranteed that yearly staffing cuts would not exceed two-percent of a rural school district's total teacher unit allocation (NLTA, 1996; Ministerial Statement, 1996; Hansard Debate, 1996). What meaningful level of decision-making will School Councils be able to execute in an advisory role? What accountability mechanisms will be put in place to ensure that School Council views are given

equitable consideration at the School board and Department of Education levels? In light of the findings in this study, these questions are emerging as new critical questions informed by this study.

The issue of power to make decisions and to effect change dominated the Decentralized Decision-Making literature and was identified as a significant issue in the data for government and its School Council pilots. A recurrent finding in the data is that School Councils in Newfoundland will be advisory in education decision-making. What then was government's ideological foundation and subsequent motive for some attempt toward decentralized decision-making in education reform policy? The key informant identifies *political decentralization* as government's base of ideology in that:

> The reasons for decentralization particularly in terms of School
> Councils and School boards and between government and school
> boards would likely have more to do with paying some attention to
> the politics of advocacy to the presumed desirability of having
> more people involved in the presumed democratic functions that
> sort of thing [School Council] serves and all these things are
> purely political motives for moving towards decentralization (lines
> 97-109).

Summary

The critical discourse analysis for this study was informed and illuminated by the data primarily collected and extracted from the Newfoundland and Labrador education reform documents, and the key informant comments. The researcher worked with the data in two forms: original whole documents and ideologically deconstructed and reconstructed document discourse. Seidel (1995) and Wiseman (1979) strongly adhere to "working back and forth between the parts and the whole of...[the]...data" to decrease the chance of distortion and loss of meaning. This process of analysis can achieve the goal of reconstructing "the data in a meaningful...fashion" (Jorgenson, 1989, cited in Seidel, 1995, p. E7).

The following areas were investigated in an effort to answer the primary and secondary research questions: (1) transfer of power and authority for education decision-making, (2) degree of decentralized decision-making, (DDM), (3) specific types of decision-making areas in education for DDM, and (4) government's claimed efforts to translate an espoused decentralization theory into practice. For the data analysis, the analytical coding of government policy discourse facilitated the reconstruction of the segments of DDM discourse into related phenomena. The discourse segments on DDM outlined government's view on what level of governance should retain what decision-making role,

authority, and ultimately power. The Royal Commission (1992) identified the following as one of goals for restructuring Newfoundland's education system: "to provide opportunities for access to the governance of schools and school boards by all responsible adults" (p. 224). The Royal Commission (1992) states that it wants "...to provide more ownership of the system at the local level, and to increase parental involvement in particular" (p. 225).

The critical analysis for this study resulted in the deconstruction and synthesis of the following primary issues that inform the study's findings: **ideology, power, decision-making authority, stakeholder role perception, administrative re-centralization, political decentralization, and School Council effectiveness**. The pattern of discourse segments that emerged in the data analysis outline clearly the major finding of the study that the *power, authority,* and local school level control for educational decision-making in the key areas of budgeting, curriculum, and personnel rests with the Department of Education and the School Boards. DDM for School Councils in the post-reform governance structure of Newfoundland's education system will not occur in the context outlined in the literature. Based on the data analysis, the researcher can generalize and synthesize the findings of the data to conclude that the decentralization of education decision-making is an illusion, not a reality, for the post-reform system of school governance for Newfoundland and Labrador. For

decentralized decision-making to occur under the legislated School Council model for Newfoundland substantial change in current education reform policy rests on fundamental shifts in government ideology and subsequent policy formulation for education governance that must include the sharing and devolution of some degree of decision-making power with the School Councils. The implications of the study's findings, some conclusionary comments, recommendations, and suggestions for further study follow next in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusions And Recommendations

Introduction

As has always been done, make sense on your own of what is
shown and told. Find and give back what you hear as the world's
own wisdom and, when you can, given back just a bit more of your
own (Rose, 1988 as cited by Seidel, Friese & Leonard, 1995).

The final chapter presents concluding comments on the thesis by
providing the reader the following: (1) a closing summary of the study, (2)
summative and conclusionary discussion of the findings, possible implications,
and recommendations for Newfoundland and Labrador's post-reform education
governance structure, and (3) suggestions for further study.

The critical researcher must deconstruct and reconstruct the
underpinnings of the ideology in a critical investigation. The following statement
by Doyle (1995) lends support to the researcher's decentralization critical
research endeavour:

Critical research dares us to look beyond common sense, to
challenge [seemingly] accepted definitions, to uncover
manifestations of hidden power, and to search for new and more
appropriate methods of knowing more about education (p. 12).

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to critically examine the education governance reform discourse related to educational decision-making, at the school level, with the hope of determining the degree of decentralized decision-making possible for the post-reform Newfoundland education system. The researcher moved from a macro to micro critical analysis of the data in an effort to deconstruct the data. In order to reconstruct the data, and illuminate the illusion or reality of decentralized decision-making for Newfoundland's post-reform education system, the reconstruction process moved from micro to macro. In light of government's espoused decentralization theory, the study provided a critical examination of the School Council as the proposed autonomous structure through which government made the claim that increased local involvement in educational decision-making will be facilitated and greater local control of schools achieved.

Primary data for the study on decentralized decision-making included: provincial legislation, education reform documents, policy statements, handbooks, and key informant comments. The researcher created a Decentralized Decision-Making Critical Discourse Analytical Typology (DDM CDAT) based on the conceptual framework of the literature review and findings of this thesis.

The data was coded and the discourse, then segmented, organized through categorization, and examined in whole and part discourse form to facilitate the emergence of motifs, recurring patterns and finally, primary themes. The primary themes that emerged in this study were informed by the findings from the research questions, and led the researcher to derive and formulate some possible implications on the decentralization of educational decision-making for post-reform education governance in Newfoundland. The following critical themes emerged:

Theme 1 - **Political Decentralization of Educational Decision-Making**

Theme 2 - **School Council As An Advisory Structure For Educational Decision-Making**

Conclusionary Discussion of the Findings

The deconstruction and reconstruction process of the data was conducted in the following manner:

1. Discourse segment motifs were extracted from the data, then grouped and categorized by congruency and similarity to derive the findings.

2. Findings were examined to formulate primary themes.

3.   Primary themes enabled the compilation of the main conclusion for the thesis.

4.   A Main Conclusion yielded a Critical Theory.

The researcher reassembled the thematic motifs extracted from the discourse segments of the data for the reconstruction process.   Striking similarities among the motifs were noted and other related motifs re-examined and recorded separately for relevance for partial suggestions for further post-thesis study recommendations.

Prevalent among most of the discourse segments, and to varying degrees of depth, were motifs on:

1.   Lack of decision-making power and authority for School Councils.

2.   Transfer of decision-making power from the Churches to the Government.

3.   Excessive bureaucracy.

4.   Advisory role for School Councils in Newfoundland and Labrador.

5.   Parent and Government perception and acknowledgement of parent isolation and exclusion from the decision-making process.

6.   Further centralization of curriculum development at the Department of Education level.

7.   Devolution of responsibility to School Councils and schools for curriculum implementation, student achievement, system performance and accountability without full decision-making power and authority.

8.   Uncertainty and confusion of purpose and scope of School Council decision-making as an education reform imitative.

9.   Degree and latitude of interpretation for the <u>School Protocol Agreement</u> afforded to School Boards by the government.

10.   Further centralization of School Board decision-making control.

11.   Legislated advisory mandate and role for the School Councils.

12.   Pilot project School Councils identify full decision-making power and authority for all areas except personnel hiring.

13.   Unwillingness of most School Boards participating in the Pilot School Council Project to share decision-making power and authority.

14.   Reduction of School Districts results in increased centralization.

15.   Government viewed School Council power for decision-making in terms of influence rather than authority.

16.   Time needed for School Council to set up and operate before effectiveness can be measured; (Finding: Effectiveness of

advisory School Council model difficult to gauge at this point in time).

17. Structural reform was the goal of education reform; (Finding: Decentralization not the goal of government's education reform).

18. Possibility that government will stop at structural reform and consider education reform completed.

19. Current policy course demonstrates that a government move toward decentralization of education decision-making not in the foreseeable future.

20. Decentralization role of School Council, in government's view is a decentralization of influence and advocacy, not power.

21. Newfoundland government education reform based on New Right ideological underpinnings of deficit reduction, cost efficiency, and the idea that economic performance is dependent on education performance.

22. Government has made an ideological shift from the aim of education to develop the whole child and the meeting of individual student needs to a view of education as a 'survival of the fittest' focusing on the attainment of predetermined standardized outcomes and global competitive achievement ranking.

23. Further centralization of power in the Ministerial role for the Minister of Education to hire School Board directors and assistant directors, establish and monitor the School Construction Board, develop curriculum, determine the teacher allocation formula, and set salaries.

24. School Boards are under the control of the government instead of the Churches.

25. Pilot School Councils wanted full decision-making authority primarily in curriculum and budgeting.

26. School Councils want greater degree of decision-making power and authority defined in legislation and the <u>School Protocol Agreements</u>.

27. School Councils do not want only an advisory role.

28. School Board perceives their role as a full decision-making one that is not advisory to government or the schools.

The process of convergence and intersection of motifs, derived from an effort to answer the research questions, generated two principal findings for the study:

Finding #1. Administrative Recentralization

The data clearly reveals administrative recentralization as government's primary purpose and intention for the Royal Commission (1992) and education reform mandate. The education reform document discourse spoke repetitively to the issue of structural reform at the top levels of the organizational pyramid; key educational decision-making is further centralized at the Department of Education and the School Board without a devolution of decision-making power and authority to the school level. Curriculum development, budgeting, and personnel decisions remain centralized at the Department of Education and School Board levels. The key informant identified the abolishment of the current denominational system of educational governance as the main goal of the government's reform effort. Government sought and attained administrative recentralization as a restructuring of the power and control of educational decision-making through secular administrative recentralization.

Finding #2. School Council Advisory Decision-Making Status

Government's espoused theory of decentralization, an interpretation of the Royal Commission (1992) decentralized decision-making recommendation, focused on increasing parent involvement by implementing an *Advisory School Council structure* at the school-community level. Government's School Council

model gives parents, business leaders, and community members a more formalized participatory role in school level decision-making. Government selectively implemented parts of the Royal Commission recommendation on DDM. Through a fragmentary decentralized approach government implements the spirit of the Royal Commission recommendation but stops short of actualizing the crucial aspect of the decision-making recommendation that calls government to share the power and authority of educational decision-making with School Councils. Instead government has provided a legislated platform upon which parents, and others can collectively advocate, and lobby for local school interests in an effort to influence the status quo educational decision-making hierarchy in this province.

School Council decision-making is defined and parametered in the <u>School Protocol Agreement</u> negotiated between School Boards and the councils. School Boards have final say and authoritative control. Therefore, School Council decision-making in curriculum and budgeting is subjective to the degree a School Board is willing to decentralize and share decision-making power and authority with the School Council. Legislation defines minimum advisory functions for School Councils but centralizes the power and authority for educational decision-making at both the School Board and Department of Education levels.

Primary Theme

The above findings inform the formulation of the primary theme derived from the study:

Political Decentralization

School Councils will be advisory in decision-making structure and design. A decentralized full-authority decision-making School Council model will not be implemented at this time. The government chose an advisory decision-making model. The School Council advisory status translates into a role of influence, persuasion, advocacy, and political correctness for School Council members.

A secondary theme echos an implication of government's decision to make School Councils advisory for the post-reform education governance context. School Councils will have to assume a full political advocacy role because government's advisory School Council education reform initiative will cast School Council members into the political arena of education.

The effect of the School Council advisory model cannot be gauged at this point in time. There is insufficient data available to assess the generalizable effectiveness of the advisory School Council for the Newfoundland education system context until the School Council implementation process is complete. The key informant and the School Council Policy Statements and Handbooks

did acknowledge that the window of opportunity does exist to increase the devolution of decision-making power and authority at some future point. School Council autonomy will need further critical study and illumination as the School Council education reform initiative is fully implemented by government's targeted date - the end of the 1997-1998 school year.

School Councils will not have exclusive jurisdiction over their mandated functions in the sense that each School Council must negotiate a School Protocol Agreement. School Councils will be required, by legislation, to abide by the protocol agreement. School Councils will have a board level link via a program coordinator mandated with the responsibility for school improvement.

Many new critical questions arise from the findings of this study. Will School Councils become a successful lobbyist group for their respective schools? Will School Councils want to embrace a political advocacy role in their relation to the existing bureaucratic decision-making structures? All education stakeholders, through the School Council advisory model, are being drawn into the education political framework within the macro political arena in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Main Conclusion

The primary theme leads the researcher to formulate a main conclusion of the thesis:

School Councils have been given Legislated Legitimation and Confirmation of a Political Actor Status in a Formalized Stakeholder Role in the Political Arena of Education for Newfoundland and Labrador.

It can be concluded from the findings for this study that School Councils will have to execute a broad political advocacy mandate. The findings intimate that the potential exists that Newfoundland's School Council effectiveness will be measured by how competently and purposefully they are able to exercise their role of advocacy and influence on the political and educational tiered micro to macro hierarchy from School Board to government.

Fullan (1991; 1993) and Sarason (1995) note continually in their research that political advocacy roles in education and stakeholder participation in the macro political arena detract from the teaching and learning focus for educational decision-making. The key informant for this study cautions that if School Councils do not stay focused on their role and function at the school level they set themselves up to be ineffective. Hence the dichotomy prevails for School Councils; they are expected to produce results but it would appear, given

the present School Council decision-making policy and legislation, Council members may perceive their hands are tied behind their backs and are blindfolded to walk the plank set before them by government's reform initiatives. Government officials believe that they have set the best conditions for School Councils to achieve government's goal of improving system effectiveness and increased student achievement.

Critical analysis of the discourse and language shaping Newfoundland's education reform policy on DDM revealed similar recurrent discourse whose textual meanings, when reconstructed, are representative of New Right ideology. Government policy discourse is shaped by the corporate influenced New Right ideology. Clark & Astuto (1994) offer support by expressing the concern that:

> The language of educational reform is dominated by the harshness of bureaucracy, control, and competition, and intervention. It is a discouraging language of distrust and inspection. The current education reform movement is stuck in a worsening negative cycle, unable to deliver on its promises and destructive to the human spirit (p. 520).

The literature reviewed from: Barlow & Robertson (1994), Barlow & Campbell (1995), Fowler (1995), Maynes (1996), and Teeple (1995) clearly provide a base of support for the ideological composition, found by the researcher, in a critical analysis of the content of the Newfoundland and Labrador reform policy text on DDM. Government's education reform policy is representative of the New Right ideology in discourse: style, content, and meaning. Government's policy statements and education reform documents reveal a lexicon of business-influenced terminology and corporate paradigms that clearly outline an ideology of neo-liberal values.

In posing an alternative, Clark & Astuto call for education reform that is teacher and student focused that allows change by "...individual communities, through hard work and the investment and effort of individuals who work on the front line" (p. 520). Such a community oriented approach, noted in the literature review, is stressed by Sergiovanni (1994).

Sergiovanni (1994) states that "a good idea becomes a fad when it is adopted and used at the level of practice without a change at the level of theory" (p. xii). He states further that "changing the basic theory of schooling means changing how we think and what we believe" (p. xii).

For the School Council to effect a lasting positive impact on the school and community, its mandate must include creating a community of believers

among all stakeholders and levels of educational governance in their vision and goals. Government must provide the level of decision-making necessary to bring about substantial change. Senge (1990) premises a strong vision shared by all levels of the organization as the first step in truly establishing a learning organization that is constantly in a state of renewal, growth, and life-long learning. Fullan (1993) regards such a state as a continuing process of change that strives for any and all change forces to realize goals and desired outcomes. Government has placed a significant portion of the task of determining the degree of decentralized decision-making for School Councils squarely in the hands of the School Board.

School boards must share the same vision and reconceptualization of schooling proposed by a school community through its <u>School Protocol Agreement</u>. The <u>School Protocol Agreement</u> could become more than a token acknowledgement of minimalist legislated functions. A shared ideology by all levels of school governance is imperative to meet the needs of students.

Sergiovanni (1994) states that "schools must first become purposeful communities. They must become places where members have developed a community of mind that bonds them together in a special way and binds them to a shared ideology" (p. xvii). The researcher identified competing ideologies as sites that took shape within what Apple (1995) refers to as "struggles with

domination and subordination" where "...many of us may have forgotten how very powerful the structural dynamics are in which we participate. In the process, cynical detachment may have replaced our capacity to be angry" (p. xi).

Green & Whitty, as cited by Apple (1995), state that "structural conditions cannot be thought 'away,' they must be thought through to be 'acted away'...(p. xiv). The intent then in this study was, to achieve what Apple (1995) stated metaphorically, "to 'think through' the complicated structural and cultural conditions surrounding...[School Councils and] schools, to uncover the cracks in these conditions, and in doing so, to find spaces for critical action" (p. xiv).

This study has illuminated the need for governments to examine the future direction for decentralization in education. Gaskell (1995), in an address to the Canadian Teachers Federation on the subject of educational choice and decision-making, states that :

> Questions must be framed in terms of cultural heritage, language,
> programs for the disadvantaged, decentralization and equity, not
> in American terms of markets, desegregation and achievement
> testing (p. 16).

This would indeed reflect the pillars upon which the foundation of Canada is built: its constitution, charter of rights and freedoms, and multicultural policy.

Mazzoni's (1991) conceptual model of the arena and sub-arena, as cited by Cody (1994), was helpful in reconstructing the data of this study. The researcher interpreted Mazzoni's model in the broadest sense at the macro level. The structural reform issue of centralist power and authority that played itself out between the Churches and government represents the larger political arena of educational reform. Within this arena exists a sub-arena of political tension - the School Council reform initiative and pilot School Councils.

The issue of decision-making power and authority was initially perceived by pilot School Council members as crucial to their perceived role. What will be the perception of the nature of the School Council legislated role by the post-reform School Councils once all schools have elected, set up, and implemented this new reform initiative? Bowman & Deal (1991) in discussing the political framing of organizations, presents the view of Alinsky (1971) that "political realists see the world as it is: an arena of power and politics moved primarily by perceived immediate self-interest" (p. 237). Teacher voice in the education reform political arena is often dismissed by many as self-interested discourse. Art Baggs, past president of the NLTA, makes the following observation:

> It is encouraging that we are now seeing more than ever
> opposition building to the cuts in education. When teachers talk
> about the cuts, we get dismissed as this special interest group out

to protect our members. Politicians cannot use this argument when they are confronted by angry parents and other supporters of education (NLTA Bulletin, June 1997, pp. 12-13).

The findings in this study validate the researcher's hypothesis that government's effort to involve all major stakeholders through a decentralization of educational decision-making is indeed illusionary. Structural reform issues dominated the discourse of policy documents and key informant comments. The education reform legislation reflects the transfer of centralist decision-making control from the Churches to government. Government's pre-occupation with structural reform and battle for power and control with the Churches meant that issues such as School Councils and DDM were placed, to some degree, on the backburner for the past school year (Department of Education Official, 1997, personal communication). The School Council decentralized decision-making issue has yet to play itself out as a dominant issue since School Councils are not as of yet fully operational in all Newfoundland schools.

Neither the Schools Act, (1996) nor the School Council legislation defines DDM authority and power for School Council decision-making. Broadly outlined functions in the legislation and policy documents provide the direction for School Councils. Any potential degree to which educational decision-making is

decentralized in the Newfoundland and Labrador education system will be determined by the consensus achieved between schools and the district board office via the <u>School Protocol Agreement</u> as School Councils become fully operational by the end of the 1997-98 school year.

Parental, teacher, and student involvement in educational decision-making must be encouraged in a progressive, meaningful way so as to empower all participants in attaining their desired goals that translate into overall student success and their individual development. Unless students, parents and teachers are empowered by the needed authority to bring about real change through meaningful decision-making at the local level, the Government, in trying to rechart, adjust, and set a new course for education may very well be causing the irrevocable derailment of one of the most vital engines for student success in education: **Local Involvement in Educational Decision-Making.**

The literature review, empirical data, and general findings generated as a result of this study on DDM show that larger generalizable issues are present: the equity, equality, and access to universal quality of education programs for all regions and schools in Newfoundland and Labrador. The grassroots cry for greater local control of educational decision-making represents the increased expectation and demand for quality offering of programs and curriculum for all Newfoundland and Labrador students. Elected officials are making political

decisions based on political party ideology and dominant interest group agendas. The DDM CDAT has evolved post-study as a possible contribution to the research base for discourse analysis, most particularly, DDM discourse from a critical perspective. See Table 5 on page 164 for the DDM CDAT research instrument.

The findings, primary theme, and main conclusion of the data in this study corroborate the construction of a critical theory that calls for transformative, emancipatory action by government as the elected representatives of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador to formulate education policy and legislation that reflects the view of the people of this province. The critical theory is informed by this study.

Critical Theory

Decentralized education decision-making, without the necessary power and authority to effect meaningful change at the school level, might very well become a government-designed, politically correct effort to provide, an advocacy platform for the major stakeholders of the education process. Government's claimed decentralization effort is thereby reduced

to an illusionary attempt that has the potential to further complicate the

bureaucratic process in the education system for all stakeholders.

A critical action is proposed as a result of the critical theory.

Table 5.

Decentralized Decision-Making Critical Analytical Discourse Typology (DDM CDAT).

The following ten typological indicators will assist all levels of organizational levels to assess and monitor implementation of decentralization of decision-making:

1. Examine the existing/potential ideologies held by the stakeholder groups at all organizational levels.

2. Determine the existing/potential decision-making power, authority, or advisory influence for all stakeholders.

3. Determine the existing/potential decision-making role and scope for stakeholders.

4. Identify the existing/desired decisional areas and types by consultation with all stakeholders.

5. Establish and continually revise a clearly defined mandate, vision, mission statement, goals and objectives, strengths and weaknesses.

6. Conduct and structure a fair democratic approach to a DDM governing body for a balanced, fairly elected, representation of the population.

7. Determine and maintain the tenor and degree of support for a shift to DDM.

8. Assess the necessity of and the formulated policy discourse for increasing the levels of bureaucracy at this point in time in the existing organizational hierarchy.

9. Assess and provide the necessary human and fiscal resources for successful implementation and maintenance of DDM.

10. Continually evaluate and assess the effectiveness of DDM implementation for all organizational stakeholders.

Critical Action

Government must re-evaluate its education governance agenda for local educational decision-making, and test degrees of devolved decision-making for School Councils that could reflect a more appropriately balanced pendulum position on the centralization-decentralization continuum. The intent of the Royal Commission (1992) vision of "integrated decentralization," (Murphy, 1991), might then be operationalized. The result could translate into a meaningful stakeholder decision-making role at the local school site.

Recommendations

Fullan (1991) maintains that "change is a journey not a blueprint" (p. 14), [and that] "change requires the power to manage it" (p. 20). Based on the literature review and findings of this thesis study, it can be proposed that government should consider the implementation and evaluation of DDM in stages. Stage by stage implementation of DDM should involve consistent School Council consultation and agreement. As a result of this study, some immediate concerns to be addressed could include:

1.1 Concrete definition of new full decision-making stakeholder roles to produce accountability.

2.1   Redistribution of power to enable School Councils meaningful decision-making authority to effectively carry out its mandate; .

3.1   Universal transfer by all provincial school districts of budgetary control for curriculum materials, teaching aids, and instructional capital cost resources as a designated School Council decisional area.

4.1   School Council legislation designating the Curriculum/Instructional budget as a Legislated function of the School Council not subject to the School Protocol Agreement; this budgetary dimension should be a legislated function in order to facilitate local needs through the DDM School Council.

5.1   Funding Equity: Provincial provision of equal funding to allow the Universality of instructional programs, curriculum, and the needed capital resources to implement these programs in all viable schools in the province.

6.1   DDM and SPA Universality and Uniformity: SPA's need uniformity in decisional areas and degree of decentralized decision-making for all viable School Districts on key areas of budget and curriculum.

Suggestions For Further Study

It is apparent to the researcher that the complexity of the concept of decentralization within education governance itself, has many potential areas for exploration. This study addressed specific questions on decentralization of educational decision-making as outlined in the introduction, methodology, and analysis. Further study should be conducted on the expanded education political framework of the province's macro political arena. Figure 1., on page 168, outlines some possible political alliances and a probable example of the post-reform political framework. The student must be the center of all decision-making. The dark outer rays of the radius represent one example of a highly probable political alliance between the principal and the School Council chair. Principals who adopt a more collegial leadership style will formulate collaborate partnerships (Stoll and Fink, 1996; Devereaux, 1995).

The radius shows gradient increase in all directions to illustrate the potential alliances between various stakeholder groups in the new School Council advisory model. Community representatives on School Councils could mirror dominant interest group agendas such that positive and negative effects can emanate from corporate and business interest (Barlow and Robertson, 1994).
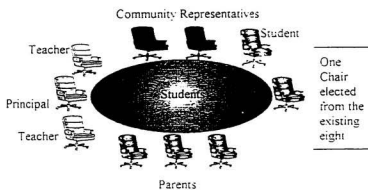
Figure 1 Possible Political Framework For School Council Composition

School Council meeting discourse should be studied over a lengthy period of School Council existence through their mandated advisory role. The discourse must include School Council meetings, faculty meetings, student council meetings, parent meetings, and School Board meetings.

In light of the findings of this thesis, the following topics are identified as suggestions for further study:

1.1 Amount and Level of parental and other stakeholder satisfaction with participation in an Advisory School Council post reform,

1.2 Public perception of and degree of interest for a fully decentralized decision-making School Council as opposed to advisory,

1.3 Degree of involvement in educational decision-making wanted by each School Council,

2. Impact of School Council on improving:

- the instructional leadership role of the principal

- professional development role of the principal,

3. Overall effect of DDM and/or Advisory School Council on student achievement, teaching and learning,

4. Effect of School Council on improvement of Home/School Community relationship,

5.   Stakeholder Ideologies as represented in School Council meeting discourse when all councils are operational in the province,

6.   Effect of School Council as a change agent for the school,

7.   The Nature of the Political Role of School Council stakeholders in Post-Reform education governance structure,

8.   Determine how will SBM/SBDM, the legislated School Council approach, plays out in effecting change in student achievement, teaching and learning, school cultures,

9.   Possibilities for School Council simularities and differences in Uni/Inter-denominational, Private schools, etc. should be studied,

10.   School Council accountability and goal attainment,

11.   Teacher Autonomy and the School Council,

12.1   School District similarities/differences in SPA negotiations,

12.2   School District/School Council differences in degrees of DDM,

12.3   Degree of DDM given to School Council by Board in Budgeting, Curriculum,

12.4   New areas of DDM School Boards may negotiate with School Council's such as PD and teacher evaluation,

13.   New areas of Hegemonic formation as a result of widened Political Arena,

14. Perceived Roles of Stakeholder interaction in School Council,

15. Full Historical Chronology of Education Reform issues and events from 1990-1997,

16. Full analysis of Wells administration proposed education reform agenda as compared to Tobin education reform agenda,

17. Comparison and Level of Satisfaction of School Council Member perception of role prior to being elected to School Council and after School Council participation,

18. Level of Satisfaction of Decision-Making role by School Council members participating in the Advisory DM Council structure.

19. Changes in Stakeholder perceptions and experience with Advisory Council model measured after operational year intervals: 1, 3, 5 years etc. to guage over a period of time, consistency or inconsistency of School Council success, effectiveness, stakeholder satisfaction, and increase of student achievement as a direct result of School Council effort,

20. As the School Council pilot study primarily led to a recommendation for Advisory decision-making status, the converse should be pilot-tested: the study should be replicated to some degree, giving School Council's gradual degrees of decision-making power and authority, inherent and

continual training, support, and evaluation to allow for a viable study on a DDM School Council that has power and authority to use public funds at the local school site for gradual degrees of decision-making in curriculum implementation, instructional design and strategy innovations, school-level budgeting for curriculum and instruction, and faculty professional development.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A.

List of Revised School District Boundaries and New School District Names 1996-97.

District #1 - Labrador

District #2 - Northern Pennisula/Labrador South

District #3 - Corner Brook/Deer Lake/St. Barbe South

District #4 - Stephenville/Port-aux-Basques

District #5 - Baie Verte/Central/Connaigre

District #6 - Lewisporte/Gander

District #7 - Burin

District #8 - Clarenville/Bonavista

District #9 - Avalon West

District #10- Avalon East

#11 - Provincial Francophone School Board

Appendix B.

List of Educational Reform Documents Used For Data Analysis in the Thesis Study

 (1) Adjusting the Course I (1993)

 (2) Adjusting the Course II (1994)

 (3) The Executive Council Act: Minister of Education Role and Powers

 (4) The Schools Act Legislation (1996)

 (5) The Education Act (1996)

 (6) School Council Policy Statement (1995)

 (7) School Council Policy Statement (1996)

 (8) School Council Handbook (1996)

 (9) Pilot School Council Project Study of School Councils Study No. 1 (1995)

 (10) Pilot School Council Project Study of School Councils Study No. 2 (1996)

 (11) Working for Excellence (1994)

 (12) Change and Challenge (1992)

 (13) Royal Secretariat Bulletin, April 1994, No. 1.

 (14) Royal Secretariat Bulletin, April 1994, No. 2.

Other Data:

 (1) Key Informant Data: Presentation and Meeting

Appendix C.

Request and Thank-you Letters

Letter of Request to the Office of the Minister of Education, Honourable Roger Grimes, for the Relevant Documents Needed to Conduct the Thesis Study.

Letter to thank the Minister and his office for their assistance in making many of the documents used for the thesis study available to the researcher.

Letter of Request to Dr. Alice Collins, c/o Eva Whitmore, Research Assistant for the Pilot Study on School Councils for the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Letter of Thank-you to Dr. Alice Collins, c/o Eva Whitmore, Research Assistant for the Pilot Study on School Councils for the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

March 30, 1996

Hon. Roger Grimes, Minister of Education
Office of the Minister of Education
Department of Education, Confederation Building
St. John's, NF
A1C 5S7

Dear Minister:

I am a graduate student at Memorial University writing a thesis on the Decentralization of Educational Decision-Making In The Newfoundland Education System Reform Process: Illusion or Reality.

The purpose of this letter is to request copies of the education reform documents entitled School Council Policy Statements (1995) and (1996), School Council Handbooks (1995) and (1996), Schools Act (1996 - when available) and Education Act (1996 - when available).

The discourse from the documents will provide data for my thesis study. The thesis study is under the direction of my thesis committee, Dr. Clar Doyle and Dr. Bruce Sheppard at the Faculty of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, Newfoundland. The study has received the approval of the Chair, Ethics Review Committee, Dr. Walter Okshevsky. The purpose of the study is to critically examine the degree of decentralized decision-making for the post-reform School Council model proposed by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. The Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Delivery of Programs and Services in Primary, Elementary, and Secondary Education recommended the formation of a School Council model.

Thank-you in advance for your cooperation. A copy of the thesis will be available to you at your request.

Yours truly,

William Kelly
M.Ed. Candidate

July 21, 1997

Hon. Roger Grimes, Minister of Education
Office of the Minister of Education
Department of Education
Confederation Building
St. John's, NF
A1C 5S7

Dear Minister:

This letter is to thank-you, your staff, and department for their full cooperation during my thesis study on the decentralization of educational decision-making. More specifically, this research study on decentralized decision-making for School Councils in Newfoundland's education reform context offers a significant contribution to the current research base and due in part to your cooperation.

Once again, thank-you for your assistance.

Yours truly,

William Kelly
M.Ed. Candidate

July 21, 1997

Dr. Alice Collins
c/o Eva Whitmore, Research Assistant
Project Director
Pilot School Council Project
Memorial University of Newfoundland
St. John's, NF

Dear Dr. Collins:

This letter is to thank-you, your staff, and department for their full cooperation during my thesis study on the decentralization of educational decision-making. More specifically, this research study on decentralized decision-making for School Councils in Newfoundland's education reform context offers a significant contribution to the current research base and due in part to your cooperation.

Once again, thank-you for your assistance.

Yours truly,

William Kelly
M.Ed. Candidate

Appendix D.

Coding System For Ethnograph Data Retrieval Analysis

Code	Full Meaning
A	Authority
*ADMCENTR	Administrative Centralization
*ADMINDECEN	Administrative Decentralization
ADV	Advisory Role
Centr	Centralization
Decentr	Decentralization
DM	Decision-making
DDM	Decentralized Decision-Making
Ideol	Ideology
*Ideol Econ	Ideology Economy
*Ideol Power	Power
*PLDECENT	Political Decentralization

*Refined Coding During Deconstruction Analysis Process

Appendix E.
Key Informant Letter of Consent to Participate in the Thesis Study on Decentralization of Educational Decision-Making

February 6, 1997

Key Informant
Official Title
Address

Dear XXX:

The purpose of this letter is to request, in writing, your approval and consent to participate in my approved thesis study entitled Decentralization of Educational Decision-Making In The Newfoundland Education System Reform Process: Illusion or Reality. The research study is under the direction of my thesis committee, Dr. Clar Doyle and Dr. Bruce Sheppard at the Faculty of Education, Memorial University of Newfoundland. The study has received the approval of the Chair, Ethics Review Committee, Dr. Walter Okshevsky.

The purpose of the study is to critically examine the degree of decentralized decision-making for the post-reform School Council model proposed by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. The Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Delivery of Programs and Services in Primary, Elementary, and Secondary Education recommended the formation of a School Council model.

Your participation in the research study would entail giving permission for the researcher to take notes during your presentation, answering questions posed by the researcher during the presentation, and also during a more in-depth follow-up audio-taped, closed meeting between you as the key informant, and the researcher, determined at a mutually convenient date and place. The meeting time required is two and one-half hours.

You will have the option of receiving a typed transcript of all notes recorded for your final approval before data analysis begins. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and/or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit. Confidentiality will be strictly adhered to unless the key informant wishes otherwise to release anonymity. Please indicate your approval to participate in this research study on decentralization of educational decision-making by signing the attached consent form. I thank you in advance for your cooperation in this graduate-level research endeavor.

Yours truly,
William Kelly,
M. Ed. Candidate