

**An Analysis of Market Reform Trends in Saskatchewan Public Education**

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by  
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## **DEDICATION**

It is the opinion of this author that much of Canada's post-war success can be attributed to our citizens having universal access to quality public goods and services. The availability of these services was to a large extent made possible through the sacrifices made by a select few generations of Canadians to whom I owe a great deal of gratitude.

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of those who made these sacrifices, and contributed to building the Canada we know today. More specifically, I would like to thank my grandparents including Lyla & Charlie Low, Winnie & Albert Sylvester, Ethel & George Sylvester, and Selma Enns with whom I continue to share many a great conversation.

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## ABSTRACT

From the 1970s onward, Western market democracies, particularly those that are English speaking and subscribe to the general tenets associated with Anglo-Saxon capitalism, have been restructuring Keynesian (post-war) era education systems through an incremental adoption of focused market reforms based on four central foci: choice, decentralization, centralization, and accountability (Altman, 2009; Ball, 1998; Kachur & Harrison, 1999; Klees, 2008; Tomlinson, 2005; Whitty, Power, & Halpin, 1998). Arguably, these changes have developed in response to ideological, political, and economic global phenomena that led to a policymaking convergence between nations (Kachur, 1999a; Klees, 2008; Tomlinson, 2005).

The purpose of this historiographic analysis was to determine whether or not, or to what extent, trends occurring in comparable education and state systems elsewhere have likewise affected policy directions in Saskatchewan. Theoretically, since these trends constitute a deductive rule, it was initially reasoned by this author that evidence for market reform in Saskatchewan public education policy should exist—and a selected sample of key policy documents from stakeholder groups served as the arena of investigation. The underlying goal of this analysis was to increase awareness and discourse among public education stakeholders with regard to the implications of market reforms.

The rational and critical analysis of the data provided by stakeholder groups suggested that evidence of market reform existed in Saskatchewan at the time of the study. The author inferred that quasi-market development was occurring and that at some

future stage variations of the implications described in this study may affect the Saskatchewan public education system.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction to the Study

To what extent, and in what ways, is market reform discourse emerging within Saskatchewan Education policy documents?

This study was a historiographic content analysis of public education policy trends in Saskatchewan (Berger, 1983). The study used, as its analytic context, policy trends that have occurred in other Western market democracies, particularly those that are English speaking and subscribe to the general tenets associated with Anglo-Saxon capitalism (Altman, 2009). As these nations began to restructure Keynesian (post-war) era education systems from the 1970s onward, each nation began to incrementally develop and adopt variations of market reforms based on four central foci: choice, decentralization, centralization, and accountability (Ball, 1998; Kachur & Harrison, 1999, Klees, 2008; Tomlinson, 2005; Whitty et al., 1998). Arguably, these changes developed in response to ideological, political, and economic global phenomena that led to a policymaking convergence between nations (Kachur, 1999a; Klees, 2008; Tomlinson, 2005). The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not, or to what extent, the public education policy trends occurring in comparable education and state systems elsewhere have likewise affected public education policy directions in Saskatchewan. Theoretically, since these trends constitute a deductive rule, evidence for market reform influence in Saskatchewan should exist—and a selected sample of documents published by stakeholder groups served as the arena of investigation. The underlying goal of this historiographic content analysis was to establish the existence or extent of market reforms

in Saskatchewan educational policy in an effort to increase awareness and discourse among public education stakeholders with regard to the implications of market reforms.

Before I describe the more experiential and detailed parameters that defined this study, it is important to briefly define and to describe what a historiography content analysis is, and why it was chosen as the methodology for this research.

As I describe more fully in Chapter Two, a content analysis allows researchers to investigate issues they perceive exist through professional observation and experience. While making these observations researchers often draw abductive inferences to develop hypotheses to explain the phenomenon they observe (Krippendorff, 2004). Those interested in grounding these hypothetical assumptions further through formal research often choose a content analysis as their research methodology (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). When formal research processes are underway, the researcher first attempts to find research that helps to explain the inferences drawn. During this process, it is the task of the researcher to develop coherent research-based connections between these inferences in the form of an analytic construct, which becomes the context in a content analysis. Quite often, the developed context provides readers with a broad enough explanation of the topic that enables them to develop their own interpretations of the phenomenon beyond what is commonly understood about the topic relative to the present context. When the researcher's academic community determines that the context is well grounded, or compelling enough to be considered valid-in-principle, the researcher can use trends established in the context as a deductive rule to apply against a different yet related phenomenon in an effort to theory affirm, or theory build, specific to the new context (Krippendorff, 2004).

In this content analysis, the context was developed in a chapter historiography that established the philosophical, political, and economic foundations, and rationale for market reform trends. The purpose of developing a historiography, or a context in content analysis, was that it provided both reader and researcher with a lens with which to view, or to carry out a critical analysis of policy texts (Berger, 1983). A historiographical context enables researchers to extrapolate both observable and unobservable inferences from texts, and in the case of policy analysis, helps researchers gain a better understanding of the origins and potential implications of policy directions (Fallon, 2006; Gall et al., 2007). However, having recognized the general features of a content analysis, it is equally important to acknowledge the unique tautological aspects associated with the use of this methodology.

In many cases, the hypotheses content analysts develop based on real-world experiences often form the basis for the researcher's main research question that sets other research processes in motion. These processes often include attempts to contextualize, to explain, or to prove the initial hypotheses drawn by establishing a theory that explains the phenomenon observed. Once the context is established, analysts often attempt to apply this context to a related phenomenon in the hope of finding theory confirming evidence. However, from a broader research perspective, this approach may be viewed as problematic since the researcher would be attempting to carry out research processes in anticipation of reaching a foregone conclusion (tautology). It is in recognition of this issue that those seeking to explore hypothetical claims choose either a content analysis or a historiography as a research methodology. Both methodologies presume the contexts developed are broad, probabilistic, and thereby limited to

hypothetical validity, and that the importance of this type of research is to develop new interpretations of the phenomena in question in an effort to widen discourse and to broaden decision-making considerations among stakeholders (Berger, 1983; Elo&Kyngas, 2007; Gall et al., 2007; Krippendorff, 2004; Morton, 1983).

This content analysis is a qualitative deductive study requiring one researcher with the analytic skills and expertise necessary to carry out this level of analysis. With regard to most qualitative content analyses, Krippendorff (2004) claimed the analyst chosen for textual analysis is often the researcher responsible for the entire study. The reason for this is that the primary researcher is often the one who made the initial professional observations, developed the original hypotheses, as well as the context to explain the phenomenon. Throughout this process, the primary researcher becomes the expert on the topic, and is thereby best equipped to derive observable and unobservable inferences during textual analysis. Since all of the research and analysis in this historiographic content analysis was carried out solely by this author, an explanation of the academic and professional experiences that led to this examination is required.

### **The Researcher's Context**

During a third year University history lecture, one of my professors explained the failure of monarchical state systems as well as the academic and political considerations that led to the subsequent rise of new communist and capitalist state systems in the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. The professor explained further that prior to the welfare state era, the majority of the economic policies of Western democratic states were largely based on *laissez-faire* principles that favoured business over labour interests. According to this professor, the culminating result was that wealth, influence, and wellbeing had

disproportionately accrued for an ever decreasing minority at the top of each nation's economic pyramid to the detriment of an ever broadening majority (labour) at the base. In nations where this occurred, he suggested that one of two events took place.

In some cases, the metaphorical pyramid flipped over in revolution, whereas in others, the accruing strains in the system led to political pressure and the development of new political and economic arrangements known as welfare states. In the case of the latter, capitalism continued to be accepted as the most efficient and effective way to allocate and to distribute private goods and services. However, it was also recognized that in order to sustain socioeconomic progress, stability, and peace over the longer term, public policy would have to reflect a balance of interests between the owners of production (capital) and the workers of these societies (labour), and that the role of regulating and maintaining this balance should fall to government through democratic public policymaking processes.

This particular lecture provided me with the inspiration to begin comparing the organizational and public policy differences between Canada and other nations, and to investigate how Saskatchewan was positioned politically relative to other provinces in Canada. As this ongoing enquiry unfolded, I increasingly came to believe that during the post-war era, the majority of Canadian citizens had become increasingly well-off relative to other nations at any other time in history. I also came to believe that much of this socioeconomic success was due in large part to Canadians having universal access to quality, democratically-run public goods and services.

Making comparisons between the organizational arrangements of state systems during the pre- versus post-war era naturally led me to take an interest in how the

business lobby might approach influencing public policy in the post-war arrangement since policies were no longer nearly as favourable to business as they had been during the pre-war era. From this perspective, it seemed only sensible the business lobby would eventually try to recapture any public policy advantages lost to further their own interests. Equipped with this hypothesis, by the time I began an undergraduate degree in education, I attempted to explore these issues through research in educational curriculum and foundational studies whenever possible. Subsequent to graduating as a teacher in 2003, I taught English as an Additional Language (EAL) in Chang Hua City, Taiwan, and continued to build on this hypothesis further through an informal study of international politics. For instance, I became fascinated with making connections between the foundational tenets of Chinese culture, and how these tenets seemed to influence Chinese public policy decisions domestically and abroad. I was likewise amazed by how foreign affairs scholars would routinely refer to the tenets of Anglo-Saxon culture as being largely responsible for the direction of domestic and international public policymaking processes in the United States and the British Commonwealth. It was during this period I strengthened my understanding of how ideology and sociocultural paradigms have the potential to influence public policy, and a population's perception of the policy directions their governments adopt.

Subsequent to teaching in Taiwan, I substitute taught in London for a time before teaching full-time in a secondary school in Essex, England. One of my first observations was that British public education was being provided to citizens through quasi-market organizational structures. Even though I was unable to describe these structures as quasi-market at the time, it was obvious education bureaucrats were attempting to run schools



according to business models. Having already been familiar with varied levels of private sector influence over public education in North America through undergraduate research, the possibility that a market arrangement might exist in England came as no surprise. What was surprising, however, was the extent of the influence. As I progressed through the experience, it became increasingly clear that what was discussed as a threat to public education during my undergraduate education had already been well established in England.

After witnessing how much time and energy teachers would spend satisfying bureaucratic requirements, or how teacher morale would plummet in response to the seemingly harsh and arbitrary subjective judgments that arose from inspections, I could only wonder whether the quality of provision would improve if teachers were trusted, respected as professionals, and taught in a nonmarket environment. At least on the surface, the issues impeding quality teaching and learning processes did not appear to result from a lack of dedication on behalf of British teachers. In fact, British teachers seemed very dedicated to the community and the school at least to the extent the organizational arrangement would allow.

From what I could remember, Saskatchewan teachers were treated with more professional respect, exercised higher levels of professional autonomy, had stronger professional and union representation, and were respected stakeholders in public education policymaking processes. I also observed that by comparison, Saskatchewan citizens had more equal access to quality public education as opposed to the stratified choice-based options parents were free to choose from in Britain. As I progressed through the British experience, I became increasingly uncomfortable with the direction of British

public education despite having had high inspection grades, an enjoyable experience, and what appeared to be a promising teaching career. In the end, I drew the conclusion Saskatchewan teachers were in a far better professional position than their British counterparts, spent far more time on meaningful teaching and learning processes, and allotted far less time to initiatives associated with competition between schools.

In order to deconstruct and define what I observed in the British system further and to bring coherence to the hypotheses I developed regarding private sector influence over public education, I enrolled in a Master's program in Educational Administration at the University of Saskatchewan in 2007. Once courses began, I explored various issues related to charter schools, school vouchers, the centralization of school financing, and the decentralization of managerial duties to principals. As I progressed through the literature pertaining to these topics, I realized there was a need to pursue literature outside the scope of education to better explain the foundational rationale in support of these instruments. I soon discovered the majority of public education policy instruments discussed in academia, the media, and public education policymaking circles, were, in fact, interdependent variations of what Tomlinson (2005) referred to as *market reforms*—a policy direction change that began to influence public education systems primarily from the 1980s onward. I also realized the specific policy instruments responsible for the quasi-market structure I observed had been developed through a selected adoption of a wide array of available market reform options that generally fall under four categories: choice, decentralization, centralization, and accountability (Ball, 1998; Berthelot, 2006; Carl, 1994; English, 2006; Kachur, 2008; Klees, 2008; Kuchapski, 1998). In recognition of the scope and ideological nature of market reforms, I realized it was no longer a

question of whether or not Saskatchewan had been affected by market reforms. The question became to what extent?

Before I provide readers with an overview of the historiography that resulted from the literature review of this study, I delimit the relativism of the conceptual framework used in this review. As described previously, I hypothesized long before graduate studies that economic drivers were likely in large part responsible for the direction of public education policy in Western states during the post-war era. Whether through undergraduate lectures on capital and labour relations, sociocultural observations made in Southeast Asia, or professional observations made of the British education system, I had been in the process of developing abductive inferences concerning public education policy directions for the better part of a decade before any formal research was underway. Between those inferences, and the course-based research that followed, I established that from an economic perspective, the concept of choice has been used as a central mechanism for restructuring traditional public education systems according to market models. I also established this restructuring required more than simply providing consumers (parents) with choice in schooling options. It required the adoption of other reforms that fall under the thematic categories of decentralization, centralization, and accountability.

### **Defining the Problem—An Overview of the Historiography**

As is discussed in Chapter Three, the pre-war and post-war economic history of Anglo-American market democracies was one of labour interests competing with capital interests. The result has been an increasing growth of influence by capital over labour through the establishment and promulgation of a so-called market reform philosophy.

According to Ball (1998) and Kachur (1999a) the need for market reforms has become the master narrative in public education policymaking agendas and stakeholder discourse, and has developed largely in response to the establishment of neoliberal economic frameworks in Western states (Altman, 2009; Klees, 2008). It is important to note, however, that despite various changes and attempts to reform traditional systems, each of the Anglo-Saxon market democracies have, to a large extent, continued to provide public services to citizens through welfare state frameworks (Finer, 1999; Klitgaard, 2007; Robertson, 2000). For this reason, reform advocates have often referred to these frameworks as the status quo. However, given that a public education policy convergence had been occurring over the course of the last three decades, these reform directions seemed to constitute the new status quo worth examining, particularly in the Saskatchewan context.

While examining the literature in support of the historiographical context, it became clear that many authors promoting the need for market reforms tended to focus on examining the implications that arise from monopolized provision, and on providing quasi-market solutions to address those issues. By taking this relatively insular and narrow approach to analysis, many scholars neglected the original welfare state rationale for separating the provisional frameworks of private and public goods in the first place. From my perspective, acknowledging this rationale was important since the assumptions that underpin the rationale for market reforms are essentially the same as those that underpinned the failed policy apparatuses of the pre-war era. In other words, in the absence of broader analysis and the development of discourse to the contrary, one must expect similar market failures could occur. Similarly, if the public policy and provision

frameworks developed at the outset of the post-war era were reflective of a balance between capital and majority labour interests, to what extent were contemporary public policies reflective of the public interest given policy direction changes in recent decades? Finally, to what extent was the public aware of these changes, or the potential long-term implications? Ultimately, the question that needed to be asked was, for whom was a policy working, and under whose terms?

### **The Problem**

After a review of the literature pertaining to market reforms and a search for this type of literature pertaining specifically to Saskatchewan, it was apparent that few scholars have either explicitly or holistically sought to explain or to examine the extent of reform trends in Saskatchewan.

### **Purpose of This Study**

The primary purpose of this historiographic analysis was to determine to what extent reform trends occurring in comparable education systems elsewhere have affected public education policy directions in Saskatchewan. The secondary purpose was to broaden awareness of the potential implications of those directions.

### **The Research Question**

The primary research question for this study was: Whether or not, or to what extent have market reforms in other Western states influenced the policy directions of Saskatchewan public education? This study also considered the following: What were the potential implications of market reforms? Which faction of society or interest group was best served through market reforms? Were market reform policy directions congruent

with the stated principles and values of the educational organizations? Were these directions congruent with each organization's stated goals for public education?

### **Delimitations**

All of the document samples analyzed in this content analysis were drawn from four organizations with mandates that cover the entire scope of responsibilities for K-12 public education in Saskatchewan. An examination of relevant samples from each organization should reveal common themes, patterns, similarities, differences, or an omission of evidence in relation to the existence of market reform trends (Gall et al., 2007, p. 182). Retrieving samples from the key policy documents of each major stakeholder organization in Saskatchewan public education was essential since relevant documents from these organizations provided the basis for decision-making and guidance for the direction of public education policy. Therefore, I only considered samples of policy documents from the primary organizations involved with the provision of K-12 public education: the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation; the Saskatchewan League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents; the Saskatchewan School Boards Association; and the Ministry of Education.

Since each of these organizations was run democratically and had different responsibilities for the provision of public education, it was likely the political persuasions of each vary despite the likelihood of having bipartisan mandates to the contrary. The differences that existed may be reflective of the interests of the populations these organizations represent, which may also have accounted for any differences in how these organizations either supported or responded to public education policy trends. In order to better isolate causality in response to these trends, it was equally important to

analyze policy samples under the stewardship of different government administrations. Taken together, this level of analysis revealed differences in political persuasions between organizations and government administrations in relation to the support or resistance of market reforms. Accordingly, I intended to select chronological samples of text from the key policy documents of the major stakeholder organizations in 2001, 2004, 2007, and 2010.

I chose the year 2001 because it marked the year in which the New Democratic Party (NDP) last came to power in Saskatchewan in the most recent decade to the time of writing. Choosing samples from 2004 allowed for a short span of time to have passed under the continued stewardship of the NDP, and 2007 marked the year when the Saskatchewan Party came to power. And finally, the year 2010 was chosen because it defined the present education policy context under the continued stewardship of the Saskatchewan Party. The intent of developing these comparators was to determine the extent of market reform influence during selected years between 2001 and 2010, and the extent to which changes in government administrations affected the pace of market reform policy directions.

### **Limitations**

Krippendorff (2004) and Schwandt (2000) claimed it is necessary for all critical researchers to declare the relativism of where the researcher stands in relation to the subject they examine, and within the ruling apparatus of society. Yet, beyond these limitations as described in the Replication and Recorder sections of Chapter Two, it was important to be mindful of the hypothetical nature of content analyses generally (Krippendorff, 2004). Historiographers and content analysts often explore specific

phenomena by engaging in a process of developing broad causal inferences to help explain research questions (Berger, 1983; Morton, 1983). Therefore, the contexts analysts develop are probabilistic, and “limit the certainty of the inferences that analysts can make” (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 353). Analysts presume the forces that contributed to the development of the context evolve and that the conclusions reached remain hypothetical or context sensitive until future events either validate or invalidate the inferences drawn or the findings made. This is especially true when the deductive rule is of a social or political nature.

Krippendorff (2004) suggested, however, that if the context were well established, the inferences drawn from the context would be considered valid-in-principle. This notion was supported by Lauri and Kyngas (2005) who stated that once the context has been established, it enables the structure of the entire analysis to be operationalized on the basis of previous deductive knowledge. Once operationalized it allows the analyst to move forward with theory testing (as cited in Elo & Kyngas, 2007, p. 109). From this perspective, and for the purposes of this study, the context acted as the critical lens that informed the rational aspects of the policy analysis. Nevertheless, there were limitations in generalizing the findings of a content analysis to other contexts.

In light of these limitations, it is important to reiterate the purpose of historiographies and content analyses, which is to offer an alternate or more holistic discourse relative to the status quo that enables the process of questioning and answering further, and that given this purpose, a final interpretation or closure to content analyses is unnecessary (Collingwood, 1939, as cited in Morton, 1983; Krippendorff, 2004).



Finally, there were practical limitations to this research as well. Given the traditional scope of a Master's thesis and current time limitations, I was not able to conduct this study further over the course of several years, nor was I able to sample sources beyond the delimitations of this study.

### **Definitions**

**Accountability.** Accountability in education refers to “official efforts to ensure that public schools are answerable to a variety of stakeholders . . . [that] requires external validation through formal policies, structures, processes, and outcomes” (English, 2006, p. 2). Specific to education, the contemporary focus of accountability is on student achievement, teacher performance, external oversight of the school itself, and decentralized leadership (English, 2006).

**Centralization.** Centralization generally refers to a hierarchical bureaucracy where there are layers of participants. At the top of the power structure, there may only be one decision-maker, and centralized bureaucracies are often tightly controlled with rules and procedures. With respect to public education, centralization typically refers to central government offices controlling curriculum or externally overseeing performance-based outcomes, finances, and managerial duties (English, 2006).

**Charter schools.** Charters are choice schools that provide parents with an alternative to traditional public schools, the latter of which charter advocates perceive as being overly regulated and bureaucratic. Charter schools are decentralized in terms of governance processes. Consequently, stakeholders create charters based on a specific mission statement or constitution that outlines the academic goals, rules, and regulations for all stakeholders involved. Authority for the schools is granted by a local school board.

Stakeholders in charters are held accountable because if the school fails to live up to the mandate, the charter can be revoked (Wells, Lopez, Scott, & Holme, 1999).

**Choice.** When describing the early industrial development of Canada, Morton (1983) explained that British commercial interests identified a need for uniting sectional commercial interests along the St. Lawrence to compete economically with a burgeoning United States. Once united, Morton claimed this unity led to an exploitation of lower class British citizens and other heterogeneous non-British groups from the metropolitan and hinterland areas that provided labour for this economic model. Accordingly, as urban industrialized capitalism progressed, Harrison (1983) claimed those subordinated lobbied the government for enhancements to individual rights. As a result, Harrison stated the Canadian legal system evolved, and new sociocultural precedents were set that emphasized the importance of achieving individual liberty and political justice in Canadian society. As a result, this scholar claimed Canadians have traditionally supported the right of individuals having a choice between institutions, as well as a right to be free from various forms of hierarchical institutional authority.

In this study, it was argued that market reform advocates have used this libertarian conception of choice to publicly promote the perceived need for adopting reform instruments in public education. In other words, reformers promoted enhancing choice-based schooling options to enhance consumer autonomy, and thereby better satisfy the wellbeing and interests of the chooser. Arguably, the use of this libertarian frame has conveniently played to the sociocultural sensibilities of Canadians, and has acted as a distraction from the actual reform intention of convincing governments to enhance choice for the betterment of the economy, and, arguably, private sector interests (Kachur,

1999b). From this perspective, market reforms are largely a manifestation of the business lobby's attempt to advance their interests through public education policy directions, which exploit the interests of the majority of whom public policies were intended to serve. Therefore, from the delimited economics frame of choice employed in this study, choice is the central policy instrument and mechanism responsible for the restructuring of traditional public education models toward competition-based market models (Chubb & Moe 1990; Friedman, 1997; Hepburn, 1999; Moe, 2003).

**Classical liberalism.** Classical liberalism is an economic philosophy that advocates against state intervention in the economy. This philosophy presumes that individual freedom is paramount, that individuals will and should act in their own self-interest, and that the economic system should be set up to harness this potential of self-interest accordingly. Markets should operate according to the philosophy of *laissez-faire* and governments should abstain from creating programs in the interest of a collective or public good to avoid abusers of the system (Fallon, 2006; Howlett & Ramesh, 2003).

**Decentralization.** Decentralization generally refers to shared decision-making among stakeholders at the local level with the logic being that people will be more committed to outcomes if they play a decisive role in decision-making. In education, this is referred to as site-based management where principals, teachers, parents, and members of the community all have a stake in both policy inputs and outputs in order to better address local needs. In theory, decentralization is nonhierarchical as opposed to the hierarchies that develop under centralization. English (2006) stated education is decentralized in terms of the “devolution of management, budgeting, curriculum, and instruction to the school site” (p. 268).

**Keynesian state.** Keynesianism is an economic philosophy that shaped the state structures of the Western industrialized nations after the Great Depression and World Wars of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Due to the misery that occurred after the aforementioned events, advocates for the Keynesian philosophy believed that the state should assume a greater collective responsibility over society, and that capitalism in itself does not afford the necessary provisions to accommodate the basic social needs of citizens. Therefore, under Keynesianism, there is an increase in centralized state planning with standardized systems of social provision, which are consumptive as opposed to productive in the economic sense. However, these social programs may provide positive externalities for society, which are often ignored by advocates against Keynesian welfare policies. Besides social programming, Keynesians also feel that during a recession it is the government's role to inject money into the economy to raise the aggregate demand for goods, regardless of whether deficits accrue as a result. The logic is that in times of surplus the deficit will balance out (Robertson, 2000).

**Markets.** Markets are an “[i]nstitutionalized area of social interaction” whereby there is an exchange of goods and services where individuals can maximize their self-interest: “[m]arkets . . . connect the cost of producing something to the income necessary to sustain operations. Prices are then controlled by the consumer's decision to buy or not” (Lubienski, 2001, pp. 5-16).

**Neo-liberalism.** Neo-liberals, as opposed to classical liberals, believe the state should restructure public institutions to create incentive-based opportunities for citizens that will make them more productive, and thereby bring a return of investment to the state. They promote the idea that citizens should be entrepreneurial by being competitive,

responsive, and efficient members of society. However, the government devolves responsibility to local levels and the citizens themselves in order that they are not directly responsible for the performance-based outcomes of public institutions (Fallon, 2006).

**Positive externalities.** Positive externalities result when a citizen consumes a good or service and it incidentally benefits others who did not consume that same good or service. For instance, as society becomes more educated, there is higher productivity within the workforce that results in a higher gross domestic product (GDP) overall, which brings a higher net of material gain to all members of society. As well, there are “less tangible gains such as producing better citizens, reducing crime, [and] increasing civic behaviour” (English, 2006, p. 316). Lubienski (2001) suggested society benefits from education in terms of “increased literacy, civic participation, inculcating a common culture, tolerance, social and human capital, social efficiency[, and] equity” (p. 30).

**Public good.** Public goods result from collectively funded services that come from public funds and are distributed to society as a whole, so that when one person consumes the good provided, it does not impede anyone else’s ability to do so. Thus, public goods and services are coined nonexcludable and nonrival because they are provided to everyone at no extra cost. The problem with public goods is that it is difficult to assign value to them, which complicates cost-benefit analyses (Scott & Marshall, 2005). One of the difficulties worth noting when discussing the benefits of public goods is the problem of externalities. Externalities are the third-party benefits that accrue when individuals consume public goods. For example, if a public good such as education is consumed by a citizen, and as a result the citizen becomes more productive, then all of society benefits from that citizen’s consumption of education. Consequently, there are

several nonmarket benefits that may accrue when a public good like education is consumed (Keynes, 1936; Marshall & Steeves, 2008). However, according to Howlett & Ramesh (2003), third party benefits are difficult to measure.

**Quasi-market.** Quasi-market, as it pertains to public education system features, refers to “a combination of parental choice and school autonomy, together with a considerable degree of public accountability and government regulation” (Whitty et al., 1998, p. 4). In some cases, school services are provided by entrepreneurs, or it may also refer to providing consumers with a choice between public and private services to increase competition to ensure that “public agencies [are] more responsive to citizen’s preferences” (Klitgaard, 2007, p. 449). Under these arrangements, a redefinition of public education occurs. Even though education continues to be funded publicly, the purpose of education is privatized, given that competition for the good turns the good into a commodity to be obtained within markets for private ends (Fallon, 2006).

**Rational/public choice.** Rational choice is an ideology that underlies public policies and analyses that presumes that people are self-interested, and that in order to adequately harness the potential of society, institutions need to be created accordingly. Rational and public choice theorists are suspect of government primarily because they believe that bureaucrats will be self-serving and maximize their power within organizations by unnecessarily inflating their budgets, and thereby pass off the cost to society (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003). They are often in opposition to the more egalitarian approach to policymaking such as deliberative democracy.

**Social democracy.** Social democracy is a set of ideas that can loosely be described as an ideology. Advocates of social democracy contend state-provided welfare

provisions are necessary to provide a balance to the individual excesses inherent within capitalist states in order to bring about relative equality within societies. It is important to note, however, that advocates for social democracy also recognize that capitalism is the only efficient and effective way to generate wealth—the primary difference between social democrats and classical theorists being that social democrats believe once wealth is created, it should be distributed according to moral as opposed to market principles. For the comparative purposes of this study, social democratic theory arguably supports the philosophical and economic sentiments and solutions proposed by Keynes, in addition to echoing the philosophies of the communitarian movement during the post-war era. The result being the newly emerged emphasis on morality and social justice would have a profound influence on government policymaking structures and processes that were arguably responsible for dramatically increasing levels of societal wellbeing during the post-war era (Dickerson & Flanagan, 1998; Heywood, 1999, 2003; Humphries, 2006; Krugman, 2007).

### **Organization of Thesis**

This first chapter has provided a background to the study. In Chapter Two, I begin by describing what a historiographic content analysis is, and what the format of this particular analysis will be. This description is followed by an explanation describing the theoretical underpinnings and reasons for including a critical context in this policy analysis, as well as the need for both rational and critical analysis in this particular study. Subsequent to methodology, I describe how this research will be carried out in accordance with the methods generally associated with content analyses. Chapter Three constitutes the historiographic context, and one half of the lens that will be used to carry

out this analysis. The chapter provides readers with a historical overview of the reactive nature of ideology throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, manifest in the reactions of various interest groups to the political and economic events of the era. Accordingly, this overview makes explicit the ideological origins of historic and contemporary public education policy instruments and directions in Western states. The historiography continues with examples of how market reform trends have affected other provinces in Canada including a brief contextualization of the traditional political climate in Saskatchewan. In Chapter Four, readers are introduced to the umbrella concept of choice followed by the analytical constructs that will be used to carry out textual analysis based on the general themes associated with market reforms, namely choice, decentralization, centralization, and accountability. Each construct includes an explanation of the conceptual logic of each category as well as the perceived benefits that arise once manifest as policy instruments in public education systems. Chapter Four continues with a description of the methods used for collecting and analyzing data as described in Chapter Two.

In Chapter Five, readers are presented with the data, and a synthesized addendum of the first stage of data analysis per organization under contextualized headings. In Chapter Six, I describe the cross-comparative analysis of the data addendums of Chapter Five, and the implications of each construct in order to draw final conclusions regarding the extent of market reform evidence per organization, and whether or not evidence became more or less prominent between 2001 and 2010, and between provincial government administrations during that time.



## CHAPTER TWO

### **The Establishment of a Critical and Rational Methodology and Method**

This study was a historiographic content analysis of public education policy trends in Saskatchewan (Berger, 1983). The study used, as its analytic context, policy trends that have occurred in other Western market democracies, particularly those that are English-speaking and subscribe to the general tenets associated with Anglo-Saxon capitalism (Altman, 2009). As these nations began to restructure Keynesian (post-war) era education systems from the 1970s onward, each nation began to incrementally develop and adopt variations of market reforms based on four central foci: choice, decentralization, centralization, and accountability (Ball, 1998; Kachur & Harrison, 1999, Klees, 2008; Tomlinson, 2005; Whitty et al., 1998). Arguably, these changes developed in response to ideological, political, and economic global phenomena that led to a policymaking convergence between nations (Kachur, 1999a; Klees, 2008; Tomlinson, 2005). The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not, or to what extent, the public education policy trends occurring in comparable education and state systems elsewhere have likewise affected public education policy directions in Saskatchewan. Theoretically, since these trends constitute a deductive rule, evidence for market reform influence in Saskatchewan should exist—and a selected sample of documents published by stakeholder groups served as the arena of investigation. The underlying goal of this historiographic content analysis was to establish the existence or extent of market reforms in Saskatchewan educational policy in an effort to increase awareness and discourse among public education stakeholders with regard to the implications of market reforms.

The primary research question for this study was as follows: Whether or not, or to what extent market reforms have influenced the policy directions of Saskatchewan public education? This study also considered the following: What were the potential implications of market reforms? Which faction of society or interest group was best served through the market reform movement? Were market reform policy directions congruent with the stated principles and values of the educational organizations? and Were these directions congruent with each organization's stated goals for public education?

### **A Brief Overview of the Framework for This Study**

In this content analysis, I intend to use a critical and rational approach to policy analysis. Chapter Three acts as the critical lens and takes the form of a historiography that provides readers with an overarching philosophical, political, and economic lens through which to view and to consider the analytic constructs used for analysis that are in Chapter Four. These constructs include definitions and descriptions of the themes, concepts, and discourse associated with market reforms that have arguably developed in response to the ideologies and political events described in Chapter Three. Chapter Four concludes with a description of the processes used for collecting and analyzing data, whereas readers are presented with the data and synopses of the first stage of data analysis for each organization examined in Chapter Five. In Chapter Six, I describe the cross-comparative analysis of the data synopses in Chapter Five, and the implications of each construct before drawing final conclusions regarding the extent of market reform evidence per organization, and whether or not evidence became more or less prominent between 2001 and 2010, or between provincial government administrations during that time.

## **A Synopsis of Methodology and Methods**

Given that content analyses are a highly contextualized, complex, and an unconventional form of research and analysis, extensive and holistic methodological explanations are often required (Krippendorff, 2004). The methodology section that follows begins by defining what a historiography is, and why the development of a historiography was the most appropriate methodology to guide this study. After establishing the historiography as the context within this content analysis, an explanation describing the general methodology of content analyses and why a context in content analysis is important follows. The methodology section concludes with an explanation of the differences between critical and rational analyses, and why using both was essential for this analysis. Finally, even though validity is often described at the end of the methods section in most content analyses, it is included at the end of the methodology section since the explanation required is better suited to this section. Following methodology, in the methods section I describe how sampling, analytic, and narrating procedures were carried out in this analysis (Krippendorff, 2004).

**Methodology.** As the primary academic associated with content analyses, Krippendorff (2004) stated that researchers who develop a problem-driven content analysis often begin research queries based on their own professional real-world experiences. As described in Chapter One, this research began in response to academic and professional observations made of the British public education system. Without having to revisit the particulars of those observations, the experience led me to hypothesize that the organizational structures of the British system had likely once been similar to Saskatchewan's, and that the introduction of market reforms had likely

occurred in response to political and economic forces external to the system itself. Given the general cultural, political, and economic comparability between the state systems of Britain and Canada, I hypothesized it would be only a matter of time before similar forces influenced the direction of public education policy in Saskatchewan.

The problem upon my return to Canada was that once I started to research these issues, I was unable to find literature that would explain the broader philosophical, political, or economic rationale to support the perceived need for developing and adopting market reform policy directions in the first place. In the absence of one broadly contextual or coherent source to explain the foundational genesis or forces behind market reforms, I could not imagine how educational researchers or policymakers interested in meaningfully analyzing or describing the implications of market reforms could carry out this level of analysis without taking a more holistic or interdisciplinary approach. With the exception of Ball (1998), there was very little literature within the discipline of education that explicitly discussed the extent or type of market failures that may occur as a result of attempting to provide public education (a common good) through an organizational framework based on market logic (failures associated with natural monopolies, imperfect information, negative externalities, tragedy of the commons, or perfect competition) (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003). As a consequence, it soon became clear a lacuna existed in educational literature that might otherwise explicitly or holistically have explained the implications of moving toward quasi-market provision models in public education. In order to carry out a well-rounded analysis of the implications that may arise in response to specific reform instruments within education (micro), or in society more generally (macro), I recognized an interdisciplinary explanation of the

historic processes that led to the present contextualization of public policy directions was required. This conclusion was emboldened after reading a sentiment expressed by Kachur and Harrison (1999), who explained “[a] failure to recognize the broad political and economic contexts in which education is embedded frequently confuses people and renders debates about education narrow and unrewarding” (p. xv). After recognizing the need for a historic context, I also realized that I was approaching this investigation in anticipation of reaching a foregone conclusion. It was for this reason a content analysis was chosen as the methodology for this study. I decided accordingly that in addition to how a content analyst would normally address tautological issues, the development of a historiographical context within this content analysis would alleviate any methodological concerns in this regard. On its own, a content analysis enables a researcher to fully investigate the hypotheses the researcher initially develops in response to the issues they perceive exist in the real-world. Therefore, the problem initially identified is often the foregone conclusion or prediction that sets the research of the content analysis in motion. Once the investigation ensues, it becomes the task of the content analyst to either refute or to confirm his or her own hypotheses by contextualizing and analyzing the phenomena. However, there is no guarantee the researcher will find evidence either for or against his or her initial hypotheses. Subsequent to the historiography section that follows, the historiographical aspects of this research design will be referred to as the “context” hereafter within this content analysis.

**Historiography.** Berger (1983) stated “the primary purpose of a historiography is to ensure that both the reader and writer of history are aware of the subtle and unconscious ways in which the very forces the historian seeks to interpret shape his own

thought” (p. vii). To enhance this type of relativism and transparency, Berger suggested researchers should declare the factors and assumptions that underpin the historical interpretations they develop in order to neutralize or to define the subjective parameters of their historical research (Gall et al., 2007). For example, as fully described in Chapter One, the concept of choice in this study has been framed from an economics perspective where choice has been the central policy instrument or mechanism used in efforts to restructure traditional public education systems according to competition-based economic models (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Friedman, 1997; Hepburn, 1999; Moe, 2003). Berger also emphasized historiographers often consider the impact of other disciplines within the development of historiographies including the relativism of the researcher’s political interests. While the historiography of this study has certainly considered the impact of other disciplines on education, most of the contextualization regarding the delimited aspects of the historiography, and the sociopolitical position of the researcher has been included in Chapters One and Two. Within the historiography itself (Chapter Three), the ideas that led to the development of the initial hypotheses of this study have been chronologically contextualized.

Similar to content analyses, researchers who develop historiographies are not necessarily in search of answers considered true. Rather, as Collingwood (1939, as cited in Morton, 1983) claimed, historiographers generally seek to “extend and confirm” their own experiences by developing questions that enhance discourse to initiate further questioning. In a content analysis, the hypotheses the researcher initially develops often become the research questions, or form the basis of the research topic. When researchers investigate to confirm these hypotheses or to answer these questions, researchers often

attempt “to interpret ideas or events that previously were not viewed or treated as related, but which have been revealed to reflect possible relationships” (Gall et al., 2007, p. 535; Krippendorff, 2004). Researchers thereby engage in a process of developing causal inferences in an effort to reach a stream of conclusions “that one set of events brought about, directly or indirectly, a subsequent set of events” (Gall et al., 2007, p. 546). Even though historiographers cannot prove that one event caused another, they can make explicit the assumptions that underpin varied features of causality by developing a sequence of historical events for readers. From this perspective, a content analysis is similar to a historiography because it enables the researcher to historically contextualize a phenomenon, and to develop hypothetical answers to research questions in relation to that context. These hypothetical answers then contribute to a new interpretation of the issues at hand, and to the development of new discourse in the hope that new understandings may improve societal systems (Krippendorff, 2004).

**Content analysis.** Many of the educational research sources that describe content analyses generally only touch on the surface of describing the processes involved in carrying out this type of analysis. As the primary scholar on this topic, Krippendorff (2004) suggested there is no one objective or prescriptive method for carrying out this type of study. Regardless of whether or not a researcher carries out a quantitative or a qualitative approach, Krippendorff claimed that any systematic analysis of texts is essentially qualitative. Gall et al. (2007) supported this claim by suggesting that a central assumption that underpins all content analyses is that all texts are a form of communication between individuals or groups, records have an official purpose, texts rely on language to give meaning, and that these meanings have been developed to satisfy

various stakeholders in one respect or another. Krippendorff emphasized the need for unravelling the intent behind textual communication:

[c]ontent analysts are as interested in what is not said as they are in what is said—that is, they are interested in what texts reveal about phenomena not spoken of, such as ideological commitments or ethnic prejudices that are manifest in influences, consequences, and uses that may well go unrecognized by individual readers. (p. 346)

Thus, Krippendorff contended the literal or more generally understood meanings associated with texts are less of a concern than the foundational assumptions and intended meanings that ground them.

Since one of the goals of the content analyst was to deconstruct foundational assumptions, Krippendorff (2004) stated that analysts must seek to explore the historical dynamics that shape interpretation in order to derive extra textual meaning. Even though accomplishing such interpretive tasks is difficult, Krippendorff claimed it is necessary if researchers hope to derive meaningful inferences from textual analyses. Kincheloe and McLaren (2000) explained this task as building a bridge “between reader and text, text and its producer, historical context and [the] present, and one particular social circumstance and another” (p. 286). But first, in order to build this bridge, a researcher needs to consider how to begin the recursive and highly contextual nature of the research process.

Since content analyses are generally considered a type of critical discourse, Gall et al. (2007) claimed these types of analyses often involve “efforts to expose the politics embedded in the discourses through which realities are constructed and perceived” (p.



512; Silverman, 2000). These scholars claimed that within education, researchers will often begin this process by questioning or exposing through research, the foundational underpinnings that maintain traditional educational operations. In most cases, this entails using a method of troubling to “analyze the power relationships that are ignored or taken for granted by most educators, but that are central to the operation of educational institutions” (p. 509). Otherwise, without contextualizing the broader phenomena of which education systems are a part, these scholars suggested both analysts and audiences would undoubtedly be limited in their capacity to understand how forces external to education systems influence phenomena internal to those systems. In recognition of the need to examine phenomena external to public education systems in this study, the development of a critical context was necessary.

**The context in content analysis and why it is important.** Establishing a context is an essential component of any content analysis. Krippendorff (2004) suggested a context can be a record of ideological, political, sociological, or economic changes that have occurred in society over a period of time. In order to extrapolate abductive inferences from texts, it is essential to develop an analytical construct (context) in a content analysis as a way of enabling the researcher to either refute or to confirm the researcher’s abductive claims. In some cases this involves attempting to unravel the ideological contexts of text that may implant a particular meaning in the minds of readers. Kincheloe and McLaren (2000) explained this level of contextualization is critical since discursive power often “validates particular research strategies, narrative formats, and modes of representation” (p. 284). Otherwise, taking the meaning of language at face value may presume discursive disclosure that may limit debates

surrounding policy options, or the implications of policy directions. Most problematic is that this type of unravelling is often “complicated by the taken-for-grantedness of the meanings promoted in these [language] representations and the typically undetected ways these meanings are circulated into everyday life” (p. 288). It is thereby important that analysts deconstruct or understand how language preserves power structures within the status quo (Krippendorff, 2004). Of particular concern in this study was to what extent classical theory has worked to maintain existing power relations and structures (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000). Since the ideological antecedents that underpin language are not always accessible to the casual observer, a content analyst must draw abductive inferences from texts based on the ideas and trends they establish in the context in order to answer research questions. In other words, the aim of the analyst is to draw inferences from texts and to phenomena outside those texts, which is why analysts refer to these answers as context-sensitive. Essentially, the arguments analysts develop either refute or support the analyst’s initial, and abductively derived, hypothetical claims.

According to Honderich (1995), abductive reasoning accepts a conclusion or inference as long as the explanation provided is the best possible, probabilistic, or compelling explanation for any given set of data. Baggini and Fosl (2010) confirmed Honderich’s claim, and suggested further that researchers who use abductive reasoning generally assume several explanations are possible for any broad body of data, and that validity rests on the best possible explanation. This is congruent with Krippendorff’s (2004) claim that the validity of a content analysis rests on the strength of the abductive inferences that can be drawn from a well-established and deductively grounded context. Specific to this study, it was important to note, however, that because of the economic

delimitation of this analysis, the limited data made available, and the researcher's semiotic assumption that the analytic constructs used in this analysis can be exchanged with their respective referents, the compelling explanation provided was but one of a myriad of possible explanations. Consequently, the ultimate goal of abduction (a best explanation) rests beyond the scope of this study. Nevertheless, this delimitation gave weight to the explanation offered on account of its coherence with the work of many authors (whose work herein is cited), and on the successful defence of this thesis before a committee of academics in the field of Educational Administration who share the contextual knowledge of the researcher.

To provide a contrast to abductive logic, in deductive reasoning it is presumed the assumptions behind a general rule are established as true, in support of a particular theory. When using deductive reasoning, scholars will often draw conclusions from data either in comparison or in contrast to this general rule (Baggini & Fosl, 2010; Honderich, 1995). In this study, the trends established in the context were the deductive rule, and the answers to the research questions were abductively derived in response to this deductive framework. Once abductive inferences were drawn from Saskatchewan-specific data, I intended to use inductive reasoning to build or to develop theory specific to the Saskatchewan context.

**Rational and critical models of policy analysis: Meting out the differences.**

Since this content analysis somewhat departed from the traditional rational approach to policy analysis, it is important to distinguish the differences between rational and critical analyses from a broader policy paradigm perspective. Fallon (2006) suggested the rational approach to policymaking and analysis is linear and sequential, and that rational

models have been developed primarily in response to the classical economic paradigm. Moreover, Fallon contended Western governments, as well as private and public organizations, have primarily adopted these models—hence the status quo of this policymaking approach. Primarily at issue is that these models often fail to explore or to consider the flaws or contestable aspects of the ideological paradigms that provide the foundation for these apparatuses. Fallon believed that recognizing the limitations of rational analyses is important because in cases where holistic approaches have not been used, policy failures have often been attributed to “poor policy implementation or lack of political will” (p. 45). In order to meaningfully ascertain the origin of policy implications and to develop policy solutions in the best interests of all stakeholders, Fallon suggested researchers use a critical approach that considers a wider array of contextual variables (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003).

In an effort to more accurately define the general stages of rational analysis, Bridgman and Davis (1998) described rational policy formation as consisting of the following steps: (a) problem definition, (b) clarification of values, (c) identification of policy options, (d) the selection of a course of action, (e) the evaluation of that course of action, and (f) a final modifying of policies accordingly. This definition and model demonstrate the extent to which rational analysis employs a means-end rationality, and may not fully consider the range of stakeholder values that may underpin problem definition. From this perspective, one ongoing limitation of this approach would be that it rarely considers or satisfies a wide range of societal needs, especially given the assumption societal circumstances are so varied and evolve. Instead of recognizing the inherent ambiguity and contingency that characterize all policymaking processes, Fallon

(2006) suggested that rational policymakers have attempted “. . . to find order in the midst of apparent chaos” (p. 39). Fallon claimed further these attempts to simplify or to objectify all that is inherently subjective are likely to result in insights of limited scope. Even though Fallon recognized the utilitarian and cost-effective aspects of the rational approach in terms of understanding phenomena or securing stable political environments, Fallon suggested the most troublesome aspect of rational analysis is how advocates claim the approach is politically neutral.

Fallon (2006) suggested that rarely are rational policymaking processes as objective, value-neutral, or bipartisan as advocates claim, and claimed further that “[a] policy is not value-neutral and is representative of an entire process of creating and shaping organization-bound action within a context of ideas and policy preferences” (p. 39). Thus, in order to deconstruct claims of neutrality, Fallon recommended that researchers and policymakers explore the assumptions that underpin the sociocultural foundations upon which organizational systems and policymaking processes are based. For example, in this study, I use the historiographical context to deconstruct the foundational aspects of public policymaking in Western state systems which may assist stakeholders to clarify whose interests contemporary public education policy directions primarily serve. Ultimately, Fallon concluded the stakeholders of policymaking processes would be best served through the use of more flexible, holistic, and multifaceted approaches to policymaking. The type of critical approach taken in this study enabled the researcher to carry out this level of analysis (Gall et al., 2007; Krippendorff, 2004).

As mentioned, content analyses are often considered a type of discourse analyses, and as such, are considered a subset of critical theory. The critical theory view of textual

or policy analysis is that the status quo, which in this case is the rational approach, is often constrained by contemporary power relationships. Critical proponents believe accordingly it is the task of the critical researcher to question how foundational limitations either shape educational policies or affirm different types of values and control. Although during this process of deconstruction, Gall et al. (2007) emphasized it is important for researchers to ground the contextualization of this level of analysis otherwise this type of research may be viewed as hypercritical. These scholars contended further that critics of the hypercritical approach believe that a constant unravelling of the philosophies that underlie organizational systems will often fail to provide tangible solutions or alternatives that will improve societal systems. One way researchers and policymakers might avoid this critique is to follow Fallon's (2006) suggestion of striking a balance between using both the critical and rational approach. In this study, both approaches were used: critical to contextualize the phenomena, and rational to carry out the methods of analysis (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003).

Prunty (1985) defined critical analysis more specifically as a way of gaining perspective on how power and control determine for whom a policy is working, under what conditions, and on whose terms. Dye (2002) defined the approach somewhat differently by stressing the importance of examining which issues are kept off policy agendas, and which issues are defined as safe. Ball (1998) supported both definitions but emphasized the importance of examining the meaning and representations that compose the language of policy narratives that frame how issues, solutions, and policymaking processes are generally understood. The critical approach of this study primarily employed Prunty and Ball's definitions since this analysis sought to determine for whom

public education policy directions in Saskatchewan were working, and how policy narratives in the province have been framed to the public accordingly. Without this level of contextualization and narrative deconstruction, the readers of this study may otherwise be inclined to accept certain paradigms or ideas as truths regardless of whether or not the policies that are developed in response suit their best interests. By providing readers with a wider context, I have enabled readers to differentiate between different types of discourse and to choose between policy alternatives (Gall et al., 2007; Schwandt, 2000). As Krippendorff (2004) stated, a content analysis enables the researcher to deduce “inferences about institutional phenomena of which the institution’s constituents may be only dimly aware” (p. 68). In this study, “constituents” referred to all public education stakeholders—including the public.

In an effort to briefly recognize and address the differences between the quantitative and qualitative approaches to content analyses, it is important to note that researchers using the quantitative approach often provide little, if any, context in support of alternative interpretations of the words used in policy texts, or of the institutions that produced them. In the quantitative approach, the meaning of a text is primarily considered to be universal and value-neutral, with only one tangible or objective meaning. Researchers who use this approach either limit, or do not seek out extra textual interpretation. Instead, quantitative researchers will often focus on the surface meanings of the words used in texts, and rely on counting the occurrence or co-occurrence of particular words during analysis. As a consequence, Krippendorff claimed the inferences drawn tend to be narrow in scope, as are the findings (Gall et al., 2007; Krippendorff, 2004).

One assumption of the qualitative approach is that the meaning derived from words, or a body of text, is developed in the mind of the writer or reader, the context of which changes by individual or by individual situation. Krippendorff (2004) stated since “a text means something to someone, [and] it is produced by someone to have meanings for someone else” (p. 19), no text is value-neutral. In other words, any meaningful examination of texts must consider the value-based context in which the text or documents were produced. Despite what Krippendorff felt was an obvious need for contextualization, he stated the qualitative rationale has not stopped quantitative analysts, and those who benefit from objectively preferred meanings, from continuing to claim their interpretations are value-neutral (Fallon, 2006). In an effort to counter such claims, Krippendorff asserted the task of the content analyst is to reject such objectivity, given the rejection is warranted, and in doing so, consider new interpretations, the implications that may arise from new understandings, and once again, to trouble the status quo often taken for granted (Gall et al., 2007).

One aspect that is similar between the qualitative and quantitative approach is the need to seek out patterns in discourse. This includes the need to observe the co-occurrence or frequency of words or concepts used, and the omission thereof. However, without contextualizing either the positive, negative, or cultural characteristics of either, Krippendorff (2004) claimed analysts are not only limited in their ability to draw meaningful inferences from textual analysis, but they are unable to ascertain the importance of omission. With the development of a context, stable correlations can be made between the context and “[t]he *presence* or *absence* of a reference or concept” (p. 59). Ultimately, Krippendorff contended that content analyses are essentially critical



analyses, and as such, are a more holistic approach to textual analyses when compared with the status quo approach. Krippendorff concluded this level of analysis is most likely to yield transformative findings, and at the very least, broaden meaningful discourse.

***Analytical constructs.*** Krippendorff (2004) stated the analytical constructs in most content analyses operationalize or formalize the context so a researcher can proceed with analysis. In brief, the analytic construct “. . . operationalizes what the content analyst knows, suspects, or assumes about the context of the text and procedurally accounts for the drawing of inferences from that text” (p. 171). In this way, Krippendorff claimed the constructs act as testable mini-theories of the context and the best explanation an analyst can imagine or can defend within the scope of one study that explains how a body of text can or should be read relative to the purpose of analysis. And given the context sensitivity of content analyses, Krippendorff also suggested construct development processes are flexible given the process and constructs are defensible in keeping with the purposes of the study.

In this content analysis, the analytical constructs were not solely an encapsulation of the concepts established in the context. Instead, the broader context in Chapter Three provided the foundational concepts required to fully understand the overlying conceptual framework of choice and the interdependency of related themes, namely: decentralization, centralization, and accountability. Essentially, the beginning of Chapter Four consists of a construct for each of these themes, which taken together represent how the ideological origins responsible for the political and economic events of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have manifested as themes foundational to policy instruments intended to reform

21<sup>st</sup> century public education systems. Each construct includes descriptions of the logic and benefits of each theme, and will act as the lens of analysis for this study.

As mentioned, the rational quantitative approach to textual analysis is insufficient when compared with the critical approach of seeking out extra textual interpretation. It is thereby unlikely that relying on the occurrence or omission of specific words or phrases in a context separate from the broader context of analysis will yield meaningful evidence especially if derived from a small sample size. Krippendorff (2004) contended linguistic conventions change over time, will vary context-to-context, and that it is more important to develop a context that enables the analyst to draw broader inferences regarding the presence or absence of a concept relative to the construct. For example, Kachur (1999a) suggested that government planners, consultants, and facilitators are often paid to use rhetorical strategies to manage the meaning of language in an effort to smuggle political values into the words, phrases, and metaphors used in public documents and relations campaigns. Accordingly, Apple (2001) and Ball (1998) claimed it is critical for researchers to deconstruct these narratives and contextualize the concepts used to support words or statements often understood to be objective or value-neutral statements.

In this study, I employed a similar critical analytic approach by determining whether the concepts established in each construct exist in the samples to be examined. This was achieved by highlighting examples of evidence and by explaining how the evidence related to each relevant construct. Once the varied levels of evidence has been compiled per organization in Chapter Five, the extent of market reform influence and changes that have occurred within and between organizations can be established.

**Replication.** Krippendorff (2004) suggested that when compared to a rational quantitative analysis, critical content analyses are not often replicated because of apprehensions regarding the relativist, context sensitive, and hypothetical nature of this level of analyses. In most cases, Krippendorff claimed analysts will never know if the research design was replicable unless future researchers attempt to replicate it. For one, other researchers must consider the central and highly contextualized role of the primary researcher, and accept that “[a] context in which a content analysis is proved successful at one time may have changed” (p. 187). This does not mean, however, that attempts cannot be made.

In this study, the constructs in Chapter Four supported by the context in Chapter Three provide other analysts with rules of inference that can be applied to similar contexts. In this sense, Krippendorff (2004) suggested that knowledge of the context is portable to other content analyses. However, it is up to subsequent researchers to determine which aspects of the context are no longer relevant and to update the context accordingly, which events have either validated or invalidated the inferences drawn, and which analytical processes require improvement to enhance the reliability of the research design. Put differently, future researchers may preserve the context as long as all modifications are declared. And despite the complexity of replicating such designs, Krippendorff claimed such attempts have value because where attempts have been made, partial validations have occurred, which in turn fulfils the goal of enhancing discourse as well as inductively contributing to the reliability of similar research designs in the future.

**Validity.** Interpretations developed by content analysts need to be theoretically grounded, and there should be correspondence between theory and data (Gall et al.,

2007). With respect to validating research findings in relation to the context, Krippendorff (2004) stated “[a] content analysis is valid if the inferences drawn from available texts withstand independently available evidence, of new observations, of competing theories or interpretations, or of being able to inform successful actions” (p. 313). Essentially, if the researcher’s academic community considered the context to be valid-in-principle or the findings attract academic, public, or any other form of relevant consideration or attention, the research was socially valid. Assuming the researcher was able to defend the extent to which the context is grounded, that the procedural analysis has been carried out reliably, and demonstrate an ability to make plausible or compelling arguments, Krippendorff contended these factors alone would render the findings of the research valid. However, Krippendorff emphasized that content analysis answers to research questions are always hypothetically valid, and are thereby limited.

### **Method**

Krippendorff (2004) suggested that methods in content analyses are often described categorically. Accordingly, the methods of this analysis will be carried out in three separate categorical phases under unitizing (sampling), recording (analysis), and narrating.

**Unitizing (sampling).** I intend to use two types of purposive sampling for this analysis. The first approach considered the need to limit available texts, to choose relevant texts, and to be fair to all possible data. The second entailed purposefully selecting textual properties within the documents for the purposes of comparative analysis.

Yin (2003) suggested that in cases where researchers attempt to test a general theory in a specific context, they should select samples that will ensure the research findings are generalizable to the theory and not to a defined population (as cited in Gall et al., 2007). Gall et al. referred to this approach as “operational construct sampling” and suggested researchers interested in understanding how theoretical constructs manifest in the real-world should use this approach. In this analysis, this entailed choosing samples relevant to the context to determine whether, or the extent to which market reform trends have manifested in the Saskatchewan public education context.

For this analysis, maximum variation sampling would be used to ensure samples are drawn from each of the organizations with mandates that cover the entire scope of responsibilities for Saskatchewan public education. An examination of relevant samples from each organization should reveal common themes, patterns, similarities, differences, or an omission of evidence in relation to the existence of market reform trends (Gall et al., 2007, p. 182). Retrieving samples from the key policy documents of each major stakeholder organization in Saskatchewan public education was essential since relevant documents from these organizations provided the basis for decision-making and guidance for the direction of public education policy. Therefore, I only considered samples of policy documents from the primary organizations involved in the provision of K-12 public education: the Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation; the Saskatchewan League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents; the Saskatchewan School Boards Association; and the Ministry of Education.

In order to obtain policy documents, I asked a research assistant to contact the major stakeholder organizations through a written request that asked each organization to

self-identify what it believed to be its key policy direction document for each of the years specified. In the event there was no response, I intended to develop a new criterion for justifying subsequent approaches, the details of which will be declared in Chapter Five.

Once document samples were obtained in a content analysis, the next step was to decide which sections of the texts were relevant for the purposes of comparative analysis. In this case, the amount of text for analysis relative to the limitations of a Master's thesis analysis was considered. Given that the introductions and executive summaries of policy documents usually entail summaries of the concepts described within documents, I intended to analyze only these sections of text from the documents identified. In the event these sections did not exist, my second choice was to analyse the introduction and conclusions of each document, and in the case of requiring a third choice, I analyzed what I determined was a relevant section of text with a limit of 10 pages (approximately 2,700 words). As mentioned previously, any modifications that occurred during sampling were recorded and declared in Chapter Five.

**Recording (analysis).** Recording occurs when content analysts formally record observations or inferences as they examine the text of documents (Krippendorff, 2004). Schwandt (2000) suggested one requirement of all critical researchers is to locate where the researcher stands within the ruling apparatus of society. Gall et al. (2007) and Krippendorff suggested further that in cases where qualitative sampling and analytic processes are carried out solely by the content analyst in the absence of external involvement, analysts should also have the credentials, expertise, and ability to derive abductive inferences from the data in relation to the context. In other words, it is important for content analysts to declare the relativism of their relationship to the

research to assist readers in understanding how those views or experiences may have affected an analyst's understanding of the data.

In fulfilling Schwandt's (2000) requirement, readers should be aware I was brought up in a working class home, was a school-leaver, and was engaged in a relatively brief construction career prior to acquiring a post-secondary education to become a teacher. However, prior to university, I always had a passion for history and increasingly came to believe there was a clear connection between the socioeconomic progress of Western nations during the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the development of welfare states. From a more experiential perspective, I also believed that had it not been for having universal access to quality public education, I may not have been able to acquire the socioeconomic means or the academic and professional experiences necessary to meaningfully carry out this analysis. Yet despite being a member of a demographic that has largely benefited from the welfare state arrangement of public goods provision, it is also important to emphasize that I am also an ardent advocate of the need for market democracy. In terms of the debates surrounding the role and efficacy of markets, I would take a similar position to Keynes (1926/2004; 1936) who claimed that sustaining progressive economic growth, social justice, and securing peace in capitalist systems requires striking a public policy balance of interests between capital and labour. Thus, in the absence of further research on this topic at the time of this writing, I would question whether market reforms in public education are conducive to achieving these ends as outlined by Keynes.

In terms of fulfilling Krippendorff's (2004) credentials requirement, I have taught in Asia and the United Kingdom which enabled me to observe and to study some of the

cultural value and organizational differences of different public education systems relative to those with which I had been familiar with in Saskatchewan. Subsequent to returning to Saskatchewan and completing graduate coursework on topics related to market reforms, I became employed as a Research and Policy Analyst for the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation. Between my early academic history (which led to the initial abductive hypotheses of this study), professional observations made in Britain, the completion of relevant graduate coursework, and my current position as an analyst, I believe I have both the credentials and expertise necessary to carry out the research processes of this content analysis. And even though these experiences and credentials are bound to affect interpretations of the data relative to the context, it will not affect how the rational aspects of this analysis have been carried out in relation to the recording processes described below.

**The recording process.** I began each phase of each analytic process with an unscathed hardcopy of the samples examined. Equipped with the analytical constructs in Chapter Four, I intended to analyze each section of text in relation to each construct. As this process unfolded, I made notes in the margins of each document of any observations, or inferences I drew in relation to the broader context and the scaffolds applied. Once this process was complete, the notes were synthesized and compiled as an addendum of data per organization at the end of each sample summary. Each summary was preceded by a brief contextualization of each organization that included a description of the role of the organization and the time periods in which the sample text was developed (Krippendorff, 2004). All of this information and the processes used for gathering data were recorded and presented in Chapter Five.



Chapter Six encapsulates an in-depth analysis and narration of all of the data that was relative to the constructs foundationally supported by the broader historiography of Chapter Three. The conclusions reached, as noted in the literature, should determine to what extent evidence for market reforms exists in the selected samples, per organization, and to what extent, if any, levels of evidence have become more or less prominent in policy documentation between 2001 and 2010.

**Narrating.** Once the final examination of the data was complete, the results needed to become interpretable and available to a wider audience. Krippendorff (2004) stated that narrating allows researchers to communicate the importance of the results with the intention of bringing the benefits and implications to the attention of the public or stakeholders who might have an interest in this type of investigation. In order to communicate findings or possible actions, Krippendorff recommended that analysts develop a compelling narrative to make new understandings of the phenomena, or observations comprehensible. In this study, this narrative is part of Chapter Six, and includes recommendations for further study.

The historiography in Chapter Three was based on an extensive literature review and provides the reader with a context for the analytical constructs used for analysis as described in Chapter Four. Essentially, the historiography provides readers with a historical overview of the reactive nature of ideology throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries manifest in the reactions of various interest groups to the political and economic events of the era. Accordingly, this overview made explicit the ideological origins of historic and contemporary public education policy instruments and directions in Western states. The historiography also included examples of how market reform trends have

affected other provinces in Canada including a brief contextualization of the traditional political climate in Saskatchewan. The historiography was developed by synthesizing several smaller research frameworks into one, which together constitute the deductive rule underpinning the analytical framework of this content analysis. The application of this context to the Saskatchewan context helped determine to what extent evidence for market reform trends exist in Saskatchewan public education policy documentation. Therefore, this study is a qualitative deductive study.

### **Summary**

This second chapter described what a historiographic content analysis is, and the format of this content analysis. These descriptions included an explanation of the theoretical underpinnings and reasons for including a critical context in any policy analysis, as well as the need for both rational and critical analysis in this particular study. And finally, in the latter half of this chapter, I described how this research was carried out in accordance with the methods generally associated with content analysis.

## CHAPTER THREE

### **Foundational Context of the Study and Review of Relevant Literature**

This study was a historiographic content analysis of public education policy trends in Saskatchewan (Berger, 1983). The study used, as its analytic context, policy trends that have occurred in other Western market democracies, particularly those that are English-speaking and subscribe to the general tenets associated with Anglo-Saxon capitalism (Altman, 2009). As these nations began to restructure Keynesian (post-war) era education systems from the 1970s onward, each nation began to incrementally develop and adopt variations of market reforms based on four central foci: choice, decentralization, centralization, and accountability (Ball, 1998; Kachur & Harrison, 1999, Klees, 2008; Tomlinson, 2005; Whitty et al., 1998). Arguably, these changes developed in response to ideological, political, and economic global phenomena that led to a policymaking convergence between nations (Kachur, 1999a; Klees, 2008; Tomlinson, 2005). The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not, or to what extent, the public education policy trends occurring in comparable education and state systems elsewhere have likewise affected public education policy directions in Saskatchewan. Theoretically, since these trends constitute a deductive rule, evidence for market reform influence in Saskatchewan should exist—and a selected sample of documents published by stakeholder groups served as the arena of investigation. The underlying goal of this historiographic content analysis was to establish the existence or extent of market reforms in Saskatchewan educational policy in an effort to increase awareness and discourse among public education stakeholders with regard to the implications of market reforms.

I began my research with the task of establishing a conceptualization of the reforms responsible for the current structures of the public education system in England. Based on the delimited economics focus of the literature reviewed and here presented in Chapters Three and Four, choice, decentralization, centralization, and accountability emerged as themes that explained how contemporary education systems of the Western market democracies came to be structured under governments influenced by neo-liberalism.

While conducting my initial reading in preparation for these reviews, I was surprised to discover how many scholars claimed changes occurring in public education systems were part of a larger global movement. In the current chapter, I review the linkage between ideology and public policy before exploring a historical account of ideologies that have provided the foundation for government policymaking processes throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I then contextualize the impact of government policymaking shifts in other Canadian provinces, and briefly review different degrees of market reform influence in other provinces before concluding Chapter Three with a brief historical overview of Saskatchewan's traditional political and educational policymaking climate.

### **Context Background: The Concept of a Public Good**

Kachur and Harrison (1999) stated that a “failure to recognize the broad political and economic contexts in which education is embedded frequently confuses people and renders debates about education narrow and unrewarding” (p. xv). It is therefore important to discuss and contextualize what the role of education is in terms of being a public good in society.

As I explain in greater detail later in this chapter, during the 19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, many Western industrialized nations constructed state apparatuses that were largely based on the foundational concepts of classical liberalism. After the World Wars and the Great Depression that characterized the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, scholars began to recognize that the allocation and distribution systems based on classical liberalism were too arbitrary and inequitable in terms of allocating and distributing state benefits that were within the common interest (Heywood, 2003; Keynes, 1936). Keynes (1926/2004) reasoned that the market system of the pre-war era offered no mercy or protection for regular citizens from the market, and that enlightened self-interest had failed to adequately provide collective benefits to the public (Saint-Martin, 2007). As a result, during the post-war era, several industrialized nations created state-owned institutions that would deliver public goods to citizens in order to increase the overall well-being of citizenries. Education was considered to be a state-owned and managed public good, and was to be collectively funded and distributed to society as a whole. Thus, education was considered to be a good that was within the collective interest. It was therefore reasoned that education should not be left to private or to individual interests to own or to maintain (Carl, 1994).

In these new welfare states, citizens were to have universal access to public goods and services, and as a public good, publicly provided education was viewed as necessary to create, maintain and enhance participatory democracies, which would also help ensure that governments and state systems were working toward the collective public interest (Heywood, 1999; Kachur & Harrison, 1999; Scott & Marshall, 2005). More specifically, Keynes (1926/2004) believed the social and economic progress of states was dependent

upon “semi-autonomous bodies within the state—bodies whose criterion of action within their own field is solely the public good as they understand it, and from whose deliberations and motives of private advantage are excluded” (p. 37). Klees (2008) suggested that the industrial nations had placed education systems within this domain of public bodies that had committed to providing quality and universal access to education to their citizenries since the post-war era.

Writing at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Noddings (2007) contended that differences in educational philosophy have had relatively little effect on the performance of public schools if compared with the social and political economic context of school systems, which evolve in response to political events (Kachur & Harrison, 1999). For example, from approximately the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century until the end of the pre-war era in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, many governments of the Western market democracies created state structures that were largely based on the foundational concepts commonly associated with classical liberalism. Following the post-war and the Great Depression era, however, public policies were largely based on a mix of Keynesian, communitarian, or social democratic ideals (Heywood, 2003; Saint-Martin, 2007). In other words, as catastrophic events generated evolutions or changes in ideological persuasions, the Western nations restructured state systems and the direction of public policymaking processes accordingly. Put differently, ideology influences the structure of state apparatuses, state policy directions, and the impact of policy directions on citizenry; public education is not immune to this phenomenon. Later in this chapter, this point is further explored in a brief comparison of policy developments in the United States and Sweden.

### **Historical Overview to the Current Educational Policy Movement**

As noted above, in the post-war era, the governments of the Western market democracies reconstructed their state apparatuses and moved away from state structures based on the tenets of classical liberalism. Instead, these nations began to create new structures based on the political, philosophical, and economic aspects of the ideas professed primarily by the British economist, John Maynard Keynes, combined with the communitarian and social democratic ideas that began to re-emerge at the time (Heywood, 1999; Saint-Martin, 2007). Keynes (1936) believed state structures based on the *laissez-faire* classical liberal approach to economics during the pre-war era were based on foundational principles and assumptions about human nature that did not match up to reality. For example, Heywood (1999) stated scholars began to recognize that human self-interestedness may be socially constructed as opposed to innate. Consequently, the ideological assumptions that had been made with regard to human nature in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries that influenced public policymaking came into question.

**Keynes and the social welfare state.** To counter the classical liberal interpretation that humans are naturally unequal and self-interested, Keynes (1926/2004) argued there was no rational ground for preferring the happiness of one individual to that of any other. Although Keynes was a general advocate for the ideas associated with individualism, he stated that ultimately the welfare of individuals is contingent upon the welfare of others in society. The resurgence of 19<sup>th</sup> century communitarian ideologies that coincided with Keynes' assertions stressed the benefits of cooperation, classless societies, and the idea that "individuals are shaped by the communities to which they belong, and thus owe them a debt of respect and consideration" (Heywood, 2003, p. 149).

Similarly, communitarian advocates suggested unregulated capitalism overemphasized the rights of individuals, which would ultimately lead to greed, and that conversely, it was more desirable to achieve a balance between individual liberty and collective needs (Nelson, Palonsky, & McCarthy, 2007). These paradigm shifts primarily occurred in response to the social and economic trauma experienced during the two World Wars and the Great Depression that Keynes argued resulted from imbalances in the economic allocation and distribution systems of states.

Another paradigm that developed in response to these calamitous events was the renewed consensus among societies with regard to human rights and how those rights should be protected (Humphries, 2006; Saint-Martin, 2007). As a scholar during the pre-war era, Keynes (1936) recognized that social welfare provisions had not been adequately provided by the private sector or through market activity, as classical theorists had supposed. Keynes reasoned this was a problem given that industrialized economies and societies were becoming increasingly complex, and argued further that the private sector would never guarantee general prosperity without increasing market regulation (Heywood, 2003). Alternatively, Keynes (1936) reasoned that governments should be responsible for fulfilling newly created and legislated equality and social justice mandates in post-war societies by taking ownership over the provision of public goods and services to stabilize economies and societies.

In response to Keynes' assertions, the general consensus reached by the Western nations was that governments should be responsible for developing, delivering, and sustaining public goods programs that would provide citizens with socioeconomic security in order to protect the greatest number of citizens "against the risks inherent in



modern life—unemployment, disability, illness, and poverty in old age” (Banting, 1997, as cited in Saint-Martin, 2007, p. 285; Keynes, 1926/2004). It is important to note, however, that although Keynes was a humanitarian, Keynes was an economist first and foremost.

In countering the classical supposition that government interventions obstruct the ability of markets to achieve equilibrium, Keynes (1926/2004) viewed government intervention in markets as critical in order to create long-term and sustainable economic growth, as opposed to the popularized notion that Keynes was in support of providing welfare provisions for the mere sake of consumption. And from the perspective of the citizens who bore the brunt of the traumatic events previously described, the development of welfare states was viewed as a way to equitably redistribute goods and services in society to improve social equality and to reduce poverty (Saint-Martin, 2007).

In criticizing the pre-war *laissez-faire* approach of governments, Keynes (1926/2004) rejected the notion that individuals possess a prescriptive natural liberty in economic activities, and that governments should intervene and provide citizens with adequate levels of social welfare to help mitigate domestic disputes that could otherwise lead to expensive and horrific conflicts. Not only would there be a humanitarian cost, but Keynes reasoned political unrest would disrupt the sustained economic growth sought by governments. Accordingly, Keynes concluded that providing citizens with universal access to public goods would ensure that all citizens would be better educated and healthier, which would lead to a more productive workforce. Keynes reasoned this spike in economic productivity would not only improve general wellbeing, but it would also substantially enlarge the middle classes of society. This, Keynes asserted, was the

formula for sustaining long-term economic growth, and in retrospect, Krugman (2007) asserted that the post-war boom was the direct result of the Keynesian formula that was developed, adopted, and implemented by Western nations during the post-war era.

In 1942, William Beveridge's *Report on Social Insurance and Allied Services* provided recommendations for welfare state development. The primary recommendations made in the report suggested state apparatuses should include "universal, minimalist, flat-rate social insurance, to be backed by commitments to full employment, universal education and a universal health service" (Finer, 1999, p. 19). It was also recommended it was necessary to use the Keynesian economic approach to deficit spending in order to sustain public programs during times of recession, and that a universally accessible education system should be a part of those programs. Finer (1999) argued the governments of these nations marketed the idea of welfare state features to citizens by stating that goods and services would be redistributed more equitably, and redistribution would provide citizens with a better way of life and with greater civil and political rights—all within capitalist free market democracies (Tomlinson, 2005). Britain was the first country to adopt ideas from the Beveridge Report, and created what became known as the first welfare state, upon which other nations would model the development of their own welfare state apparatuses (Finer, 1999). One eventual result was that the Keynesian economic ideal became the socioeconomic orthodoxy in these nations, displacing the former systems based primarily on the principles of *laissez-faire* (Heywood, 2003).

Keynes (1926/2004) claimed that to regulate these economies, governments should inject funds into the system during times of recession in order to stimulate demand for goods and services. It was further recommended that these injections take the form of

temporarily increasing the size of public bureaucracies in order to create jobs that would continue to provide workers with income during economic troughs. Given the public nature of the employment created, the effort was also expected to increase the third party benefits that accrue from providing public goods and services. However, the corollary to these deficit spending injections was that they were intended to be temporary and based upon the tenet that future revenue surpluses would even out any deficits turned debt over time (Heywood, 2003).

One consequence of the post-war ideological consensus between Western market democracies was that the majority of these nations developed institutions with similar rules and procedures underpinned with legislation that covered minimum wage levels along with systems of social security meant to ensure that all citizens would be privy to a minimum quality of life standard (Heywood, 2003; Robertson, 2000). Heywood stated that as a result of these developments, governments began to provide citizens with an array of social initiatives and services (such as pension, benefits, housing, health, and education programs) that, until the post-war era, had not been adequately provided through markets. Specific to the development of public education and health systems, Carl (1994) stated that Western governments reached the consensus that it was necessary to expand and extend the provisions embodied in these systems in order for the economy to prosper (Finer, 1999; Tomlinson, 2005).

As Heywood (2003) stated, the relationship of public education systems within welfare states has often been a source of confusion since the benefits of education extend beyond individual material interests. The status of education in relation to the welfare state is further confused by the fact that Keynes had little to say specifically about

education. For the record on what Keynes did state, Keynes was against unregulated private schooling, and was in favour of education policies that would meet job market demands. Likewise, Keynes believed that education spending should primarily be viewed as a means to enhance human capital as opposed to tax cuts as a way to stimulate the economy (Pressman, 2007; Saint-Martin, 2007).

**A brief comparison of U.S. and Swedish post-war policy.** Although Keynes paid scant attention to education when compared with his analysis of state systems generally, Tomlinson (2005) argued Western governments had in fact reached a consensus with respect to developing public education systems based on Keynesian public goods tenets with respect to universal access to quality public goods and services. Primary education was intended to be accessible and available to all children regardless of class, and was expected to be regulated and well resourced. Moreover, education systems were perceived by governments as being essential for fulfilling social justice mandates by providing citizens with better and more equal opportunities for socioeconomic advancement. Thus, the emphasis on social justice somewhat coincided with the consensus that universal access to education was an economic necessity to harness the economic potential of the working and middle classes. According to Krugman (2007), the overall and arguably positive consequence of this consensus was the Western nations experienced unprecedented and wide-spread affluence from the post-war era on, with only somewhat diminishing returns post-1973. As citizen support for expanding public goods provisions increased, Kuchapski (1998) noted how support for public education provision increased as well (Heywood, 2003).

The differences in welfare state structures and levels of government interventions that did exist between nations were largely contingent upon what each society perceived as being the good society. For instance, each nation developed and adopted different welfare state policy instruments based on perceived need, a perception of which was based on the foundational philosophies or beliefs of each nation (Finer, 1999). To provide two quite opposite examples, the citizens of the United States had traditionally been suspect of government intervention whether political or economic, and have consequently promoted less government intervention when compared with the immediate post-war British welfare state system. Similarly, U.S. citizens have traditionally favoured the ideas associated with individualism and free market solutions to citizen welfare, whereas Swedish citizens have traditionally promoted more government intervention to improve societal welfare.

The rationale employed by the Swedes, and even Britons at the outset of the post-war era, was that social programs would help alleviate the socioeconomic inequalities that had resulted from unregulated market activity prior to the post-war era (Finer, 1999; Humphries, 2006, Krugman, 1990). The conceptual dichotomy that existed between the United States and Sweden serves as an example of how differences in the foundational beliefs of a nation may have been responsible for the different levels of welfare state intervention and the types of policies that have been developed and adopted since. These differences would also account for the difference in discourse surrounding the policy instruments in terms of how these instruments have been framed to the public. For example, what was framed as a right in one country could be considered an impediment to socioeconomic progress in another (Klitgaard, 2007; Wilkinson, 2005).

Under the U.S. welfare state framework, Klitgaard (2007) claimed citizen rights have generally been framed as citizens having the right to economically succeed and that the role of the state is to support equality of opportunity to enshrine this right.

Alternatively, Sweden has framed rights as citizens having the right to access a minimum standard of living as provided and as distributed by the state in order to reduce citizen dependency on markets. The debate and conceptions as to what constitutes rights within a society become important when discussing how different state philosophies affect the organizational structures of the institutions that provide public goods and services such as education.

In order to briefly contextualize the welfare state features in Canada within the Western democratic framework, Heywood (1999) stated the “United States, Canadian and Australian systems can be described as liberal (or limited) welfare states since they aim to provide little more than a ‘safety net’ for those in need” (p. 307). To contrast, Heywood stated the original British and Swedish models were developed based more on the ideals of social democracy, and offered citizens more and better access to public provisions than limited intervention states. However, as mentioned, it is important to reiterate that strictly categorizing and assigning welfare state attributes to different states based on foundational emphases is bound to change over time, given the reflexive and evolving nature of ideology and state structure development (Saint-Martin, 2007; Tomlinson, 2005). Otherwise, Heywood’s conclusion suggests that Canada has been a limited welfare state similar to the United States—a country renowned within the Western democratic framework for offering less public provision to citizens through public goods bureaucracies (Wilkinson, 2005). Thus, it is important to consider not only

the reactionary nature of ideology over time and how that influences public policy, but also to consider what the foundational traditions and public policymaking processes are of states or provinces within a broader national framework.

**Saskatchewan as understood through the Swedish policy frame.** Humphries (2006) suggested political traditions and public policy frameworks in Saskatchewan have been more closely aligned with social democratic or institutionalist state frameworks similar to the Swedish framework previously described. By way of comparison, the state framework for Saskatchewan would stand in marked contrast to the limited state framework Heywood described as suiting the rest of Canada. However, it is important to remind readers that ideology and policy trends evolve. For example, the original British welfare state system was initially developed according to social democratic ideals, yet over time a pronounced policy direction shift occurred based on a revival of classical liberal ideals remnant of the pre-war era (Klees, 2008; Pressman, 2007). It is thereby important to contextualize the traditional adherence to ideologies in states, how historical events may influence ideology and affect public policy, as well as the implications that result (Carnoy, 1992).

### **The Trials and Tribulations of the Welfare States: The Keynesian Years**

Robertson (2000) stated that after welfare states had been created, tension developed between the business and labour lobbies as the interests of each group diverged and became more politically and economically entrenched. For instance, business advocates only reluctantly subscribed to the Keynesian postulate that increasing government welfare provisions was necessary in order to mediate the type of class conflicts that had characterized the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in order to create stable and

economically progressive societies. Instead, from the purview of the business lobby, the post-war goal was to extend capitalist systems of accumulation globally in order to create new and diverse capital opportunities for investors. From this perspective, business viewed the enhanced socioeconomic rights of labour as the primary obstacle in pursuit of various capital opportunities. Employing the pure self-interest assumptions of classical liberal theorists, business advocates also believed that post-war bureaucrats had unnecessarily increased the size of bureaucracy, and that bloated bureaucracies inefficiently and ineffectively tied up investment capital that could otherwise be put to better use through private investment. Accordingly, Robertson contended the business lobby continued to promote the presumption that free markets were most efficient and effective at allocating and distributing goods and services, and that government allocation and distribution, by their very nature, were inefficient and ineffective (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003; Whitty et al., 1998).

According to Robertson (2000), one consequence of this belief was that as the size of public bureaucracies increased, a correlative antipathy developed between the business and labour lobbies, the former of which somewhat successfully influenced the general public to coalesce with this sentiment from the 1980s onward (Ball, 1998; Robertson, 2000). As part of this ongoing agenda, Robertson claimed business leaders began to lobby governments to reduce state bureaucracies by reverting back to the minimalist role governments held during the pre-war era when governments provided just enough provision and intervention to curb the tolerance and demands of labour necessary to sustain capitalist systems (Keynes, 1926/2004).



According to both English (2006) and Robertson (2000), the labour movement viewed the creation of welfare states entirely differently. Labour advocates viewed the expansion of the state's role in the lives of citizens as a socioeconomic victory for the working and middle classes. The expansion of socioeconomic provisions improved the quality of life for citizens, and provided a social safety net from markets that largely did not exist prior to the post-war era (Klitgaard, 2007). Both labour advocates and Keynes believed that to preserve quality public goods provisions, it should be the responsibility of publicly and democratically elected service organizations to limit the power of capital, and to enshrine and protect newly achieved political and civil rights (Humphries, 2006). According to Krugman (2007), it was even more important that increases in progressive taxation rates be adopted to create more balanced and fair economic allocation and distribution systems to sustain capitalist systems, and public goods and services. Krugman stated that, as predicted by Keynes, the compromise achieved between capital and labour immediately following the post-war period resulted in relative peace and economic progress, and that the additional welfare state provisions created during this era were accepted as the norm by the 1970s (Kuchapski, 1998; Robertson, 2000; Tomlinson, 2005).

**Reforming the post-Keynesian economies in the 1970s and 1980s.** Robertson (2000) stated by the 1970s, deficit spending and public debt had become a major point of contention between business advocates and governments. Robertson claimed the issue enabled business advocates to argue that the enlargement of bureaucracies was solely responsible for the debt, in addition to promoting the ideological supposition state bureaucracies were counterproductive to the wellbeing of the economy and were

obstacles in need of redress (Krugman, 2007). Recall that Keynes (1936) had maintained that the rationale behind allowing governments to run deficits was to temporarily maintain public goods and service expenditures during times of recession. But by the 1970s, it had become apparent that government expenditures based on deficit spending were continually exceeding tax revenues, which ran contrary to the temporary postulate with no foreseeable end in sight. As public debts increased and became perceptibly unmanageable, market advocates and academics in support of the business lobby began to suggest that Keynesian-style economics and public policies would never adequately address deficit spending issues. It would have been difficult for the labour movement to contest these claims given that bureaucracies rarely decreased in size once they had been enlarged. This fuelled the business-favoured notion that public goods bureaucrats were self-interested and bent on enhancing their own status and wealth through questionable bureaucratic expansions (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003; Robertson, 2000).

By the 1970s, citizens were also becoming aware of the increases in public debt and the business lobby's voice in opposition. This awareness coincided with the 1970s oil crises, in addition to increases in stagflation and unemployment rates. As the need to counteract these crises became more explicit, the business lobby and market reform movement became more pronounced in an effort to discredit Keynesian socioeconomic policies. As a consequence, governments began to explore the potential of various policy instruments they believed had the potential for addressing burgeoning socioeconomic problems. This provided the business lobby with an opportunity to not only promote reforms that would suit capital interests, but those that were congruent with classical ideological preference. Arguably, the fiscal crisis that unfolded in the early 1970s marked

the beginning of the emergence of market reforms for public goods and services (Krugman, 2007; Robertson, 2000; Saint-Martin, 2007).

Friedman (1997) and Hayek (1960) were prominent market advocates who believed all public goods and service bureaucracies, including public education systems, should undergo market reforms based on private sector organizational models (as cited in Lubienski, 2006). Chubb and Moe (1990) and Friedman made the ideological connections between the business lobby and market reform movement explicit by explaining how the lobby and movement are ideologically congruent in terms of subscribing to classical theoretical assumptions upon which market theories are based. As such, these scholars promoted the need for wide-scale market reforms for public education systems—an advocacy these scholars contended must continue (Kachur & Harrison, 1999; Klees, 2008). Market reform advocates Chubb and Moe contended that despite the obvious need for reform, public education leaders continued to enlarge bureaucracies through the 1970s and 1980s, and justified these enlargements by convincing governments these expansions were necessary through the use of emotional language in public service mandates. Hayek (1960) suggested similarly that terms associated with social justice were used as a way to cloak and to justify the growth of state bureaucracies, and play to the rights and entitlement sensibilities citizens had developed after the advent of welfare state provisions (as cited in Heywood, 2003; Howlett & Ramesh, 2003).

In order to curb the perceived excesses and self-interests of citizens and bureaucrats, reform advocates began to call for a reduction of welfare state provisions, and believed the role of government should be relegated to upholding law and order,

protecting private property rights, and preserving national security (Carl, 1994; Freeman, 1999; Robertson, 2000). Reformers also believed “[e]xcessive welfare provisions, trade and labour protectionism, overactive minority group representation and top-heavy public bureaucracies [were] burdening ‘democracies’, and that government monopolies over goods and services undermined competitiveness within the global economy” (Marchak, 1993, as cited in Robertson, 2000, p. 166). On the other hand, reformers recognized it was unrealistic to expect bureaucracies to scale back entirely given the power of the labour opposition lobby and in recognition that certain programs and services had some positive external benefits (Saint-Martin, 2007). Thus, instead of advocating for full privatizations and whole-scale provision reductions, reformers developed public policy reform instruments designed for government adoption and implementation that would reframe the organizational frameworks of public goods bureaucracies based on what was deemed most efficient in the private sector. Similar to classical liberal theorists, reformers believed free exchanges within markets produce the best consequences in the economy, and free exchanges would likewise produce the best consequences in the provision of public goods and services (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Friedman, 1997; Loxley & Thomas, 2001). Lubienski (2001) explained how market advocates generally believe that all public institutions should “foster [the] physical and economic conditions that promote private development, efficiency, and competitiveness that would then benefit the political unit in the wider perhaps global marketplace” (p. 21). It is thereby necessary to explain how markets generally operate before applying and analyzing the implications of this framework to the provision of public goods and services.

**A reform framework for education.** From a classical liberal perspective, markets enable individual participants to make voluntary exchanges for goods and services where participants can accrue individual benefits between themselves and producers. It is presumed these exchanges make demand transparent, and enable producers to know what quantity of goods and services to produce in order to supply consumer preferences. Theoretically, the transparency of the process should allow consumers to fulfil their self-interests, which in turn creates equilibrium between supply and demand (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003; Lubienski, 2006). Essentially, reformers believe the forces of supply and demand spur competition between producers for consumers, and will stimulate a process of natural selection that will weed lower quality and inefficiency out of producer processes (Mintrom, 2003). Theoretically, competition also ensures producers will be innovative in the development and delivery of their product in order to secure the clientele necessary to maintain profits. This process will not only displace inefficient competitors, but it should also lead to technological progress, among other benefits (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Howlett & Ramesh, 2003).

Chubb and Moe (1990) contended public education should be provided in accordance with the market logic described above. Accordingly, these scholars believed the ideal scenario for providing quality public education would be full privatization but in the event of this approach not being politically palatable, market forces should be used whenever possible. Otherwise, in the absence of market discipline, public education systems should be deemed perpetually inefficient and ineffective (Chubb, 2003; Howlett & Ramesh, 2003; Lubienski, 2001, 2006).

Dickerson and Flanagan (1998) expanded the classical view of welfare state apparatuses further to include the problem of free riders. Free riders are those citizens who are believed to consume government provisions without contributing their share of the revenue needed to fund those services. In an effort to exercise self-interest at every available opportunity, it is believed free riders will abuse universal access to government provisions simply because they are available. By extension, market reform advocates believe that citizens may grow dependent upon consuming the service or resource provided, and that this dependency will make citizens counterproductive burdens to the state. To counteract unproductive behaviour, reformers contend it is necessary for states to develop, adopt, and implement public policies that will curb free rider behaviour through a provision system based on rewards and sanctions to entice citizen productivity.

Chubb and Moe (1990) claimed rewards and sanctions would correct free rider behaviour in public education systems. For instance, these scholars presumed that public educators are, in part, free riding public education systems to the extent they are not subject to market discipline, which by extension, presumes that the performance of public educators in the traditional Keynesian organizational framework has historically been mediocre. This supposition may further imply that educators only engage in a teaching career out of self-interest and personal gain, as opposed to an altruistic commitment or communitarian sense of duty. Taken together, market advocates contend that free riding of any sort has the potential to increase public program expenditures, tax and interest rates, and provide people with fewer incentives to work (Loxley & Thomas, 2001).

Given that public education systems in the Western market democracies have generally been exempt from market discipline, Chubb and Moe (1990) suggested these

systems are monopolistic provider capture systems run by management teams not held directly accountable to consumer preferences (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003; Lubienski, 2003). Accordingly, these scholars claimed that educators have not been held accountable for instructional performance either through penalties for poor performance, or incentives that reward excellent performance. Chubb and Moe believed reward and sanction organizational frameworks are necessary if the goal is to improve instructional performance and break with status quo mediocrity. These scholars also stated that ultimately, market discipline should be extended and applied to everyone involved in any public bureaucratic process, and, in the case of education, recommended that administrators, central office staff, and parents be included in this framework (Ball, 1998; Heywood, 2003; Lubienski, 2006; Mintrom, 2003; Whitty et al., 1998). Given this stark demarcation in approach to providing public education, it is thereby important to also understand how societies and governments eventually became convinced this approach was necessary to better understand how a convergence toward developing, adopting, and implementing market reform policy directions became established.

**The revival and refinement of classical liberalism: The development of the social investment state.** As mentioned previously, Robertson (2000) and Tomlinson (2005) claimed the fiscal crises of the 1970s created a window of opportunity for the business lobby to develop and push through public policy reforms that were business friendly, and would satisfy ideological presumptions about how all goods and services should be allocated and distributed in society. Writing in retrospect of the crisis, both Krugman (2007) and Tomlinson suggested that public bureaucracies were not responsible for the perceived decreases in economic productivity, and that business lobby claims to

the contrary were largely groundless. In other words, the proposition that market reforms in the public sector were the solution had little to do with meaningfully improving organizational efficiency or the substance of what was being provided through traditional frameworks. Instead, market reforms were primarily intended to enable more business lobby control over public policymaking processes to suit the needs of business (Klees, 2008; Krugman, 1990). Krugman (2007) and Tomlinson also claimed the critiques levied against public bureaucracies were most pronounced in the nations that more closely culturally adhered to classical liberal beliefs, such as the United States (Carnoy, 1992; Klitgaard, 2007; Wilkinson, 2005).

Almost ironically, Krugman (2007) and Tomlinson (2005) explained that despite purported declines in corporate profitability and productivity, the year 1973 also marked the beginning of increasing relative inequality between the working and middle classes in Western states. In other words, a reversal of the trend established during the Keynesian era (Dolmage & Clarke, 2006; Klees, 2008; Robertson, 2000). Klitgaard (2007), Krugman, and Wells et al. (1999) claimed relative inequality became most pronounced in nations favouring free markets and less in nations favouring a more egalitarian redistribution of state resources through progressive taxation.

Tying economics to public education, Tomlinson (2005) stated that until 1973, publicly funded and democratically run education systems were considered the pillar of welfare states. Similar to Krugman (2007), Tomlinson asserted the business lobby manufactured a public bureaucracy crisis as a reactionary response to a largely unrelated macroeconomic crisis. Both scholars claimed the sudden perceived need to reform public goods and services was simply a way to convince governments to develop policies that



would benefit capital, and that the rhetoric used to promote this shift suggested that all citizens and governments would benefit. Krugman claimed the ultimate consequence of the crisis was that the post-war social compact between capital and labour had begun to unravel, and is a trend that continues in the present.

Robertson (2000), Krugman (2007), and Tomlinson (2005) each suggested the primary motive behind the business lobby asserting control over domestic government policymaking processes was to extend capital networks globally to enhance capital mobility in order to increase profitability. Once achieved, these scholars also suggested that enhanced mobility would enable corporations to disempower domestic governments by threatening capital relocation, which would render Keynesian economics unworkable (Carl, 1994; Heywood, 2003; Klees, 2008). These scholars maintained that in order for Keynesian frameworks to remain effective, domestic governments would have to retain control over domestic economies. Ball (1998) suggested governments lost this control once business advocates successfully lobbied to extend capital networks through free trade agreements. According to Robertson (2000), the business lobby claimed these extensions were necessary to address declines in productivity and profitability through new investment opportunities abroad. Thus, as corporate mobility increased throughout the 1970s and 1980s, it became easier for corporations to move production operations to countries that could provide cheap labour, untapped resources, limited government regulations, and low taxation rates. This flexibility also allowed the business lobby to demand political and economic changes from domestic labour movements and government since corporations had an increasing number of relocation options should governments decide to not make corporate concessions. According to Robertson, this put

domestic governments in a hamstrung position of either adhering to the business lobby demand of lowering corporate tax rates, deregulating domestic economies, undermining union contracts, entering into foreign investment and trade agreements, or running the risk of losing whatever corporate tax revenue would otherwise be available to fund public goods and services. As a consequence, the public policy platforms of all governing administrations eventually moved to the centre, or centre-right of the traditional political spectrum.

**Implications for education since the 1970s.** Beginning in 1979 with the Thatcher administration in the United Kingdom and the Reagan administration in the United States during the 1980s, classical liberal assumptions became revived and entrenched in the form of market reform policy instruments intended to reform traditional Keynesian welfare state systems. Among other measures, these administrations sought to reduce the size and political clout of the labour movement and in the process, scrutinized public education systems in an effort to reform them according to market models (Finer, 1999; Heywood, 2003). Tomlinson (2005) suggested the critiques that ensued were largely couched in ideology as opposed to tangible merit, and that essentially governments were not satisfied with the level of control they had over public education systems to supply the perceived demands of the labour market and fulfil ideological assumptions regarding accountability (Robertson, 2000; Whitty et al., 1998). Similar to the fiscal crisis of the 1970s that provided classical theorists an opportunity to promote market reforms generally, the Thatcher administration used perceived economic problems as an opportunity to blame educators for the crisis in order to promote ideological reforms in education. As reform instruments were gradually adopted and the discourse

used in support of these instruments was accepted and embedded as the norm in education policymaking discourse, citizen conceptions as to how to rectify perceived issues in public education narrowed (Klees, 2008; Noddings, 2007).

One problem, according to Kachur (1999), was that reform advocates publicly promoted market reforms as being congruent with Keynesian-era public education principles even though several scholars contended these changes were not congruent with the principles of universal access, teacher professionalism, democratic principles, or newly established conceptions surrounding the need to provide students with a holistic education (Ball, 1998; Kachur & Harrison, 1999; Kuchapski, 1998; Tomlinson, 2005). However, these scholars suggested that framing these instruments as congruent was necessary to gain public support since the public had grown accustomed to Keynesian-era principles, and would not tolerate changes that contradicted them (Ball, 1998; Carl, 1994; Finer, 1999; Friedman, 1997; Kachur & Harrison, 1999; Krugman, 1990; Kuchapski, 1998; Robertson, 2000; Whitehorn, 2007). Tomlinson summarized this phenomenon:

Although policymakers routinely paid lip-service to the importance of education for social, cultural and personal reasons, in the post-welfare state the economic imperative came to dominate the political and educational agenda. Successive governments from the 1970s imposed economic priorities on education, [and] accepted the received wisdom that formal education was fundamental to success and progress in a world dominated by free market economics. (p. 201)

Despite the market reform lead taken by the United States and the United Kingdom, Carnoy (1992) and Klitgaard (2007) suggested the extent and influence of market reforms varied in accordance with the cultural and foundational differences and

socioeconomic events that occurred or evolved in states, similar to the developmental differences that were necessary to consider in the development of welfare states during the post-war era. These events influenced ideology and public opinion, which in turn influenced the balance of power between the business and labour lobby in different states—an influence that Robertson contended has been reflected in the changes to public policy platforms since the post-war era. Almost recursively, the balance of power between capital and labour would influence the ideological prescriptions of the public, of government, and be responsible for what type of policy options would be considered, and which alternatives would be constrained (Fallon, 2006; Krugman, 1990, Robertson, 2000).

Before moving into a detailed analysis of specific reform instruments, it is essential to pay additional descriptive attention to how the political policy platforms of Western governments evolved and converged toward promoting market reforms after 1980. Understanding this evolution and convergence is important to better ascertain how ideological and political convergences between governing administrations in different nations may have contributed to a discourse convergence in education policymaking discourse, and the perceived need for market reform instruments in public education.

### **Policy Platform Evolution in Western Democracies and the Birth of Neo-liberalism**

According to Klees (2008), Krugman (2007), Pressman (2007), Robertson (2000), and Tomlinson (2005), after the Reagan and Thatcher administrations came to power, support for market reforms incrementally became established in the Anglo-Saxon Western democracies. Klees (2008) stated that during and subsequent to these administrations, the discourse used to promote these “efficient, effective, and

accountable” changes altered almost instantly, however, it would be too simplistic to suggest the public would have supported these changes without having been part of a more general paradigm shift over time.

Heywood (1999) explained that academics have traditionally labelled various political parties as being on the political left, centre, or right side of the traditional political spectrum. In providing one contrast, Heywood suggested administrations on the right have tended to ground their beliefs in the foundational tenets of classical liberalism whereas those on the left have tended to support policy instruments grounded in communitarian, egalitarian, or collectivist values. It is important to note, however, that individuals or governments on either side of the spectrum are essentially seeking different philosophical means to achieve similar ends. This does not mean, however, that the philosophical aspects of ideology, or government subscriptions to ideology, should be divorced from policy analysis. In fact, as Fallon (2006) contended, the reverse may be true. For example, if the pure self-interest premise can be challenged, so too can the efficiency or efficacy of market activity. In other words, if fallacies follow from foundational assumptions, a researcher should expect that real-world tangible implications may result.

The purpose behind describing the most basic attributes of the political spectrum is to illustrate how different ideological affiliations contribute to policy development based on specific assumptions (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003). According to Whitehorn (2007), the somewhat insidious problem with the development of market reform policies for public goods, as illustrated earlier in this chapter, has been the way in which reforms have been promoted by governments using Keynesian-era principles. For instance,

according to Klees (2008) and Saint-Martin (2007), the Reagan and Thatcher administrations sought to dramatically reduce public program expenditures in an attempt to gain in debt relief. The rationale used to reduce social programming and the size of government was the necessity to counter the self-interests of public sector bureaucrats who had unnecessarily increased the size of government to unsustainable levels.

Regardless of how pragmatic or necessary this approach may have seemed, the point was that the approach ran contrary to the traditional Keynesian postulate of sustaining public programs through deficit spending practices during times of recession. Saint-Martin (2007) contended that over the longer term, these reductions exacerbated inequalities in the United States and the United Kingdom which led to “high levels of unemployment, the polarization of incomes, and the intensification of social exclusion [that] sustained an increasingly strong sentiment of insecurity in the population” (p. 283). Thus, what seemed politically and economically necessary in the short-term arguably ended up costing society more in the longer term (Krugman, 2007).

The Institute of Fiscal Studies (2004) concluded that one consequence of Thatcher’s policies was that the UK became “one of the most economically unequal countries in Europe, with poor people in Britain poorer than the worst off in more equal industrial societies” (as cited in Tomlinson, 2005, p. 4). Given Keynes’ (1936) assertion that economic redistribution through social programs was necessary to sustain economic progress and achieve social stability, the right-of-centre shift in the 1980s arguably contributed to an instability remnant of the pre-war era, and set a precedent whereby the balance of power between capital and labour tipped back in favour of capital (Robertson, 2000).

Tomlinson (2005) suggested the policy platform convergences that took place between government administrations domestically, and between market democracies, became more pronounced and apparent throughout the 1980s, and that almost all administrations broke away from developing policies based on Keynesian-era principles accordingly. However, this did not stop all parties previously considered leftist or pro-labour from campaigning under this premise. On the surface, Tomlinson claimed the policy platforms of pro-market and pro-labour administrations appeared to be ideologically opposed, even though the administrations claiming to be left-of-centre had adopted much of the market reform discourse and policies of their right-of-centre predecessors particularly during the 1990s (Ball, 1998; Kachur & Harrison, 1999; Klees, 2008; Loxley & Thomas, 2001; Robertson, 2000; Tomlinson, 2005; Whitehorn, 2007).

Saint-Martin (2007) claimed that as citizens became more aware of the socioeconomic fallout that resulted from the 1980s social program reductions, the citizens of the UK, US, and Canada began to support political parties that took a more compromising approach to governance and policymaking (Dickerson & Flanagan, 1998; Heywood, 2003). Consequently, the majority of administrations began to view certain social programs as investments that might improve the long term economic prospects of states (Heywood, 2003; Loxley & Thomas, 2001; Saint-Martin, 2007). As a result, scholars began to describe the general convergence of the major governing administrations to the centre-right, and refer to the administrations themselves as being centrist from the 1990s onward. A second result of the mix between Keynesian and classical ideals was the development of a new ideology that has loosely become known as neo-liberalism (Loxley & Thomas, 2001).

The underlying shift in the ideological affiliations of what had traditionally been known as pro-labour governments is important because these were administrations that had traditionally supported the labour movement and benefited from Keynesian-era policies (Krugman, 2007). Recognizing this shift is also important because it led to the perceived consensus that market reforms are the solution for improving the provision of public goods and services. In brief, this shift was indicative that all parties had been influenced by the more modern manifestation of classical liberal ideas known as *neo-liberalism* (Loxley & Thomas, 2001; Saint-Martin, 2007).

Even though neo-liberal reforms were a comparatively moderate approach to enhancing market activity when compared with the pure market approach proffered by classical theorists, many political parties previously considered *left* reduced government expenditures on social programs and corporate tax rates under the banner of doing what it takes to remain competitive in the global economy. Reductions of this type were made explicit under the Blair administration in the UK, under Clinton in the US, and under Chretien in Canada, despite the leftist platforms on which these administrations campaigned and regardless of how reductions and regressive taxation contradicted Keynesian principles (Keynes, 1936; Warnock, 2003). Tomlinson (2005) stated that ultimately, the policy platforms of the parties in power, and those in opposition, had become more or less indistinguishable by the 1990s. Heywood (2003) described this political convergence as not

so much a single, coherent ideological tradition in its own right, but more an attempt to blend competing traditions and reconcile apparently conflicting ideas and values . . . [in] search of workable policy solutions and the attempt to re-



establish electoral credibility. (p. 148) (Ball, 1999; Krugman, 2007; Loxley & Thomas, 2001; Nelson et al., 2007)

Within this framework shift, Carl (1994), Heywood (2003), and Tomlinson (2005) each suggested that one point of consensus between administrations was the perceived need to develop and promote policy instruments that would ensure citizens had an equal opportunity or right to participate and succeed within markets. The rationale employed was that over the longer term, this approach would generate greater economic returns to citizens and the state, due to expected increases in efficiency and productivity (Saint-Martin, 2007). According to Ball (1998), the problem was that those promoting these changes presume the foundational assumptions in support of the theoretical efficacy of markets are positivist truths, and that accordingly, these ideals and assumptions have rarely been questioned in mainstream or policymaking discourse.

Saint-Martin (2007) suggested that the new political focus of providing incentive-based opportunities to certain demographics over others also changed the conception of what constitutes the rights of citizens. According to Kachur and Harrison (1999) and Saint-Martin (2007), one of the primary objectives of market reformers during the 1980s and 1990s was to eliminate citizens' universal access right to consumptive provisions, and instead provide citizens with equality of opportunity, or the right to work and accumulate material wealth in an effort to make citizens more productive (Heywood, 2003; Tomlinson, 2005). Carl (1994) claimed one problem with this shift was that it would restrict the access citizens once had to public programs and social safety nets to which citizens had grown accustomed. Accordingly, Carl stated that the socioeconomically privileged have benefited most from the shift since the privileged are

best equipped to access or bypass the incentives provided (Tomlinson, 2005).

Conversely, under the traditional arrangement, those citizens who fell outside the socioeconomic mainstream were universally provided with social safety nets that would enable them to gain enough socioeconomic independence to meaningfully access other public programs such as public education that, in turn, would enhance a citizen's prospect of achieving socioeconomic success and productivity (Keynes, 1936). Thus, unconditional access would be provided to all citizens, regardless of the more immediate economic needs of government.

**Neo-liberal policy views of education.** Lubienski (2006) suggested that public education policymaking processes have not been immune from the influence of neo-liberalism or market logic. Beginning with the dramatic market reforms that affected public education systems in the United Kingdom and the United States during the political tenures of the Thatcher and Reagan era, Lubienski asserted that public education systems have increasingly been viewed as a way to develop and harness human capital to make states economically competitive. In order to achieve this, Lubienski claimed reformers have been lobbying governments to reform public education systems based on private sector models presumed to be more efficient and effective as a result of market-based competition. Accordingly, Lubienski suggested the theme of competition has underpinned the majority of educational reform instruments since the 1980s, and is foundational to the choice policy instruments developed for public education. This point is examined in greater detail in Chapter Four, but to summarize briefly, advocates of choice generally believe teachers should be subject to market discipline. This way, structures will be in place that will harness the self-interests of teachers, who in turn, will

be more responsive in fulfilling their employment mandate. In theory, increased responsiveness should equate to improved instructional effectiveness, and higher learning outcomes overall (Chubb, 2003; Chubb & Moe, 1990; Friedman, 1997; Hepburn, 1999). However, several scholars concluded that market reforms are less about improving teaching and learning, and more about improving accountability optics for the public, reducing the costs of education, reducing union activity to gain control over education systems, and appeasing the business lobby's desire to tap the capital market tied up in public goods through quasi-privatizations (English, 2006; Klees, 2008; Loxley & Thomas, 2001; Robertson, 2000; Tomlinson, 2005; Whitty et al., 1998).

Ball (1998) and Lubienski (2001) suggested market reforms in public education are essentially a form of microeconomic reform that turns education into a product within a quasi-market that enables consumers to compete for what is considered the best value education, or rather, for what was once considered a universally accessible quality public good. The problem, as explained by Lubienski, is that pursuits for quality education are likely to suit the interests of those who are best equipped to exercise choice options, be it through access to resources, or the cultural capital one has in society. Thus, given the self-consuming dynamics of the market in the absence of adequate system-wide regulation, this may mean that a dwindling few will benefit at the expense of an ever broadening majority (Lubienski, 2006; Whitty et al., 1998).

Ball (1998) stated another problem is the way in which reform advocates promote market activity as value-free in an attempt to simplify reform debates by insisting the invisible hand of markets will result in a natural equilibrium between the supply and demand of consumers (parents) while ignoring the market failure implications that can

occur if public goods are provided through markets. Ball also argued that the invisible-hand rationale has proved convenient because it distances reformers and governments from having to take responsibility for the outcomes and implications that do result. This way, in the event education systems fail, according to centrally set government criteria, most of the blame and responsibility will reside with incompetent teachers, failing schools, or the poor choices of parents (Whitty et al., 1998).

Robertson (2000) claimed teachers and teacher unions have often been blamed by governments and the business lobby for the perceived failures of school systems, based upon the ideological claim that bureaucratic unions often obstruct what would otherwise be considered efficient market-based activity. Robertson and the Canadian Teachers' Federation (1997) suggested further that Canadian public education systems have not been failing as claimed, and that these critiques are inevitable as long as public education is not provided according to a preferred ideology (Ball, 1998; Fallon, 2006). To that end, Robertson stated that reformers primarily view teachers as a

a large occupational group [that] represents a significant drain on state resources—largely in fixed salaries—at a time when the state must redirect its resources into policies and programmes aimed at promoting the conditions for a competitive advantage within the regional and global economy. (p. 147)

As such, Robertson concluded the primary agenda of reformers has been to reduce educational expenditures, and to control curricular content to ensure educational supply meets labour market demand.

As mentioned previously, reformers have often viewed the collective, political, and economic clout wielded by teachers and their unions as the main obstacles for

reform. Accordingly, Kachur and Harrison (1999) stated the macropolitical goal of reformers has been to develop policies that would break up the “iron triangle of teacher unions, educational bureaucrats, and university theoreticians” (p. xix), whereas the micropolitical goals were to develop corporate management models for public education to reduce educational expenditures, and make education systems more responsive and effective. The Canadian Teachers’ Federation (1997) and Tomlinson (2005) stated that to further this political project, advocates have attempted to limit the perceived successes of democratic and universally accessible public education systems, and have manufactured a crisis to justify the development, adoption, and implementation of market reforms. Otherwise, reformers would have found it difficult to convince the public to support reforms that have the potential to perpetuate and to exacerbate existing socioeconomic stratifications in society:

While overt selection had largely become unacceptable by the 1980s, the application of market principles to education proved extraordinarily effective in reintroducing a complex system of selection, passing as “diversity” in which, as intended, the greatest beneficiaries were the middle classes. (pp. 218-19)

In other words, reformers recognized that universal access principles had remained politically palatable to citizens and were included in policy reform rhetoric accordingly to ensure reform instruments were incorporated into policy agendas (Ball, 1998; Klees, 2008; Loxley & Thomas, 2001; Robertson, 2000; Tomlinson, 2005).

To cite a specific example of a manufactured crisis, the Canadian Teachers’ Federation (1997) stated that prior to the major public education reforms in New Zealand, there was neither parent nor public upheaval to warrant any major changes to the

education system. According to the Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF), market reforms were adopted as a direct result of a promarket administration coming to power. As such, the CTF concluded market reforms in New Zealand were based primarily on a wider ideological and political agenda of “downsizing government, downloading responsibilities, demonizing public employees, and turning over public institutions to the for-profit sector” (p. 36). In other cases, Klees (2008) stated reformers have manufactured crises in public education to divert attention away from the resource needs of education systems.

Ball (1998) summarized the general features of market reforms in education as “an ensemble of generic policies [of] parental choice and institutional competition, site-based autonomy, managerialism, performative steering and curricula fundamentalism—which nonetheless have local variations, twists and nuances-hybridity—and different degrees of application intensity” (p. 125). Klees (2008) described the movement somewhat differently as the development and promotion of merit-based accountability practices, privatization, an increase in community involvement, a decentralization of services, and testing and choice schooling options. But according to Klees and Robertson (2000) the central theme throughout either description is that market reforms rarely cost much money, and typically amount to cuts or reductions in educational expenditures. Klees (2008) also contended competition-based systems lead to a proliferation of low versus high quality institutions. Different levels of access not only contradict the universal access principles, but as Keynes (1936) suggested, reduce the state's ability to harness the economic potential of all citizens (Saint-Martin, 2007).

Writing decades apart, both Keynes (1936) and Klees (2008) recognized market systems had historically failed to adequately provide quality provisions to the wider public, and that without universal access to quality public education, there would be a reduction in the positive externalities required to maintain peaceful and prosperous states (Wilkinson, 2005). Moreover, a tiered system may actually enhance socioeconomic stratifications in society and increase the costs of welfare state dependencies, which, ironically, run contrary to the ideological preference of classical liberals and the aim of the business lobby (Robertson, 2000; Saint-Martin, 2007). Klees (2008) and Lubienski (2006) also claimed market reforms were antidemocratic, despite how advocates claim that choice policy instruments enhance citizen or consumer freedom as a way of winning support for these instruments.

**A policy and linguistic convergence.** Ball (1998) and Kachur (1999a) claimed market reform language in public policymaking discourse has increased, and become more entrenched as a result of advocates perpetually proclaiming it as the only solution to perceived problems in public education in academia, through the media and, eventually, government mandates. Beginning in the 1970s, this trend accelerated throughout the 1980s, and dominated discourse by the 1990s once the ideological convergence between administrations was well established. As a result, policy alternatives and discourse have narrowed and become constrained in public policymaking circles (Klees, 2008; Robertson, 2000). Ball described the complexities of tracking ideological, political, and policy convergences between states:

National policy making is inevitably a process of bricolage: a matter of borrowing and copying bits and pieces of ideas from elsewhere, drawing upon and amending

locally tried and tested approaches, cannibalizing theories, research, trends and fashions and not infrequently flailing around for anything at all that looks as though it might work. Most policies are ramshackle, compromise, hit and miss affairs, that are reworked, tinkered with, nuanced and inflected through complex processes of influence, text production, dissemination and, ultimately, re-creation in contexts of practice. (p. 126)

It is thereby understandable how market-based policies and state structures vary somewhat in the present, just as the policies and structures varied during the initial development of welfare states.

According to Kachur and Harrison (1999), Canadian public education policy directions began to be affected by market reform in the 1990s as a result of policy borrowing between Western states. These scholars suggested it began in Alberta in 1993, and in Ontario in 1995 after neo-liberal ideas and policy instruments were “imported most especially from New Zealand, Britain and the United States” (p. xiv) by right-of-centre or conservative governments (Dei & Karumanchery, 1999). A few of the instruments that were adopted included national testing, achievement examinations, parent advisory councils, centralized control over education funding and curriculum, and a cap on increased expenditures for public education. The Alberta and Ontario governments at the time both proclaimed these reforms were necessary to ensure that public education systems would be more responsive to labour market demand, and invited the involvement of the business community to influence public education policy directions.



In brief, Canadian public education systems are not immune from macropolitical or economic phenomena. However, as Ball (1998) suggested, given the unique cultural, political, and economic features of states, reform instruments are likely to vary state-to-state in terms of the types of instruments that are developed, and the extent to which they are adopted with the surface features of each looking slightly different. The point, however, is that once market reforms begin reformers will often argue that the success of any one instrument is dependent upon the adoption of additional instruments until a full quasi-market is established (Chubb & Moe, 1990).

### **Summary of Recent Reforms in Education Policy**

In summary, Ball (1998) explained that market reforms enable governments to gain more control over public education, and devolve responsibility for educational outcomes to the local level. Ball articulated this position in greater detail by stating how reforms depend

on a clear articulation and assertion by the state of its requirements of education, while the second gives at least the appearance of greater autonomy to educational institutions in the delivery of those requirements. The first involves a reaffirmation of the state functions of education as a “public good”, while the second subjects education to the disciplines of the market and the methods and values of business and redefines it as a competitive private good. (p. 125)

Essentially, the debate on whether or not market reforms are a progressive step in improving the quality of public education may be contingent upon varied notions of what is in the private versus collective interest. For this reason, Ball illuminated the importance of deconstructing the ideological and political agendas of educational reforms, regardless

of purported neutrality, in order to determine how the purpose and objectives of public education have been defined, and for whose benefit this definition suits. Ball claimed this requires deconstructing the new master narrative or discourse associated with market reforms.

Cousins and Hussain (1984) explained that reform discourse primarily pertains to economics, which these scholars argued has constrained the range and the scope of policy development:

The discourse constructs the topic and, as with any discourse, it appears across a range of texts, forms of conduct and at a number of different sites at any one time.

Discursive events refer to the one and the same object . . . there is a regular style and . . . constancy of concepts . . . and strategy and a common institutional, administrative or political drift and pattern. (as cited in Ball, 1998, p. 126)

Ball suggested this linguistic strategy has influenced the public to the point of complacency in support of market reforms despite how educational mandates and the promotion of policy instruments have continued to be framed in accordance with the Keynesian-era principles of access and equity. For example, as choice schooling options became prevalent during the 1990s in the United Kingdom, parents were rhetorically defined as chooser-heroes who were able to exercise freedom of choice. As a result, parents became only interested in school systems that were customer friendly or competitive. According to Ball, this linguistic tact largely ignored the political agenda underlying reform instruments and played instead on the emotions of the public by directing public attention to the more superficial aspects of individual interests and perceived freedoms (Lubienski, 2006; Tomlinson, 2005).

As a result, Tomlinson (2005) suggested that as the reform movement grew in Britain, the middle class gained increasing control over communication networks within public policymaking circles, which further constrained policy discourse and narrowed policy alternatives to benefit the middle class:

[T]here was an important section of the middle class, educated in private or good state schools and “good” universities, dominating the communications, information and propaganda industries, and the political arena, who were easily able to resist egalitarian and social democratic school organization. (p. 171)

In order to determine the extent of market reform influence over public education policymaking discourse in Canada, it is important to first establish the political context in Canada, and how it relates to these trends.

### **The Canadian Context in the Western Democracies**

According to Carnoy (1992), the differences in educational provision frameworks between societies depends largely upon the emphasis societies place on levels of welfare state provision and government intervention, as opposed to providing goods and services through markets. Carnoy (1992) and Klitgaard (2007) suggested the structural features of states developed according to the predominant ideological factions within each society relative to different time periods within a state’s history. Thus, the evolution of ideological convictions that citizens or various lobby groups held at any particular time would determine the extent to which states developed peripheral, hierarchical, or institutionalist state frameworks. Carnoy stated that a peripheral state framework encouraged less government intervention and more market activity, whereas a hierarchical state framework reinforced the status quo or existing economic power

structures. An institutionalist state, on the other hand, encouraged correcting the inequalities that arose from unregulated market activity.

Carnoy (1992), Humphries (2006), and Klitgaard (2007) each suggested states leaning toward one framework over another lean based on the ideological and cultural consensus that have been built within states through democratic processes. Western states have usually attempted to strike a balance between the primary ideological paradigms that have underpinned state frameworks, namely liberal meritocracy, conservative elitism, and democratic egalitarianism—all of which relate to the contestable purposes of public education in society. For instance, the United States has traditionally encouraged individualism, low government intervention, and increased market activity in the public sector. Given these values, the US might arguably be characterized as a peripheral state. On the other hand, Sweden has traditionally attempted to combine economic growth with equity through government intervention, making Swedish governance more synonymous with an institutionalist state framework (Erixon, 2004).

In making a continental North American comparison between Canada and the US, Harrison (1983) claimed the historical processes that led to the development of each nation were quite different. For example, when early Americans were developing new frontiers they were faced with considerable hardship and opportunity, yet were not bound to obedience and loyalty to a distant state like Great Britain. As F.J. Turner (1958) explained, this resulted in the emergence of an independent individualist cultural character that supported an entrepreneurial or *laissez-faire* view of social and economic structures (as cited in Harrison, 1983, p. 156). Canada, on the other hand, remained in a colonial dependent relationship with Great Britain whereby the labour classes of Canada

provided the industrial class in Britain with staple exports. According to Cuneo (1982) and Naylor (1972), the exploitative nature of this relationship gave rise to a uniform labour movement that attempted to balance the political interests of workers with domestic and European employers (as cited in Harrison, 1983, p. 155). Accordingly, Harrison suggested that the independence of Canadians and of Canada generally, has depended more upon the emergence of collectives, and in the absence of this emergence, may have been integrated into the United States long ago.

Understanding how states align with different organizational frameworks is useful to help explain how states such as Canada, or Saskatchewan, may have defined the purpose of public education and developed specific provision frameworks. For instance, if the purpose of education can be primarily relegated to either being “a means for individual social mobility (market), a socializing agent for the state (authority), or a vehicle for social transformation (trust)” (Humphries, 2006, p. 334) within a society, then it may be easier to determine how citizens within different state frameworks might view market reform trends. For example, if it can be determined that the United States is a peripheral state, it might be reasonable to suggest that U.S. citizens may primarily view education as a way to enhance individual market mobility whereas in an institutionalist state like Sweden, citizens may view education more as a way to transform society toward collective goals. However, according to several scholars these types of variations may have had little to do with the educational issues that emerged in response to the fiscal crises in the early 1970s, and far more to do with the economic similarities between states that were eventually responsible for future policy convergences (Krugman, 2007; Kuchapski, 1998; Robertson, 2000; Whitty et al., 1998).

Ball (1998) suggested that as the organizational structure of public bureaucracies were blamed for the crisis and market reforms were proffered as the solution, those opposed did not sufficiently question the classical assumptions underpinning these changes. Over time, this push gained support and validation which made it easier for other market democracies to accept and push similar changes. For example, Clement and Vosko (2003) and McBride (2001) stated that Canada and the United States began to adopt or promote instruments based on privatization, deregulation and the free market under Mulroney and Reagan era during the 1980s (as cited in Chan et al., 2007), which set a conservative governance precedent that had a long-term effect on public education systems well past the tenure of these particular administrations. More importantly, this reform approach continued under subsequent administrations claiming to be left or pro-labour during the 1990s, and into the new millennia. This may have contributed to the ideological convergence previously described, and further embedded the philosophical assumptions foundational to market reforms (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Howlett & Ramesh, 2003; MacKinnon, 2003; Pressman, 2007; Robertson, 2000; Saint-Martin, 2007; Whitty et al., 1998).

Within Canada, several scholars concluded that 20 years of ideological struggle has resulted in a reduced role for the state, and that educational policymaking has conceded to a globally competitive free market paradigm with market reform instruments considered the only viable alternative and solution to public policy concerns in Canada:

[I]rrespective of political party, and within an ideology shaped by the global context of neo-liberalism as in the rest of the Anglo-Saxon world, neoliberalism has come to comprise the *raison d'être* of Canadian politics over the last two

decades (Clement and Vosco, 2003) [*sic*], narrowing the discourse of political economic, and social debate, transforming what it means to be liberal, social democratic, or even progressive conservative by asserting itself against social entitlements, rights and citizenship. (Chan, Fisher, & Rubenson, 2007, p. 235)

Chan et al. (2007) and Klees (2008) claimed these education reform frameworks have also been extended worldwide, and have influenced the educational policymaking processes of developing nations through supranational organizations such as the World Trade Organization, World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and through free trade agreements (Ball, 1998). Specific to Canada, Chan et al. (2007) stated

[t]he changes in the Canadian political economy have been achieved over the last two decades through two processes: *neo-liberal constitutionalism* and *disciplinary neoliberalism*. The former term referring to the legal institutionalizing of neo-liberalism through supranational organizations such as the WTO or the IMF, or through free-trade agreements such as NAFTA. (p. 235)

Thus, Canada has not been immune to global economic pressures, and several scholars stated that from the Mulroney administration onward, Canada's main political parties have been increasingly adopting market reforms under governments influenced by neo-liberalism from the 1990s onward (Chan et al., 2007; Kachur & Harrison, 1999; Klees, 2008; Saint-Martin, 2007). However, it would be short-sighted to suggest there have not been historical differences between the governance traditions of the provinces within Canada, and thereby differences in the government rhetoric used to promote change in education, and the types of reform instruments considered (Humphries, 2006; Newton, Burgess, & Robinson, 2007).

To provide a few examples, Chan et al. (2007) explained that at one end of the spectrum, the new right provincial governments of Klein in Alberta, Harris in Ontario, Campbell in BC, and Charest in Quebec have used legislation to impose fiscal and educational policy top-down, whereas administrations in Saskatchewan have traditionally used collaborative consultation between educational partners to achieve change during this same period. It should be noted, however, that all provinces have been adopting market reforms to some extent since the 1990s, and despite “the strong neo-liberal trends of accountability, deprofessionalization, and labour relations reform, Canadian debates in education have still embraced issues of social equity, including multiculturalism, antiracism, inclusion, social justice, language policy, diversity, and a equitable education for all students” (Chan et al., p. 231). Yet one must expect that meaningful commitments to these traditional issues may vary between provinces, and also be aware of the paradigms driving market reform in Canada, as described by Chan et al.:

[T]hree overlapping policy orientations have driven provincial governments to introduce policies designed to increase choice. First is the commitment to market forces and the related desire to create a market for educational services. Second is a populist attachment to individualism. Third is an egalitarian commitment to diversity and equality of opportunity. Two competing principles underlie these three policy orientations: an orientation to neo-liberal theory and practice, and an emphasis on social humanist principles. At times one of these orientations may have dominated the policy environment at the expense of others. Furthermore, choice policies in education are, in part, a response to parents who want more decision-making latitude about their children’s programs and schools. (p. 229)



It is thereby clear that a rationale exists to support these changes in public education. However, according to the Canadian Teachers' Federation (1997) and Henley and Young (2008), Canadian citizens still support the humanist and universal access principles that have traditionally underpinned Keynesian provision frameworks in Canada. The CTF also claimed that Canadians continue to believe education is a public responsibility that provides benefits to all of society, and that all of society has a stake in preserving quality and access for all citizens regardless of different geographic locations or socioeconomic circumstance. These priorities are declining, however, according to Chan et al. (2007) who stated “. . . support for and emphasis on equity considerations such as gender, antiracism, and multiculturalism has waned in most provinces [and] is a trend consistent with fiscal and policy conservatism” (p. 232).

Similarly, Servage (2008) stated “Alberta, with almost 40 years of unbroken conservative governance, has been a Canadian leader in terms of implementing neoliberal social services policies” (as cited in Kachur, 2008, p. 371). In that same vein, and more specifically, Kachur stated neo-liberalism has become the primary ideological foundation guiding the public policymaking processes of Alberta which began under the Klein administration during the early 1990s. Kachur and Harrison (1999) claimed the Klein administration borrowed market reform ideas from Britain and the United States to develop new ideas about school reform, and as a result, developed an education platform based on the ideas of the free market, individualism, and minimal state interference in markets. Kachur contended further that the Klein administration had also manufactured a deficit crisis from 1993-1997 to justify the adoption and implementation of market reform. According to Kachur, this crisis was based on three arguments:

[F]irst, that deficits and debts were out of control; second, that social expenditures (mainly education, health, and welfare) were the cause of the deficit crisis, and third, that the crisis could not be dealt with by increasing revenue through either taxes or a reliance on economic growth. Individuals were “overtaxed”, corporations would simply “leave town”, and Alberta’s resource-based economy was too volatile. The crisis, it was alleged, could be dealt with *only* by massive cuts to social spending. (p. xxv)

Kachur and Harrison (1999) concluded that the Klein administration had waged an aggressive market campaign against all public service providers that included cuts to social services, including education, in order to free revenues that support technological innovation while paying superficial lip-service to the importance of education.

Kachur (1999a) conceded, however, that the ideological ideas and practices adopted by Klein’s administration were a symptom of a more general move toward economic, political, and technological integration with other societies within a global economic framework. Nevertheless, Chan et al. (2007) stated these changes were less drastic in other provinces even though British Columbia, Manitoba, Ontario, and, to a lesser extent, New Brunswick, began to follow the governance models established under Klein, which included the adoption of market reforms, namely, the imposition of top-down accountability frameworks. These provinces also experimented with variations of centralized curriculum and finances, increasing the use of standardized testing, and focusing on outcomes-based education scores. Reform instruments have also included site-based management methods, an inclusion of school councils, and an introduction of private organizational models for education systems. For the purposes of this study, it is

important to note that during this time, Saskatchewan had largely resisted these changes according to Chan et al. (2007) and Newton et al. (2007).

Before moving on to how various scholars have contextualized the historical values and political climate in Saskatchewan, it is important to first analyze how policies some scholars contend have been incongruent with the public interest, could have gained public support in the first place. For example, Kachur and Harrison (1999) claimed that Albertans had remained outwardly supportive of public education, and the support market reforms had received was primarily in response to the crisis Klein manufactured. In developing this campaign, Kachur (1999a) claimed public relations entrepreneurs were hired to develop a market reform discourse that would appear as rational consensus across society to mobilize support. Essentially, the goal was to embed ideological and political values within media and policymaking discourse that spoke “a language of public concern for education and democracy, implemented the corporate agenda, appeased the school reform movement, created a new ‘common sense’ about economics, technology, and education and captured the imagination of ‘ordinary Albertans’” (p. 62). In order to gain academic and organizational backing for these changes, Kachur claimed the Klein administration gained the support of “a sympathetic network of neo-liberals and neo-conservatives who work for business faculties, the Fraser Institute, the Conference Board of Canada, the Canada West Foundation, and other private think-tanks in the business of promoting business” (p. 69) whereas the academics that contested these changes had their ideas marginalized, fragmented, or incorporated into the dominant agenda. Thus, by treating neo-liberal assumptions as objective or rational, Kachur stated that facilitators of the process invested purported facts with political values under the veil

of neutral statements, and that essentially, government planners, consultants, and facilitators have used various rhetorical and organizational strategies to manage the meaning of language to promote reform.

Bernstein (1996) suggested the meaning behind language is always subjective and value-based: “Every time a discourse moves, there is a space for ideology to play” (as cited in Ball, 1998, p. 24). Ball (1998) similarly stated that ideology is foundational to all discourse, and once a new orthodoxy has been established, the discursive framework used for providing solutions becomes limited in light of the dissemination and institutionalization of the assumptions within that language, and limits alternate discourse. Kachur (2008) suggested this dilemma is difficult to overcome because “individuals are consumed with the very real distractions of day-to-day life, operating within the hegemonic meritocracy of corporate careers, [and an] inability to recognize ideology as such” when immersed (p. 390).

### **Saskatchewan as a Context for This Study**

Humphries (2006) stated that the principles and values that have provided the philosophical value foundation for Saskatchewan’s governance structure have been politically unique within Canada:

Saskatchewan began as a rural society influenced by a stern physical environment that demanded the spirit of community and cooperation of settlers. The Province is the seat of the first democratic socialist government in North America. Politics and cooperative action are the tools residents used in their search for security and stability, thus creating an environment that fosters participation and political

unionism. Traditions of cooperation continue in Saskatchewan institutions. (p. 340)

Newton et al. (2007) similarly described the historical isolation experienced by Saskatchewan settlers, and how the importance of community developed out of the diverse needs between rural, Northern, and urban communities. To better accommodate cultural and geographic diversity, these scholars suggested it was necessary to have flexible community-based public policy frameworks, and that these frameworks have guided educational policy in Saskatchewan since those times. More specifically, this spirit of cooperation meant educational policymaking processes have traditionally been collaborative and based on consensus-building between educational partners, regardless of the declared ideological affiliations of stakeholders in contrast to the other provinces whereby relationships have been characterized by conflict and opposition (Chan et al., 2007). In Saskatchewan, these partnerships have primarily involved the major educational organization partners, namely, the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, the Saskatchewan School Boards Association, and the Ministry of Education.

Newton et al. (2007) highlighted the importance of this ethos by emphasizing how partners, educators, and administrators have analyzed existing policies together and have collaborated successfully to develop new ones. These processes have included allowing schools to develop and implement policy according to the specific needs of each community as opposed to the approach practiced in other provinces of adopting uniform and centrally imposed frameworks (Chan et al., 2007).

In stark contrast to neighbouring Alberta, accountability frameworks in Saskatchewan have traditionally viewed assessment as a way to improve teaching and

learning conditions, as opposed to being used “to evaluate the effectiveness of individual schools and teachers in delivering the educational program” (Chan et al., 2007, p. 59). In addition to using assessment primarily to inform instructional practice, Saskatchewan has also been resistant to using assessment for the purposes of rank and comparison between schools. Highlighting these traditional features of Saskatchewan is important in an analysis that seeks to determine the extent to which market reforms are congruent with the traditional values of the province, and whether the trend has influenced educational policymaking processes in Saskatchewan in light of those occurring in other Western states.

### **Summary and Review of the Historiography**

According to scholarly opinion on either side of the market reform debate, scholars have generally agreed that the overlying purpose of the market reform movement has been to make teachers more responsive and efficient in an effort to improve the educational outcomes of student achievement scores—an end intended to develop more vibrant economies in order to maintain a competitive edge within global markets. Scholars have also reasoned that given the global integration of economic markets, the relationships between states have likewise become integrated. As a result, discourse in support of maintaining a competitive edge within the global economy has become firmly established within the public policymaking discourse of each of these nations, albeit to varying extents. Accordingly, this has resulted in a corresponding pressure on public education systems to adopt market reform discourse, which has subsequently provided the foundational rationale for education policies intended to improve educational outcomes that will help the state achieve economic ends. Another

underlying assumption held by market reform proponents that pervaded the literature was that an increasing adoption and implementation of market reforms is essential to break the *status quo*, or what some scholars claimed has been the public sector monopoly over public education provision. Underlying market reforms and embedded within reform discourse, however, are the philosophical assumptions and values generally associated with classical liberalism, which are to a large extent foundational to the more modern ideological manifestation of this body of ideas, neo-liberalism. Similar to classical liberalism, neo-liberalism provides the foundational rationale for variations of choice theory with one central presumption: humans are entirely self-interested beings. Inherent self-interest has provided the premise upon which pure market theories have been based, and is foundational to the rationale that markets are the most effective and efficient way to allocate and to distribute goods within society. Thus, advocates of market reform have traditionally believed that all public goods and service provisions, including education, should be provided through markets, a mechanism that advocates enable the provision of goods in a rational, neutral, and objective manner that brings into balance a natural equilibrium between the interests of all stakeholder groups in society (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Howlett & Ramesh, 2003; Keynes, 1936; Loxley & Thomas, 2001; Lubienski, 2003).

Howlett and Ramesh (2003), Keynes (1936), and Saint-Martin (2007) each suggested one drawback associated with classical and neo-liberal theories has been the reluctance of advocates to acknowledge the foundational flaws of their theoretical assumptions about human nature that provide the foundational belief that markets are neutral or objective. Several scholars in this review contended that the flaws of these

assumptions have manifested into real socioeconomic problems in society as a result of developing public policy instruments based on this paradigm—a framework that scholars contend largely ignores the issues associated with market failures when public goods are provided through markets. Scholars in opposition to market reforms also believed that reform advocates have used the concept of self-interest as a way to defend inequality or socioeconomic stratifications by contending that stratifications are a natural state for human-beings. Howlett and Ramesh (2003) similarly explained how the premise of self-interest has been used to presume that democratically-run public service bureaucracies are inherently inefficient and ineffective. From this perspective, the only way to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of performance within organizational systems has been to impose market reforms for public goods and services (Chubb, 2003; Friedman, 1997; Hepburn, 1999; Klees, 2008; Moe, 2003; Robertson, 2000; Wilkinson, 2005).

Relatively few scholars illuminated the potential need to address the foundational flaws in classical or neo-liberal theories when engaging in market reform debates, with the exception of the rationale provided by Keynes during the pre-war era. During this era, Keynes (1936) stated that public goods had not been effectively provided to citizens through pure market systems. Keynes reasoned this was because the premise of pure self-interest in support of market activity was flawed, and manifest as market failures in provision frameworks that create allocation and distribution imbalances between capital and labour that threaten political stability, and possibly the very existence or sustainability of capitalist systems. As a consequence, Keynes reasoned that public goods could and should be effectively provided to citizens through democratically-operated public bureaucracies. Otherwise, market failures would disrupt the ability of governments



to harness the economic potential of citizens for the overall betterment of an entire society.

Writing in retrospect of Keynes' assertions, Krugman (2007), Robertson (2000), and Tomlinson (2005) each stated that from the beginning of the post-war era leading up until the 1970s, the industrialized states that adopted welfare state features experienced an economic boom as a result of establishing a public policy balance between capital and labour within welfare state frameworks. However, these scholars also claimed this balance had been tipped back in favour of capital from 1973 onward, and suggested that a dismantling these frameworks and Keynesian fiscal policy has been occurring since, particularly in the Anglo-Saxon Western democracies (Altman, 2009; Klees, 2008; Tomlinson, 2005).

One consequence of this unravelling was a resurgence of classical liberal ideas that later manifested as policy instruments intended to address the early 1970s fiscal crises that included reforming public education systems according to market logic. Scholars contended that these instruments policies spread domestically within states, first through a domestic institutionalization of these policies by dominant state actors such as the United States, and later through the international institutions the largest pro-market states controlled, which Klees (2008) contended were also responsible for extending and standardizing capital networks globally. Thus, as the global economy developed, and competitive pressures increased, a policy platform convergence between political parties occurred, prompting government administrations to subscribe to the values and assumptions associated with the centre of the traditional political spectrum. For the most part, this generally meant that most parties took a pro-market stance in the effort to

reform public goods and services, including public education (Carl, 1994; Kachur & Harrison, 1999; Klees, 2008; Loxley & Thomas, 2001; MacEwan, 1999; Tomlinson, 2005).

According to Ball (1998), Kachur (1999a), and Klees (2008) another major consequence was that the new neo-liberal paradigm narrowed policymaking discourse and the alternatives available to bring about change in public education and society. These scholars claimed however, that despite this convergence, governments have continued to promote reform under the same discursive framework that characterized provision under the traditional Keynesian framework—the principles and values of which the citizens of these states had grown accustomed. It is thereby important for stakeholders to understand that the neo-liberal conceptualization of public education provision may entail fundamental differences with respect to rights, quality, and access than what has traditionally been understood (Freeman, 1999; Noddings, 2007; Robertson, 2000; Saint-Martin, 2007; Whitty et al., 1998; Wrigley, 2007).

An empirical observation of the literature would suggest that the traditional provision of public education that had been established after World War II leading up until the 1980s has been considered the status quo in states largely untouched by market reforms up until that time. The primary features of this quo being universal access, democratic organizational processes, public ownership, and provision free from market discipline. It is important to note however that despite the prevalence of reform trends, the Western states primarily discussed in this review have continued to provide public education under traditional provision frameworks, albeit to different extents. The point however is that once market reforms begin reverting back to a Keynesian framework in

its purest and most efficacious form is unlikely since reformers argue that the success of one instrument is often contingent on the adoption and implementation of another—especially given the general societal paradigm in support of such changes (Chubb & Moe, 1990).

The Canadian Teachers' Federation (1997) and Robertson (2000) concluded that, in actuality, there has never been a crisis in Canadian public education, and that the organizational provision arrangements have simply never satisfied the ideological presumptions of reform advocates (Klees, 2008; Krugman, 2007). The CTF went on to suggest that “[t]he agenda for educational reform must be based on improving access to high quality education, not fiscal fundamentalism or ideological conviction” (p. 39). Several scholars suggested that these types of reform pressures and manufactured crises have been most prevalent in peripheral states where cultural values tend to support market-based activity and low government intervention (Carnoy, 1992; Humphries, 2006; Klees, 2008; Klitgaard, 2007; Tomlinson, 2005). Moreover, these states also tend to have wide and increasing socioeconomic gaps in society that these scholars contend are arguably the largest obstacle in the way of improving student achievement outcomes (Wilkinson, 2005). Thus, instead of attempting to reform economic allocation and distribution systems, administrations subscribing to neo-liberalism have developed superficial provision-level solutions, in this case market reforms that are intended to address perceived problems in public education.

Accordingly, Klees (2008) and Robertson (2000) suggested that meaningfully improving outcomes may require reforming allocation and distribution systems similar to the balance achieved immediately following the post-war era. Kachur (1999a) concluded

however that Western states have been moving in the opposite direction. In retrospect, it would seem Keynes revealed the seeming irony of the market reform movement—the irony being that even though market reforms may satisfy ideological presumptions about organizational systems, individual choice over common goods through markets lead to worse economic outcomes for states once market failures are meaningfully considered. In other words, as modern governments continue to move away from Keynesian frameworks, this departure may run contrary to the stated priorities and goals of government with respect to the perceived need to compete in the global economy (Carnoy, 1992; Freeman, 1999; Humphries, 2006; Klees, 2008; Klitgaard, 2007; Krugman, 2007; MacEwan, 1999; Pressman, 2007; Robertson, 2000; Wilkinson, 2005).

With regard to the balance between capital and labour in Canada, moving into the twenty-first century, Canada's former Prime Minister, Paul Martin, stated there has been a major decline in the Canadian middle class since the 1980s, and the disparity between the rich and poor has been accelerating since the 1990s (Kachur & Harrison, 1999). According to several of the scholars reviewed, Martin's statement correlates with the rise in market reforms for education during and subsequent to that decade. As reform ideas gained prominence in the United States and the United Kingdom, Canada also began to slowly adopt market reforms, beginning with Alberta in the early 1990s. Kachur and Harrison claimed this precedent marked the beginning of the push for new public management models that have since "pushed even social democratic provincial governments in British Columbia and Saskatchewan to accommodate neo-liberal and conservative interests" (p. xxii). Thus, given Chan et al.'s (2007) assertion that Saskatchewan has largely been resistant to market reform changes in education, it

becomes necessary to question the extent to which Saskatchewan has remained either immune to these changes, or has been influenced by trends elsewhere (Heywood, 1999; Humphries, 2006; Klitgaard, 2007; Newton et al., 2007; Whitehorn, 2007).

### **Chapter Summary**

In Chapter Three, readers were provided with a historical overview of the reactive nature of ideology throughout the 20 and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries manifest in the reactions of various interest groups to the political and economic events of the era. This overview made explicit the ideological origins of historic contemporary public education policy instruments and directions in Western states, and provided readers with the background required to more fully understand the final conclusions of this content analysis.

Subsequent to this explanation the historiography continues to provide the reader with an overview of how market reform trends have affected other provinces in Canada, including a brief contextualization of the traditional political climate in Saskatchewan. In Chapter Four, readers are introduced to the umbrella concept of choice and the analytical constructs used to carry out textual analysis based on the general themes associated with market reforms, namely choice, decentralization, centralization, and accountability. Each construct includes an explanation of the conceptual logic of each category, as well as the perceived benefits that arise once manifest as policy instruments in public education systems. In Chapter Five, readers are presented with the data and a synthesized addendum of the first stage of data analysis per organization under contextualized headings. In Chapter Six, I describe the cross-comparative analysis of the data addendums of Chapter Five, and the implications of each construct in order to draw final conclusions regarding the extent of market reform evidence per organization, and

whether or not evidence became more or less prominent between 2001 and 2010, and between provincial government administrations during that time.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### The Analytical Constructs of This Content Analysis

This study was a historiographic content analysis of public education policy trends in Saskatchewan (Berger, 1983). The study used, as its analytic context, policy trends that have occurred in other Western market democracies, particularly those that are English-speaking and subscribe to the general tenets associated with Anglo-Saxon capitalism (Altman, 2009). As these nations began to restructure Keynesian (post-war) era education systems from the 1970s onward, each nation began to incrementally develop and adopt variations of market reforms based on four central foci: choice, decentralization, centralization, and accountability (Ball, 1998; Kachur & Harrison, 1999, Klees, 2008; Tomlinson, 2005; Whitty et al., 1998). Arguably, these changes developed in response to ideological, political, and economic global phenomena that led to a policymaking convergence between nations (Kachur, 1999a; Klees, 2008; Tomlinson, 2005). The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not, or to what extent, the public education policy trends occurring in comparable education and state systems elsewhere have likewise affected public education policy directions in Saskatchewan. Theoretically, since these trends constitute a deductive rule, evidence for market reform influence in Saskatchewan should exist—and a selected sample of documents published by stakeholder groups served as the arena of investigation. The underlying goal of this historiographic content analysis was to establish the existence or extent of market reforms in Saskatchewan educational policy in an effort to increase awareness and discourse among public education stakeholders with regard to the implications of market reforms.

In this study, the concept of *choice* and the role of choice policy instruments in Western public education reform movements were primarily examined through an economic lens. According to Ball (1998) and Kachur (1999b), this framing contrasts with how educational reformers have often framed and promoted the need for adopting choice policy instruments to the public. For example, these scholars suggested reformers have often attempted to appeal to the Canadian public's historic libertarian sensibilities by promoting choice as a way to enhance individual liberties (Apple, 2001; Harrison, 1983). Examples of such enhancements might include increasing public schooling options for citizens or the autonomy of bureaucrats and teachers to perform duties. However, from a delimited economic frame of analysis, reformers have arguably used the libertarian frame to obfuscate the primary intent behind promoting choice instruments, which is to enable the restructuring of traditional public school systems to suit a preferred ideology and interest group agendas (Ball, 1998; Chubb & Moe, 1990; Kachur, 1999b; Pressman, 2007).

As described in Chapter One, the introduction of choice in traditional public education systems enables competition between consumers (parents) for quality education, which turns education into a commodity to be obtained for private ends in education markets (Fallon, 2006; Lubienski, 2001). Consequently, the introduction of choice also represents a foundational break with the historic rationale used for exempting the provision of public goods from market discipline during the Keynesian era (Finer, 1999; Keynes, 1926/2004). To remind readers, Keynes reasoned that providing public goods through market systems would result in more market failures than would otherwise result from monopolized provision carried out by "semi-autonomous bodies within the



State—bodies whose criterion of action within their own field is solely the public good as they understand it” (p. 37). Immediately following the post-war era, welfare state developers considered such advice and developed what became traditional public education systems free from market discipline. Given this historic development, the eventual introduction and acceptance of choice in public education can arguably be viewed as a series of gateway events that enabled the development and adoption of the other market instruments required for the development of quasi-market models in some Western states (Carl, 1994; Tomlinson, 2005). This trend is significant since quasi-markets represent a mix between two types of organizational systems, the foundational principles of which are diametrically opposed (Whitty et al., 1998). Consequently, educational stakeholders may want to consider the extent to which the introduction of market discipline in traditional public education systems has increased the probability and variety of market failures that can occur, as predicted by Keynes.

After a review of the literature pertaining to market reform trends and the provision failures that have occurred in response, market failures have been broadly defined under the following categories in this analysis: tragedy of the commons, imperfect information, imperfect competition, and negative externalities (Apple, 2001; Ball, 1998; Howlett & Ramesh, 2003; Klees, 2008; Lubienski, 2006). These failures are fully described in the Implications section of Chapter Six, and are used to inform the final level of critical analysis and conclusions of this study. However, the market failure issues associated with monopolized provision that can occur in the traditional system are addressed in this chapter in the section The Logic and Benefits of Choice. It is equally important to address these implications since they have formed much of the basis for

critiques of traditional public education systems, and the rationale used to advance market reform agendas (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Hepburn, 1999; Lubienski, 2003).

Each of the analytical constructs generally provide readers with an ideological explanation of the perceived benefits of market reforms, and help to explain the interdependent relationships between the various policy instruments required for the development of full quasi-markets in public education. From a delimited economic perspective, choice is the umbrella concept under which other market instruments fall. For the purposes of this study, other instruments have been divided into the thematic categories of decentralization, centralization, and accountability, and are explained subsequent to the section on choice that follows.

### **The Logic and Benefits of Choice**

Advocates of choice generally contend that all participants in any organizational system should be provided with options that enable competition to improve productivity, and thereby the quality and costs of the goods provided. Underlying this view is the notion that humans are entirely self-interested, unequal, and should be as free as possible from externally imposed constraints that impede this nature. This notion of pure self-interest is foundational to the theoretical efficacy of markets (Heywood, 1999; Howlett & Ramesh, 2003; Lubienski, 2003).

Choice (market) advocates presume human potential is best maximized if organizational participants are subject to market discipline since incentive and sanction-based instruments enable system managers to guide the behaviour of participants toward desirable outcomes. If imposed wisely, advocates presume higher productivity and net material gains will result that can be recaptured by the organization and redistributed to

participants in an ideologically accepted form of the common good. This framework provides participants with an opportunity to choose behaviour that will either result in reward or sanction. In most cases, it is presumed that participants will pursue productive behavior to satisfy self-interests. Similarly, consumer choice imposes external pressure on internal systems. For example, it is presumed the more choice consumers have, the more competitive, efficient, and innovative service providers will be in order to attract and retain demand. Essentially, choice theorists presume that as long as all participants are able to make market choices free from unnatural obstructions such as governments or discipline-free bureaucracies, equilibrium between the interests of consumers and producers can be achieved. Only then will all participants reap the third party benefits that result from higher productivity, innovation, reduced prices, consumer satisfaction, and the elimination of inefficient service providers (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Heywood, 1999; Howlett & Ramesh, 2003; Lubienski, 2003; Mintrom, 2003; Skinningsrud, 1995).

The concept of self-interest is also central to the critiques choice advocates often make of traditional public education systems. Chubb and Moe (1990) suggested those in opposition to welfare state development during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century believed that if states were to ever develop public service organizations free from market discipline, the bureaucrats of those institutions would be free to exercise self-interest to the detriment of public stakeholders. For example, it was predicted that public bureaucrats would unnecessarily enlarge budgets to either enhance either their own individual status, or the political clout of their organization without meaningful cost-benefit consideration. According to Chubb and Moe, it was also predicted that as bureaucracies grew, so too would the number of workers that would politically support this new status quo. The

main concern was that over time, the political influence of this demographic would increase to the point of being able to obstruct the types of reforms required to improve organizational systems, particularly those intended to reduce or eliminate the bloat and inefficient practices of bureaucracies. Chubb and Moe claimed that in retrospect, many of these predictions came true which negated the Keynesian-era assumption that politics could be removed from the provision of public services since the premise of self-interest clearly negated the possibility public bureaucrats (including educators) could ever actually be “impartial experts devoted to the public interest” (p. 4; Robertson, 2000). As could be expected, similar critiques were eventually extended to traditional public education systems.

Advocates for enhancing choice in public education often claim teachers have been provided with few incentives to be responsive to parental preferences, labour market demands, or provide cost effective services (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Moe, 2003). Not helping matters have been teacher unions. Moe (2003) suggested unions are even further removed from the realities of market discipline, and have developed a false sense of teacher professionalism used to convince governments and the public of the need to advance and secure the economic interests of teachers. Since the only way unions can exist and prosper is to retain or increase membership, Moe argued the primary focus of teacher unions has been to protect and advance the pay, rights, and working conditions of teachers while paying little heed to labour market demands, or the need to adopt meaningful reforms. From this perspective, unions act as an obstruction in what could otherwise be an efficient education market, and only prosper in systems free from market discipline (Robertson, 2000).

Without a complete market-based restructuring, Chubb and Moe (1990) suggested transformational innovations that meaningfully improve student performance will never take place in traditional public education systems. Moe (2003) claimed billions of dollars have been spent on the public system to little or no avail, and that as long as teacher unions are able to obstruct meaningful change through the promotion of superficial remedies non-threatening to union interests, the inert status quo will continue. In order to address this issue, Chubb and Moe claimed enhancing choice is necessary to break down institutionalized bureaucracy, and to collapse union power (Dickerson & Flanagan, 1998; Friedman, 1997; Hepburn, 1999; Lubienski, 2003; Moe, 2003; Tiebout, 1956, as cited in Pressman, 2007). Chubb and Moe (1990) also contended that once education markets are fully developed through choice-based restructuring and all participants are able to exercise self-interest in an open market, only the fittest, most effective teachers and schools will survive. Choice will enhance competition and will ensure schools compete for enrollment through innovation and the imposition of market discipline to satisfy parental demands (Dobbin, 1997; Hepburn, 1999; Lubienski, 2003). In this sense, choice redistributes power to parents (consumers), and acts as a bottom-up form of accountability (Hepburn, 1999; Moe, 2003).

Market advocates are generally aware of the types of provision failures that can occur in response to quasi-market provision (Whitty et al., 1998). As fully described in Chapter Six, such failures include the issues associated with tragedy of the commons, imperfect information, imperfect competition, and negative externalities. However, the primary difference between how market advocates view these failures when compared with how advocates of the traditional system view them is that these failures are less

problematic than those associated with monopolized provision. For example, in an effort to address the inequities associated with consumers having imperfect information or unequal resources in an education market, reformers often support the development of government initiatives or incentives that improve access to market opportunities. Examples of incentives or assistance include, but are not limited to, publicly assisted transportation, direct subsidies, enhancement to consumer information, meaningful rewards and sanctions, or regulations that improve fair competition (Chubb, 2003; Chubb & Moe, 1990; Ryan & Heise, 2002; Saint-Martin, 2007).

Given the logics and benefits articulated above, the primary concepts related to choice I employed during textual analysis within the scope of this research are represented in any words or statements related to the following:

- Choice used as a discourse or policy instrument to enhance individual liberties by providing consumer (parent) options.
- Choice as a way to enhance competition to improve services.
- Choice as a way to impose market discipline through reward (incentives) and sanction.

### **The Logic and Benefits of Decentralization**

Decentralization in public education generally refers to a belief in the efficacy of shared decision making among stakeholders at the local level. Advocates generally contend service providers and recipients at the local level have a high stake in policy inputs and outputs and are best equipped to decide what constitutes local need, and are most committed to improving education outcomes and experiences. From this perspective, decentralization is a nonhierarchical, bottom-up form of accountability when

compared with the hierarchies that can develop in the top-down governance structures in more centralized public education systems (Friedman, 1997; Kachur & Harrison, 1999; Lawton, 1996; Whitaker, 2003; Whitty et al., 1998).

Most of the scholars reviewed in this study who advocated for an increase of teacher autonomy beyond levels traditionally exercised in traditional public school systems also believed public education is most efficaciously provided through quasi-market systems that hold teachers directly accountable for outcomes and the choices individuals make (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Lubienski, 2001; Tomlinson, 2005; Whitty et al., 1998). Given this type of accountability and the need for ensuring fair competition ensues between organizational participants, advocates claim individuals should be as free as possible from the type of bureaucratic influences that obstruct one's ability to innovate, make meaningful professional decisions, or respond to market forces. Essentially, advocates presume the more autonomy teachers have; the more productive, efficient and effective teachers will be, which, in turn, improves student achievement beyond what is organizationally possible in a traditional public school system (Bulkley & Fisler, 2003; Chubb, 2003; Chubb & Moe, 1990; Friedman, 1997; Hepburn, 1999; Lubienski, 2001; Whitty et al., 1998).

From a delimited economic perspective, decentralization instruments are often intended to enhance managerial, budgeting, and instructional autonomy at the local level in exchange for centralized control over policy, standards, regulations, curriculum (what is taught and how it is assessed), and finances (the amount of money devolved) (Chomos & Walker, 2006; English, 2006; Freeman, 1999; Kachur, 1999b; Sahlberg, 2008; Turner, 2006; Whitaker, 2003; Whitty et al., 1998).

Hepburn (1999) claimed enhancing decentralization is important since teachers and principals in traditional systems have not had the autonomy required to meaningfully improve student achievement. From this perspective, increasing managerial capacity is viewed as necessary to enable principals to assert more control over the internal structures, staffing, and funding considerations of their schools (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Grace, 1995, as cited in Ball, 1998; Levy, 1991; Madsen, 1997; Vergari, 2007). Similarly, Hepburn and Mintrom (2003) claimed teachers require more autonomy to innovate and that in cases where autonomy has increased, teachers have enjoyed the additional flexibility, stakeholder accountability, and performance incentives that characterize decentralized systems.

Several scholars also suggested decentralization redistributes grassroots power in local communities through the increased emphasis on school community councils. Proponents claim councils strengthen the collective vision of the school, enhance accountability among stakeholders, ensure the effectiveness of new policies, build professional community, and add stakeholder voice to local policy development processes (Ferris, 1992; Krommendyk, 2007; Lindquist, 1998; Madsen, 1997; Mintrom, 2003; Murray, 2007).

Given the logics and benefits articulated above, the primary concepts related to decentralization I employed during textual analysis within the scope of this research are represented in any words or statements related to the following:

- Any emphasis or value placed on shared decision-making in the development of policies or programs at the local level.
- Any emphasis or value placed on increased autonomy at the local level.



- Any reference to the efficacy of devolving funds or managerial responsibilities to the local level.

### **The Logic and Benefits of Centralization**

From a delimited economic perspective, centralization in public education generally refers to an increase in the control governments have over curriculum, finances, managerial duties, and overseeing performance outcomes at the local level (English, 2006; Lawton, 1996; Whitaker, 2003). Ball (1998) described this trend as a form of “. . . indirect steering or steering at a distance which replaces intervention and prescription with target setting, accountability, and comparison” (p. 123). Essentially, governments have been attempting to gain control over what is taught, how it is assessed, and for what purpose (Chan et al., 2007; Kachur, 1999b; Whitty, et al., 1998).

Manzer (1994) provided one rationale in support of this trend:

“[in Canada] . . . provincial education authorities should make policy decisions regarding the overall resource allocation to public education, content of the common or core curriculum, provincial standards of educational achievement, and mechanisms of accountability . . . [whereas management] should be decentralized to school boards, school councils and teaching staffs, while ensuring that accountability to the policy-determining centre is maintained. (as cited in Kuchapski, 1998, p. 230)

According to proponents, this level of centralized restructuring enables governments to accurately track student achievement, and nurture the relationships between achievement, employment, productivity, and trade to meet the needs of commercial competition on a global scale (Ball, 1998; Carl, 1994).

Given the logics and benefits articulated above, the primary concepts related to centralization I employed during textual analysis within the scope of this research are represented in any words or statements related to the following:

- Any emphasis or value placed on government control over what is learned or what is assessed.
- Any emphasis or value placed on increasing government control over the funding used to finance the broader public education system.

### **The Logic and Benefits of Accountability**

From a delimited economic perspective, English (2006) claimed accountability in public education generally refers to official efforts to ensure public schools are answerable to stakeholders through formal policies, structures, processes, and outcomes subject to external validations primarily with respect to student achievement, teacher performance, and the management of schools. From a more ideological perspective, Robertson (2000) and Whitty et al. (1998) suggested advocates of this type of accountability presume the pressure that results will encourage teachers and students to be more responsive and innovative in achieving organizational aims when compared with the pressures of traditional organizational arrangements (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Hepburn, 1999; Lubienski, 2006; Moe, 2003).

As the pressure on industrialized nations to compete in global markets accelerated from the 1970s onward, scholars claimed the pressure to adopt outcomes-based policy instruments in public education increased (Kachur & Harrison, 1999; Klees, 2008; Robertson, 2000; Sahlberg, 2007; Tomlinson, 2005). As a result, the notion that standardized benchmarks, uniform curricula, and assessment criteria were required to

track student achievement and provide information-based points of comparison developed accordingly. The perceived benefit of having this type of information was to provide parents, universities, and governments with planning information upon which to base school choice, public policy, admissions criteria, and to help close the gap between educational supply and labour market demands (Ball, 1998; Lubienski, 2006; Moe, 2003; Robertson, 2000; Whitty et al., 1998).

Given the logics and benefits articulated above, the primary concepts related to accountability I employed during textual analysis within the scope of this research are represented in any words or statements related to the following:

- Any emphasis or value placed on ensuring service providers (teachers) are answerable to stakeholders through formalized processes external to the local level or teaching profession.
- Any emphasis or value placed on accountability for the purposes of improving the responsiveness of service providers.
- Any emphasis or value placed on accountability for the purpose of tracking academic progress.

### **The Processes Used for Collecting and Analyzing Data**

As per the data collection methods described in Chapter Two, each of the major stakeholder organizations were contacted through a written request and asked to self-identify what each organization believed to be its key policy direction document in 2001, 2004, 2007, and 2010. As one might expect, the responses were markedly different. For example, only one of the organizations provided exactly what was requested, whereas another provided no data at all. Given this variation, the full details of what was received,

and in the one case retrieved, are described in the contextualization sections that precede the data analyses and summaries for each organization in Chapter Five.

The purposive sampling approach to determine which sections of text within documents would be used for comparative analysis was relatively similar between samples. In Chapter Two, I described three options for selecting samples, the choice of which would depend upon the content of the documentation received. The first option was to select the introductions and executive summaries of each document, and in the event the categories did not co-exist, I selected the introductions and conclusions as a second choice. In the event of requiring a third, I stated that I would determine which sections of text were relevant for the purposes of comparative analysis with a 10-page limit, and justify this choice along with the other method modifications that follow (Gall et al., 2007; Krippendorff, 2004). Given the wide variations in the documentation received, I chose the third option of relevance—sampling with a 10-page limit—for every document with the exception of the one that did not fulfill the 10-page limit.

### **The Rationale for the Third Option**

The Saskatchewan Ministry of Education was the only organization that was either able to fulfill the criteria requested, and of the documents sent, the introduction and summative statements were not consistently relevant nor did they contain a similar amount of text. In other cases, documents did not include definitive introductory or summative statements, and none of the other organizations fulfilled the chronological aspects of the request. With the exception of the document sent by one organization, the only common thread between documents was a breadth of 10 pages. Accordingly, I chose the third option of relevance--sampling with a 10-page limit--and in the one case where

the documentation fell short, I analyzed all of what the organization chose to send. The details regarding the choice of each sample are included as addendums to the contextualization sections for each organization in Chapter Five.

### **Method Modifications**

Once the samples for each organization were established, I carried out a second level of analysis to determine which sections of text should be examined. The purpose of this process was to separate text relevant to the constructs from text related to other issues explored in the historiography. This level of analysis was possible given my familiarity with the concepts in the constructs and historiography since I was the sole developer of each (Krippendorff, 2004). This process began with a read through of the hardcopies of each sample and as I read through, I labeled, in pencil, any sections of text that were relevant, and for what reason in the margins of the sample. This included making an initial determination as to which sections of text were related to which thematic construct, or which aspect of the historiography.

Once this initial and general analysis was complete, I developed a digital text document for each organization as a way to further organize relevant sections of text. Each document began with a contextualization of the organization and of the documentation received, followed by three headings used to organize the data: (a) Evidence for Market Reforms (b) Other Observations Relevant to the Broader Historiography, and (c) Summary of Data. Text from the digital copies of the original samples was then copied and pasted into the new document under the appropriate heading based on the observations made during the initial analysis. In order to retain my original impressions and commentary captured in the handwritten notes, I rewrote the

commentary as bullet points under each section of text. Each of the Ministry's four separate samples were also analyzed in this manner and organized in the order of the documentation request—2001, 2004, 2007, and 2010. With respect to how all of the information and data sets for each of the organizations were ordered and presented in Chapter Five, the organization with the highest frequency of market reform evidence was presented first with the rest arranged accordingly. As a last stage of analysis for this set of documentation, I revisited the original samples and counted the number of references related to the analytic constructs per page of each 10-page sample and included these averages at the end of the Context of the Organization section for each organization (Gall et al., 2007; Krippendorff, 2004). Determining this average was important to conclude an approximate extent of market reform evidence per organization, and allowed me to draw this conclusion for all of the organizations, given that one organization had only sent one page.

I then developed a second set of data documentation. The Context of the Organization and Other Observations Relevant to the Broader Historiography sections largely stayed the same, but the Evidence for Market Reforms was reanalyzed and rearranged in accordance with the order of the constructs as presented throughout the study: choice, decentralization, centralization, and accountability. This level of analysis reconfirmed that each section of text chosen constituted evidence, and was also used to order data for the final stage of cross-comparative analysis. To carry out this process, I printed hardcopies of the constructs, and compared the concepts of each construct with each section of related data. If there was a correlation, I revised and expanded on the bullet points below the text by describing these relationships. However, in the event there

was no correlation, I moved the data to the section pertaining to the broader historiography.

After the market reform data was established, I reanalyzed the data in the Other Observations Relevant to the Broader Historiography categories. This process was completed by rereading the data and making a list of the themes I felt were related to the issues addressed in the historiography (Chapter Three). Once these themes were established, I reread the historiography to gather ideas and sources that would support a discussion of those themes in the Summary of Data sections in Chapter Five.

With an approach for determining extent and the relevant evidence established, the next step was to synthesize the data for each organization in a final level of data documentation to be presented as Chapter Five. The chapter begins with A Note on Limitations followed by a description of the Context of the Organization, the Evidence for Market Reforms (as determined by the formal construct analysis), Other Observations Relevant to the Broader Historiography, and a holistic analysis of all the data per organization in the final Summary of Data section. In total, three levels of critical analysis were used to examine data in addition to the layers of rational process used to organize data and determine extent. Using both approaches was necessary to develop well-supported answers to the research questions to enable further questioning, and fulfill the purpose of this study (Collingwood, 1939, as cited in Morton, 1983; Fallon, 2006; Gall et al., 2007; Krippendorff, 2004).

### **Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, I introduced readers to the umbrella concept of choice and the analytical constructs used for rational and critical analysis based on the general themes

associated with market reforms including choice, decentralization, centralization, and accountability. Each construct description included the conceptual logic of each theme as well as the perceived benefits that resulted once this logic manifests as public education policy instruments. The eleven analytic constructs are, restated, as follows:

- Choice used as a discourse or policy instrument to enhance individual liberties by providing consumer (parent) options.
- Choice as a way to enhance competition to improve services.
- Choice as a way to impose market discipline through reward (incentives) and sanction.
- Any emphasis or value placed on shared decision-making in the development of policies or programs at the local level.
- Any emphasis or value placed on increased autonomy at the local level.
- Any reference to the efficacy of devolving funds or managerial responsibilities to the local level.
- Any emphasis or value placed on government control over what is learned or what is assessed.
- Any emphasis or value placed on increasing government control over the funding used to finance the broader public education system.
- Any emphasis or value placed on ensuring service providers (teachers) are answerable to stakeholders through formalized processes external to the local level or teaching profession.
- Any emphasis or value placed on accountability for the purposes of improving the responsiveness of service providers.



- Any emphasis or value placed on accountability for the purpose of tracking academic progress.

Following the construct descriptions, I described the processes used for collecting and analyzing data as per the methods described in Chapter Two, in addition to any necessary modifications. In Chapter Five, I present readers with the context of each organization, the data, and analyses used to draw conclusions regarding the extent and context of market reform influence per organization. I begin Chapter Six with a cross-comparative analysis of these conclusions before I present readers with the Implications that can arise should the construct themes be developed and adopted as policy instruments in public education. By this point, readers are familiar with the role of each organization, the extent of market reform influence in the samples provided, and the implications of market reforms generally, so final conclusions can be drawn, and recommendations for further analysis made. Finally, as a slight departure from other Master's theses, I conclude this study with some general commentary in relation to the broader historiography for future researchers to consider.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **Reporting of Data**

This study was a historiographic content analysis of public education policy trends in Saskatchewan (Berger, 1983). The study used, as its analytic context, policy trends that have occurred in other Western market democracies, particularly those that are English-speaking and subscribe to the general tenets associated with Anglo-Saxon capitalism (Altman, 2009). As these nations began to restructure Keynesian (post-war) era education systems from the 1970s onward, each nation began to incrementally develop and adopt variations of market reforms based on four central foci: choice, decentralization, centralization, and accountability (Ball, 1998; Kachur & Harrison, 1999, Klees, 2008; Tomlinson, 2005; Whitty et al., 1998). Arguably, these changes developed in response to ideological, political, and economic global phenomena that led to a policymaking convergence between nations (Kachur, 1999a; Klees, 2008; Tomlinson, 2005). The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not, or to what extent, public education policy trends occurring in comparable education and state systems elsewhere have affected public education policy directions in Saskatchewan.

Theoretically, since these trends constitute a deductive rule, evidence for market reform influence in Saskatchewan should exist—and a selected sample of documents published by stakeholder groups served as the arena of investigation. The underlying goal of this historiographic content analysis was to establish the existence or extent of market reforms in Saskatchewan educational policy in an effort to increase awareness and discourse among public education stakeholders with regard to the implications of market reforms.

### **A Note on Limitations**

Given that one of the goals of this study was to determine the extent of market reform influence per organization and the correlate effect this may have on public education policy directions, it is important to briefly revisit the limitations of establishing extent using the methodology and methods chosen.

The processes used to determine extent and organize the data in this chapter were quantitative, rational and critical. Extent was determined by calculating the average number of market reform references per page of each sample based on the concepts established in the analytic constructs. One drawback of using this approach was that each organization would often emphasize the same word or concept, such as *accountability*, even though the context surrounding the use of the word was different. There were also structural issues between samples that limited comparability. For example, the Ministry sent four chronological samples of Annual Reports, and while the purpose of each report was generally the same, the structure or level of administrative detail was not. Nevertheless, as Krippendorff (2004) contended, such limitations are expected in a qualitative content analysis, and every analysis, whether quantitative or qualitative, requires a process for establishing patterns in discourse. In this study, the rational approach used to establish extent provided a conceptual framework upon which further critical analysis could be applied. Thus, in consideration of the limitations previously described, the conclusions regarding extent were approximations used to inform the more general and critical conclusions presented in the Summary of Data sections for each organization.

## **The Ministry of Education**

### **Context of the Organization**

As per section 3(1) of *The Education Act, 1995*, the Ministry of Education is the Government of Saskatchewan branch responsible for “. . . all matters not by law assigned to any other minister, department, branch or agency of the Government of Saskatchewan relating to elementary and secondary education”. The Ministry is also responsible for several legislative acts and regulations including, *The Education Act, 1995* (including legislative stewardship for Boards of Education and Conseilsscolaires), *The League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents Act, 1991*, and *The Teachers’ Federation Act, 2006* (Government of Saskatchewan, 2007).

The Ministry has numerous responsibilities including the provision of managerial advice, curriculum guides for courses, and professional development to assist in the implementation of new initiatives (Government of Saskatchewan, 1997). According to the Ministry’s website, the Ministry is also responsible for providing the early learning and child care, preK-12, and library sectors with funding, governance, and accountability supports with a focus to improve student achievement. Ultimately, “[t]he Ministry is committed to improving the learning success and well-being of all Saskatchewan children and youth, and the enhancement of literacy for all Saskatchewan people” (Government of Saskatchewan, 2007).

### **The Documentation Request and What Was Received**

A documentation request was sent to the Ministry of Education in November 2010 requesting the organization to identify and provide what the Ministry considered to be its key public education policy direction documents in 2001, 2004, 2007, and 2010. In response, the Policy, Evaluation, and Legislative Services Branch of the Ministry provided annual reports for each of the years requested, which according to the

government, clearly “. . . outline the Ministry’s goals, and the resulting outcomes and accomplishments for each reporting period” (Ministry of Education, personal communication, December 24, 2010). The Ministry also noted the format of the documents had changed during these years but that “the substance had remained consistent” (Ministry of Education, personal communication, December 24, 2010).

It is important to briefly reiterate that there were slight structural differences between the four samples sent by the Ministry. Each sample was an Annual Report but the introduction and summative statements were not consistently relevant nor did they always contain a similar amount of text. Consequently, the 10-page sampling of each report began once relevant or substantial statements were made which either began with the Minister’s letter of transmittal or on the next page entitled Introduction.

As explained in Chapter Four, the information sets for each organization have been arranged according to the frequency of market reform evidence per sample. The organization with the highest approximate frequency of evidence has been presented first, and the one with the least presented last. Accordingly, the Ministry’s information has been presented first, but it is important to note that the level of frequency varied substantially between the first and last samples provided. For example, the frequency in the 2000-2001 and 2003-2004 reports were comparable to the frequencies found in samples provided by other organizations. Nevertheless, the Ministry’s 2006-2007 report had the highest level of frequency out of all the samples, and the most recent report in 2009-2010 was a close second. Given that both of these documents have comparably high levels of frequency and define the present education policy context, the Ministry was chosen as the organization with the highest level of evidence.

Each of the sample sizes drawn from the Annual Reports were 10 pages in length. The sample from 2000-2001 had a total of 5 references with an average of .5 references per page. This was the lowest number of references for all samples analyzed in this study. In the next sample from 2003-2004, there was a substantial increase with a total of 15 references and an average of 1.5 per page. This upward trajectory continued in 2006-2007 with a total of 22 references—2.2 per page—and marked the end of samples developed under the stewardship of the New Democratic Party (NDP). The sample drawn from 2009-2010 was the first developed by the Saskatchewan Party, and was the last of the Ministry’s documentation to be considered in this analysis. There were 20 references in this sample with an average of 2 per page, slightly fewer than the previous sample. More holistic approximations are made subsequent to the critical analyses that follow in the Summary of Data sections for each organization.

### **The Government of Saskatchewan’s Annual Report 2000-2001**

#### **Evidence for Market Reforms**

This sample did not contain any references related to choice but there were two related to decentralization. In the first example, the Ministry referred to the other stakeholder organizations as partners and emphasized the importance of the organizations working together to ensure programs and services responded to the needs of students. In the second, the Ministry highlighted the importance of finding a balance between provincial and local autonomy, which demonstrated a commitment to shared decision-making. There were no references to centralization, but a few pertained to accountability.

The first was embedded in the opening statement of the Minister’s Letter of Transmittal. In this letter, the government emphasized its “[g]overnment-wide

commitment to improved accountability . . . in accordance with the general principles set out by the Performance Management and Accountability Review Project” (Government of Saskatchewan, 2001, p. iii). Following this emphasis, the government described how it would enhance transparency by providing a detailed record of outcomes and accomplishments from the previous year, as opposed to solely providing the next year’s performance plan. An example of the accomplishments listed was the monitoring of test outputs from the Provincial Learning Assessment Program and School Achievement Indicators Program to acquire feedback on the effectiveness of the public education system.

In brief, the Ministry valued the efficacy of shared decision-making and autonomy at the local level although more emphasis was placed on the need to enhance formalized processes for accountability to improve the effectiveness of the system. References to monitoring student achievement outcomes to improve responsiveness were also made explicit. The two predominant construct themes in this sample were decentralization and accountability.

### **Other Observations Relevant to the Broader Historiography**

The Ministry emphasized the importance of collaborative working relationships with other stakeholder organizations, and recognized that broader provincial, community, and family supports were essential to maintain or improve the public education system. The Ministry also acknowledged the importance of universal access by explaining that all students should have access to “. . . quality education and equality of education opportunities” regardless of personal circumstance or geographic location (Government of Saskatchewan, 2001, p. 6). The Ministry also contended that social justice was

requisite to providing all students with a quality student-centred education. More specifically, student-centred education referred to the need for accommodating diversity in student learning through a pedagogical approach known as the Adaptive Dimension.

The sample concluded by emphasizing the importance of Saskatchewan students becoming proficient in foreign languages and intercultural competence to ensure students would be able to fully participate in the global society. There was no explanation about what this type of participation would entail.

### **The Government of Saskatchewan's Annual Report 2003-2004**

#### **Evidence for Market Reforms**

In the Government of Saskatchewan's 2003-2004 *Annual Report* (2004) there were two references to choice. The first was in reference to the need for a "strong and competitive learning sector" to "respond to the changing labour market" (p. 7) but it was not clear whether this referred solely to post-secondary, preK-12, or both, since this document was created at a time when the Ministry of Learning was responsible for both sectors. Either way, since choice enables a market restructuring of public systems to enhance competition to improve services or responsiveness, this reference was construct evidence. Similarly, in reference to Saskatchewan Learning's goals for K-12 education, the Ministry stated that meeting "the diverse learning needs of individuals" requires programs and services to "remain competitive" with "credit transferable to other jurisdictions" (p. 10). This may have meant Saskatchewan educators needed to compete with providers in other jurisdictions in providing quality education, or that program flexibility would enhance the choices consumers could make, which would stimulate



competition, maintain supply, and fulfill labour market demands. There were no references to decentralization.

In order to sustain the “structural and fiscal integrity” of the public education system, the Ministry claimed there was a need for “financial restructuring” and “centralized administration”. More specifically, it was stated that “[a]fter three years of voluntary restructuring, 33 school divisions amalgamated to create 18 new divisions [and that] . . . the Commission on Financing Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education recommended that a new policy be implemented to further reduce the number of school divisions in the province” (Government of Saskatchewan, 2004, p. 9). These statements indicated an emphasis on centralization in terms of increasing centralized control over policymaking by reducing levels of decentralized administration.

There were several references to accountability in this sample. The first emphasized the need to declare Department of Learning results based on the previous year’s performance plan in an effort to increase public accountability. In order to achieve this level of transparency the Ministry reported a Summary of Performance Results in the Annual Report that outlined the connections between department activities, the objectives of those activities, and the department’s financial results in pursuing those objectives. The Ministry valued the need to enhance formalized accountability processes to improve responsiveness, and ensure service providers were answerable to external validations.

The next references to accountability focused largely on the need to track the academic progress of students. In the context of reporting “performance results” it was stated that “Saskatchewan student performance is lower than the national average in all but one area, comprehension of science content” (p. 8). This statement was followed by a

commitment to enhance curriculum, and adopt new initiatives to improve student performance in all areas. When describing the need to improve performance to be competitive with other jurisdictions, the need for “a national standard of system testing” was not questioned, but there was a brief description of the limitations of testing methodologies. The Ministry stated that relative to the national average, Saskatchewan students had not fared well as a result of “changes in test design and scoring” (pp. 10-11). This was the only limitation or implication described.

### **Other Observations Relevant to the Broader Historiography**

The Ministry continued to illuminate the need for strengthening the “. . . collaborative relationships with the department’s learning sector partners” (Government of Saskatchewan, 2004, p. 5), and claimed “[t]he department’s work is guided by on-going collaboration with sector partners” including LEADS, the Saskatchewan Association of School Business Officials, the SSBA, and the STF (p. 7). These references were followed by descriptions of the geographic diversity of the province, and the need to enhance access to educational opportunities through the use of technology.

The rationale for improving access was initially framed as a way to “. . . advance the social, economic, and personal well-being of Saskatchewan people”, but eventually concluded with a higher emphasis on the need to meet “. . . the employment needs of the provincial labour market” (Government of Saskatchewan, 2004, p. 6), and the economy more generally. Other references were made to the need for training individuals and developing partnerships between those individuals and “employers, communities, and industry”, and that this would “enhance participation in the civic life of the province by preparing individuals for active citizenship” (p. 6). The sample concluded with a

statement describing the Ministry's involvement in a new initiative entitled the Labour Market Development Agreement Summative Evaluation intended to strengthen the correlation between the K-12 system and the labour market.

### **The Government of Saskatchewan's Annual Report 2006-2007**

#### **Evidence for Market Reforms**

There was a stark increase in the number of detailed references to accountability relative to the previous sample, and more details regarding the Ministry's centralization initiatives. There were no references to choice, and only a few pertaining to decentralization.

The references to decentralization primarily referred to the Ministry of Education's (formerly Saskatchewan Learning) contract ". . . with the Saskatchewan School Boards Association to develop an electronic template to support reporting by local School Community Councils" (Saskatchewan Learning, 2007, p. 10). By extension, this presumed Ministry support for shared decision-making and autonomy at the local level. However, the subsequent statement clarified the organization's legislated responsibilities for curriculum development, and more specifically, the "instructional practices to be used in schools". As part of this explanation, the Ministry described their continued commitments to strengthening ". . . curriculum to focus on learning outcomes", a process that included the use of "[d]epartment curriculum consultants". At this stage, the Ministry claimed only to be in the process of making "significant progress . . . toward the development of an outcomes based curriculum" (pp. 10-11). The government's assertions of control over what is learned and assessed were clear references to centralization.

Relative to the 2000-2001 and 2003-2004 samples, there was a major emphasis on enhancing financial and performance accountability through additional planning, measuring, and reporting methods, in addition to new references regarding the learning sector's responsibilities for meeting the province's economic demand. Following the general emphasis to improve accountability to enhance system performance, numerous references were made to various initiatives underway to track student achievement. There were almost as many references to accountability in this sample as there were total references to all the construct themes in the sample previous.

The references to formalized accountability initiatives began with descriptions of the support school divisions received from the Ministry to implement the Continuous Improvement Framework (CIF). According to the Ministry "the planning and reporting of learner outcomes . . . is a primary requirement of the Framework" that ". . . provides the PreK-12 education system with the first common strategic planning and accountability mechanism that will enhance operational accountability across school divisions, and improve student learning outcomes for all Saskatchewan students" (p. 10). According to the Ministry, the CIF "establishes an annual planning, monitoring, and reporting cycle that aligns provincial and local priorities to improve system operations and learner outcomes". In coordinating this effort the Ministry carried out "[c]onsultation meetings with all 28 school divisions in the province to discuss the planning and reporting cycle of the CIF", which ". . . confirmed that all had adopted the Framework as a key component of their strategic planning processes" (p. 10). There was no mention if school divisions were free to choose involvement or if the initiative was imposed. References were also made to the expansion of the provincial Assessment for Learning (AFL) program.

According to the Ministry, the AFL program was intended to provide teachers with valuable data to track how students were performing in an effort to enable teachers to make the necessary planning and assessment changes that would improve student performance. The Ministry went on to suggest that from a broader perspective, “[p]erformance information is used to assess overall progress towards goals and objectives to inform or guide future plans and actions of the Department and sector”, and that the CIF and the AFL program were developed in response to the need to improve learner outcomes (Saskatchewan Learning, 2007, p. 6). In an effort to build on the continued success of these initiatives, the government claimed further that it would expand the AFL program and would develop more division and school-specific data by administering two large-scale assessments per year (increased from one per year), and by broadening the program from a sole focus on mathematics and reading to include writing, science, and personal and social skill development.

Yet despite the recurring focus on accountability for the purposes of tracking academic progress and improving the ability of educators to carry out their responsibilities, the Ministry remained committed to meeting the diverse needs of all learners. The need for a student-centered education was recognized in addition to the need for preparing students with employable skills. The latter was emphasized with the claim that an outcomes-based approach “. . . measures not just graduation rates, but the skill sets students need to thrive and succeed in tomorrow’s world” (Saskatchewan Learning, 2007, p. 10). The Ministry concluded these belief statements with the claim that “[s]tudent learning outcomes are increasingly important for all of us; students, parents, families, general public, teachers, administrators, [and the] labour market” (p.

10), without making any specific reference as to whether the positive externalities being referred to were economic.

Other accountability statements pertained to the changes “made to the K-12 Operating Grant formula during 2006-07, for implementation effective April 1, 2007, resulting in a simpler, more transparent, and more equitable funding system” (Saskatchewan Learning, 2007, p. 6). One aspect of enhancing transparency included the need for “additional accountability around outcomes related to student achievement through the Continuous Improvement Framework” but no details were provided as to whether funding would become contingent upon outcomes (p. 6). Each of the construct concepts for accountability previously described were reiterated in various forms, and numerous times, throughout the sample.

### **Other Observations Relevant to the Broader Historiography**

The Ministry continued to emphasize the importance of ongoing collaboration with other stakeholder organizations but added the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations to the list. Besides this relatively minor change, there were a few other significant changes. Following the statements concerning collaborative commitments, the Ministry outlined the gradations of responsibilities between stakeholder organizations for PreK-12 education:

There are a variety of relationships between the Department and the institutions, agencies, boards, and organizations that comprise the early learning and child care, library, and PreK-12 learning sector. These relationships vary by degree of accountability and are described in Acts and Regulations, orders in council, and memorandums of understanding. (Saskatchewan Learning, 2007, p. 4)

Another distinction was that the Department of Learning was no longer responsible for post-secondary education but had assumed new responsibilities for early learning and child care. The Ministry claimed the integration of early learning and childcare with the Department of Learning was unique and that Saskatchewan would be “. . . the first jurisdiction in Canada to focus responsibility for early learning and childcare services within a single education Ministry”. The Ministry went on to claim the initiative “. . . is a key priority for the provincial government”, and would provide “. . . integrated program and policy support to licensed child care and Prekindergarten programs, while coordinating the broad early learning and child care agenda” (p. 4). Initially, the initiative was framed as a social justice endeavour that would “contribute to healthy child development”, and ensure all children had the best “start in life”, but the focus shifted to the importance of improving levels of “readiness to learn” to “improve learning outcomes” (p. 8). These claims were based on studies that demonstrate how

preschool children who attend high-quality early childhood education and child care programs have a greater likelihood of success in school and of becoming productive, contributing members of society as adults. Early childhood development is an important component of lifelong learning and in improving the long-term social and economic prospects of our province. (p. 8)

There were also other references that referred to the “profound impact” the learning sector had on social and economic wellbeing, and the Ministry stated they would continue to explore “the impact of investments in early learning and childcare” (p. 9).

Among the data related to accountability, several statements inferred the public education system was in need of improvement. The Ministry stated “[l]arge-scale

assessments of student learning reveal that Saskatchewan students are not achieving at the desired levels compared to their Canadian counterparts,” and that an increase in the development and use of data would help target resources appropriately, and enhance successful transitions “. . . both within and from the PreK-12 systems (either to employment or further education)” for children and youth at risk (Saskatchewan Learning, 2007, p. 10).

### **The Government of Saskatchewan’s Annual Report 2009-2010**

#### **Evidence for Market Reforms**

This was the first and only sample analyzed that was developed under the stewardship of the Saskatchewan Party. There were no references to choice but the references to the other themes were relatively balanced.

The references to decentralization began with a description of a new initiative to improve student achievement entitled the Provincial Panel on Student Achievement. The introduction of the initiative included a broad and detailed list of the stakeholders that collaborated on the Panel, which by extension, presumed the Ministry valued shared decision-making. Stakeholders were also broadened to include “business organizations and post secondary groups” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2011, p. 12). As part of the consultation process the Ministry claimed to have commissioned the provincial universities to carry out “. . . an extensive review of current North American research on ‘what works’, as well as in-depth analysis of current achievement trends” (p. 11). It was not clear whether “what works” referred to school level initiatives and pedagogical practices, or research regarding the potential benefits or implications of public education reform trends.



Under Measurement Results, the Ministry claimed they would continue supporting other decentralized initiatives inherited from the previous administration such as School<sup>PLUS</sup> and School Community Councils to improve student achievement. The Ministry described School<sup>PLUS</sup> as

. . . a province-wide initiative led by the Ministry of Education and the provincial education system that promotes learning success and well-being for *every* child and young person. It envisions a province where every school is actively improving student outcomes through the delivery of a strong learning program and serving as a centre for social, health and other social services. (Government of Saskatchewan, 2011)

Beyond this visionary description, there was little detail regarding how schools would tangibly become a hub for social, health, or other social services, or the extent to which this initiative or School Community Councils had been supported. Regardless, it was clear local autonomy and stakeholder voice in policymaking and implementation processes were valued in principle. The references to centralization were somewhat less clear.

In a section entitled Ministry Overview, it was stated that the Ministry “. . . provides direction for Pre-kindergarten to Grade 12 education [and] . . . strengthens the performance of the school system through consultation with school boards on funding and taxation and through curriculum enhancement” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 7). These statements indicated a respect for autonomy and collaboration but it was questionable whether these principles were honoured in the centralization of public education financing that occurred in 2009 (Government of

Saskatchewan, n.d.). There was also a pronounced departure in tone between samples with regard to accountability beginning with the letter of transmittal written by education Minister Ken Krawetz in the introduction of the report.

The letter began by stating “[t]he Government of Saskatchewan is committed to increased accountability, to honouring its commitments, and to efficiently and responsibly managing expenditures” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 3). The Minister then claimed the purpose of the 2009-10 Annual Report, was to demonstrate “progress” toward these commitments but these statements preceded any statements having to do with the provision of education. Similarly, in the second paragraph of the Introduction, the government stated the “. . . report also demonstrates progress made on Government Commitments as stated in the Government Direction for 2009-2010, the Minister’s Mandate letter, throne speeches, and other commitments” (p. 5). Out of all the samples, this was the first major emphasis of the perceived need to align the Ministry of Education’s goals and progress with the general commitments and goals of government, however, many of the themes that emerged in previous samples continued to be emphasized. For instance, there were numerous references to the need to enhance accountability to improve student achievement, and continue collaborative practices with education partners. The Ministry also reiterated the gradations of legislated responsibilities between the “. . . institutions, agencies, boards and organizations that represent the sectors within the Ministry’s authority” (p. 7). This was similar to the 2006-2007 sample under the New Democratic Party.

Some of the accountability references that related to teaching and learning included a continued emphasis on the importance of developing outcomes-based

curriculum to support higher achievement. A commitment to the Continuous Improvement Framework (CIF) was also reiterated, but a new initiative entitled Inspiring Success: Building Towards Student Achievement was introduced. Similar to the processes used to implement CIF, the Ministry claimed Inspiring Success “. . . continues to be implemented, monitored and assessed across the province” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 11). There was also a pronounced emphasis on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) when compared with previous samples. The Ministry claimed,

PISA is a collaborative effort among member countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and is designed to provide policy-oriented international indicators of the skills and knowledge of 15-year-old students . . . [that] . . . measures skills that are generally recognized as key outcomes of the educational processes and are believed to be pre-requisites to efficient learning in adulthood and for full participation in society. (p. 12).

This was the first explicit reference to a competition-based policy convergence between nations. However, there were no details regarding which student skills were preferred, or the extent to which the perceived need for competition related to the economy. What was clear, was that PISA measures showed “. . . that Saskatchewan 15-year olds performed statistically significantly below the Canadian average in all performance areas measured, and are trending downward in mathematics and reading” (p. 13). The importance of addressing this relative failure was referenced more than once, and it was inferred that the need for monitoring “. . . the progress of Saskatchewan students to ensure that they meet

national and international performance standards” is a necessary precondition for success (p. 7).

Out of all the themes in the Ministry’s samples, references to accountability were predominant, but the number of references became more frequent throughout the decade. As reflected in the 2009-2010 sample, by the end of the decade the need for formalized accountability processes external to the local level or teaching profession was taken for granted as was the need for accountability pressures to improve system responsiveness and track student achievement.

### **Other Observations Relevant to the Broader Historiography**

Notable observations included the Ministry’s continued emphasis on collaboration with sector partners. The Ministry claimed collaboration was important to support curricular development (outcomes-based learning), the completion of the Provincial Panel on Student Achievement report, and other initiatives including CIF, Inspiring Success, and efforts to support PISA. Collaboration efforts to support these initiatives may have inferred the partner organizations condoned these policy directions in the absence of being able to analyze the collaborative exchanges that have taken place. However, even though there was an obvious rise in accountability or student achievement initiatives throughout the decade, there is no way of knowing within the scope of this study, the extent to which each initiative reflected market reform features without further analysis. For example, what recommendations were made in the Provincial Panel on Student Achievement report? What recommendations were made or not included in the report?

It should also be noted that the Ministry made some acknowledgement of the ties between socioeconomic issues and student achievement. For instance, when describing “. . . a few major highlights in 2009-10”, the Ministry claimed to have made “[t]he largest annual increase in the number of operational child care spaces since the Ministry assumed responsibility for child care in 2006” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 3). This achievement was emphasized in relation to how this social investment related to the economy. One rationale provided was that “[h]igh quality child care services contribute to Saskatchewan’s economy, both now and in the future, by providing supports to parents who want to participate in today’s labour force, or to seek post-secondary education” (p. 8). And with regard to longer term benefits, the Ministry claimed,

Children who have had the benefit of early childhood education programs experience benefits that persist later in life. These benefits include better school performance and lower juvenile crime rates . . . [and that it] has been demonstrated that investments in early childhood education pay off in better life and health outcomes later in life. Early childhood development (ECD) research estimates that every \$1 invested in ECD is worth \$3-\$18 later in life. (p. 9)

Overall, the Ministry claimed the initiative “. . . will support the development of socially responsible, engaged citizens, which will contribute to the sustainable economic growth of Saskatchewan” (p. 8).

Given the repeated emphases on the rates of return for these investments, one must wonder whether the value placed on other social initiatives would become

contingent on the prospect of future economic returns, and if so, whether the rationale provided would continue to focus on the notion of social justice.

Under Measurement Results, the Ministry stated “[m]any factors influence student performance, some of which are beyond the control of the Ministry or the boards of education, such as individual motivation and personal circumstances” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 12). However, in stating this, the Ministry fell short in recognizing the effect of systemic issues beyond the local level such as rises in relative inequality, or public policy imbalances between capital and labour. By framing variables “beyond the control of the Ministry” as being based on “individual motivation” or “personal circumstances”, one might conclude the Ministry has devolved excessive levels of responsibility for outcomes to individuals especially if it can be argued such claims have been made amid regressive socioeconomic trends.

As emphasized throughout this sample, the Ministry’s primary goal was to secure a “. . . prosperous Saskatchewan, leading the country in economic and population growth, while providing high quality of life for all”. It was not clear what constituted a high quality of life, but the need to “[s]ustain economic growth for the benefit of Saskatchewan People” was emphasized repeatedly, and it was the goal of government to have “all ministries and agencies” work together to achieve this (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 6). This sample focused on the need to stimulate the economy more than any other.

Another primary difference between this sample and those previous were the references to stakeholder consultations. There was a particular emphasis on the need to solicit stakeholder input from the business community, which was broadened to include

entrepreneurs and entrepreneurialism into the curriculum. More specifically, the Ministry emphasized the importance of “. . . working with local school boards, the business community, and community based organizations to enhance business literacy, entrepreneurial and career education in Saskatchewan schools” (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 11). The Ministry claimed these Junior Achievement (JA) initiatives were developed to “. . . help young Canadians discover leadership, entrepreneurial, and workforce readiness skills so they can achieve their highest potential as citizens of our global community” (p. 11), yet no details were provided describing what “their highest potential as citizens” meant within a globalized framework. This was a recurring theme throughout the samples. Explicit correlations were also made between PreK-12, and the labour market.

### **Summary of Data**

As described in the introduction of this chapter, the number of construct references increased substantially between the 2000-2001 and 2004-2005 samples, and continued to increase slightly in the 2006-2007 report. All three samples were developed under the stewardship of the New Democratic Party, and the frequency of references was maintained in the Saskatchewan Party government’s 2009-2010 report.

After carrying out a critical analysis of the context, one commonality that emerged between samples was the recurring emphasis and value placed on shared decision-making with stakeholders and improved accountability to track student achievement and monitor the effectiveness of the public education system. There were few references to choice, and those that did exist pertained largely to the need for the learning sector to be more competitive with other jurisdictions by enhancing program

flexibility and the transferability of credits from one jurisdiction to another to meet labour market demands. However, these statements were made in the *2003-2004 Annual Report* when the Ministry was still responsible for post-secondary education, making it difficult to distinguish whether the references pertained solely to post-secondary, or more generally to PreK-12 education as well.

In the first three samples, there were few references to decentralization, and those that did exist pertained primarily to the need for shared decision-making, achieving a relative balance between provincial and local autonomy, and support for School Community Councils.

The range of stakeholder consultations also broadened between samples. Initially, the stakeholder organizations identified as partners worthy of on-going consultation included LEADS, the SSBA, the STF, and the Saskatchewan Association of School Business Officials, but was eventually broadened to include the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations by 2006-2007. In 2009-2010, consultation considerations were broadened again to include the business community and entrepreneurs, which, as established in the historiography, are groups that have traditionally had different conceptions regarding the purpose of education, and what constitutes progressive education policy directions.

With regard to centralization, the references began in 2003-2004 and initially pertained to reducing the number of school divisions, which may have enhanced the size of centralized bureaucracies or narrowed the mechanisms available for gaining meaningful local input. By 2006-2007, centralization discourse changed and began to focus on the need for developing an outcomes-based curriculum to ensure what is learned



and assessed at the local level is appropriate. And while an emphasis on the importance of enhancing an outcomes-based curriculum continued in the 2009-2010 report, statements around the need for centralizing PreK-12 funding were new.

As mentioned previously, accountability references comprised the bulk of market reform concepts found throughout the samples but were limited in the 2000-2001 and 2003-2004 reports, relative to those drawn from the 2006-2007 and 2009-2010 reports. The focus in the earlier samples was primarily based on the need to enhance the transparency of performance results versus only publishing the next year's performance plan. Explicit references of the need for social justice and broader public accountability to achieve this end were also made in the earlier samples and decreased in the samples subsequent. Similarly, in cases where there was a focus on outcomes and standardized testing for the purposes of inter-jurisdictional comparisons, references were limited and accompanied by explanations of the limitations of standardized tests in the earlier samples, but such explanations decreased in the samples subsequent.

By 2006-2007, there was a marked increase in accountability discourse with an increased focus on the need to enhance financial and performance accountability. This shift included the introduction of two new initiatives to improve and track student achievement including the Continuous Improvement Framework (CIF) and Assessment for Learning (AFL). CIF was introduced as a strategic planning and accountability mechanism that would align provincial and local priorities to enhance aggregate outcomes across the province. AFL was framed as a way to increase large-scale assessments, develop more division and school specific data and to help inform decision-makers including teachers. It was clear that as the number of initiatives intended to

improve system responsiveness increased, references to the need to provide students with a holistic or student-centred education were either marginalized or decreased. However, it was also apparent that the perceived need to improve system responsiveness, particularly student achievement, was bolstered by statements regarding the relative failures of Saskatchewan students relative to their peers in other jurisdictions.

The 2009-2010 sample had a similar level of accountability references when compared with the sample drawn from the 2006-2007 Report. One of the primary differences was the emphasis on increasing accountability in education to ensure education priorities aligned with the general goals of government, and the introduction of more initiatives to achieve this end. For example, in addition to the Provincial Panel on Student Achievement introduced in 2006-2007, Inspiring Success was introduced with a great deal of emphasis placed on the need to support Saskatchewan students in ways that would enhance their competitive prospects in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). The emphasis on PISA was also the first indication that a competition-based policy convergence between nations had occurred. By 2009-2010, the need for formalized accountability processes to improve responsiveness was taken for granted and there was little, if any, discourse that described the limitations of these processes or the implications that could arise from moving in this policy direction.

Other observations relevant to the historiography that were similar between samples included the recurring emphasis on the need for educational partners to collaborate. However, beginning with the 2006-2007 report, the Ministry began describing the gradations of legislative and organizational responsibilities between the educational partners, a trend that continued in 2009-2010. This may have implied a view

that responsibilities for education were not equal among partners, and that the partners, and the public, should have been aware of it. Ongoing collaboration may also indicate that partners have condoned or supported a rise in accountability initiatives, or market reform policy directions more generally. Another similarity was that each sample made at least one reference to the need for Saskatchewan students to be well-equipped to flourish in a global framework, yet few details were provided as to what skills may be required and for what purpose.

In terms of differences, a few broad conclusions can be drawn. In the 2000-2001 report, there were references emphasizing the need for broad socioeconomic supports external to the education system to enable the system to flourish, whereas in 2009-2010, the barriers to educational success were described as individual circumstances or student attitude without any mention of external factors. The 2000-2001 sample also had more references to accommodating student diversity through frameworks like the Adaptive Dimension that arguably respected teacher professionalism when compared with subsequent samples. Beginning with the 2003-2004 report, there was a gradual increase in references to the economy, but the initiatives promoted as satisfying economic demand were often introduced as a way to improve the wellbeing of individuals that concluded by explaining how the initiative would meet the demands of the labour market.

By 2006-2007, there was a marked emphasis on the need to create more data and use data to improve student achievement and system performance. The importance of making social investments that would bring high rates of future economic returns also began to be emphasized through commitments to early learning and childcare investments. By 2009-2010, the discourse had evolved to include dollar amount rates of

return, and explicit connections between the early learning and childcare initiative and the labour market were made. Perhaps most important were the 2009-2010 references regarding the government's goal of leading the country in economic growth to improve wellbeing. Essentially, the government made a statement that supported the classical liberal trickle down approach to economic management, in addition to suggesting entrepreneurialism was the solution to stimulate and sustain economic growth and blended it into the curriculum accordingly.

In consideration of the rational processes used to determine extent, the critical analyses of market reform evidence and other issues related to the historiography, it was apparent that market reform themes were increasingly present throughout 2000-2010 based on the samples examined. However, had I relied solely on the rational process to determine extent, I may have otherwise concluded that year-to-year increases in market reform references slightly regressed after the Saskatchewan Party government came to power. Upon further critical analysis, however, this was clearly not the case.

Nevertheless, it was clear that references to market reform concepts increased substantially under the stewardship of the New Democratic Party, only to be maintained and enhanced further by the Saskatchewan Party administration given the increase in references to broader neo-liberal reform trends. In conclusion, it was clear that market reform references increased consistently from year-to-year in the samples examined.

### **League of Education Administrators, Directors and Superintendents (LEADS)**

#### **Context of the Organization**

The Saskatchewan League of Education Administrators, Directors and Superintendents (LEADS) is an organization comprised of individuals employed by a

board of education in a supervisory or administrative capacity that have out-of-scope designations. Examples include directors of education, assistant directors, superintendents, and those in related positions. LEADS formally became an organization with the passage of an act to incorporate legislation in 1984, and once legally recognized, quickly became one of the major stakeholder organizations in Saskatchewan's PreK-12 public education system (League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents of Saskatchewan, n.d.).

According to information presented on the LEADS website, the rationale for developing the organization was to enhance the leadership expertise available to Saskatchewan's education community, and to influence public education policy directions accordingly through apolitical consultation processes. More specifically, according to *The League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents Act, 1991*, other objectives of the league included promoting the cause of education in collaboration with, and in consideration of, the legislated responsibilities of the other educational partners, and to raise the professional status of LEADS members (League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents of Saskatchewan, n.d.).

### **The Documentation Request and What Was Received**

A documentation request was sent to LEADS in November 2010 requesting that the organization identify and provide what the organization considered to be its key public education policy direction documents in 2001, 2004, 2007, and 2010. LEADS provided one page pertaining to strategic plans and priorities entitled LEADS 2010-2011 Action Plan. As stated in Chapter Four, the average number of references related to the analytic constructs were calculated per page to determine the approximate extent of

market reform evidence for all organizations, and not only for those organizations that were either able or chose to fulfill all aspects of the documentation request.

The sample provided had a total of 2 references with an average of 2 per page, keeping in mind it was the only page provided. This number was slightly lower than the 2.2 average in the Ministry's 2006-2007 Annual Report, and was the same average found in the Ministry's 2009-2010 report. Therefore, among the organizations examined, the LEADS sample contained the second highest frequency of evidence for market reforms.

### **Evidence for Market Reforms**

There were no references to choice or centralization in this sample. The first relevant reference related to decentralization through an emphasis on providing supports to School Community Councils through the sharing of best practices. This suggested the organization valued shared decision-making and input around implementation at the local level.

The other references pertained to accountability. The organization's stated priority was to lead and share best practices in areas including "data driven decision-making" and "accountability reporting" practices (n.p.). These references made clear that the organization supported formalized processes to enhance accountability, transparency, and track system progress.

### **Other Observations Relevant to the Broader Historiography**

Similar to the Ministry, LEADS emphasized the need to "[c]ontinue dialogue with our education partners to strengthen LEADS ability to influence educational policy" (n.p.). Most other priorities pertained to providing leadership expertise in the education sector.

## **Summary of Data**

In consideration of the rational processes used to determine extent, the critical analyses of market reform evidence and other issues related to the historiography, it was apparent that market reform themes were present in the sample examined. It is important to reiterate, however, that the organization only sent one page, which clearly limited analysis. For example, had the sample been 10 pages long, the rational analysis used to determine extent may have yielded far different results. Nevertheless, market reform concepts were present.

It was clear LEADS valued shared decision-making with stakeholders, collaboration with educational partners to achieve objectives, and formalized accountability processes to improve system responsiveness. Therefore, the predominant themes that emerged were related to decentralization and accountability.

### **Saskatchewan School Boards Association (SSBA)**

#### **Context of the Organization**

According to the organization's website, the SSBA is a non-profit organization that was incorporated by a special Act of the Saskatchewan legislature in 1952. Membership is voluntary, and the mission of elected members is to “. . . serve and provide leadership as the voice for elected Boards of Education, who are the accountable stewards of publicly funded education in Saskatchewan”. The association represents the public, separate, and francophone school divisions as well as the rural, urban, and northern diversity of the province. Essentially, boards are elected to govern PreK-12 education at the local level, and ensure the wishes of the community are reflected in the

educational considerations made at the division level (Saskatchewan School Boards Association, 2009, n.p.).

With respect to the association's current advocacy priorities, the SSBA seeks to be effectively represented in establishing the province's new funding model for public education, to ensure school board autonomy is defined and enhanced, and "to ensure boards of education and the Association are recognized as leaders for strengthening student achievement and responding to student needs" (Saskatchewan School Boards Association, 2009, n.p.).

### **The Documentation Request and What Was Received**

A documentation request was sent to the SSBA in November 2010 requesting that the organization identify and provide what the Association considers to be its key public education policy direction documents in 2001, 2004, 2007, and 2010. By mid-January 2011, the organization had not responded. In order to provide the organization with another opportunity, another request was made via email through the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Saskatchewan on January 19, 2011. One stipulation in the second request was that I would have to receive an email response from the organization by January 21, 2011, otherwise the research would continue based on a random sampling of publicly accessible documents from the organization's website.

After January 21 came and went and no documents were forthcoming, I searched the SSBA's website and found two relevant sampling options. The first was a series of annual reports that would fit the chronological criteria required to determine extent. The second was a body of position statements on various educational issues. After reading portions of both samples, it became clear that the annual reports did not contain much



information on educational issues, especially those relevant to my research questions. For example, the annual reports primarily described the governance structure of the SSBA, the parameters of communications, and the more technical aspects of administrative financial reporting on a day-to-day basis. Consequently, it seemed more appropriate to sample the organization's position statements since these statements "... address key issues for Pre-K-12 education and describe the shared beliefs that direct united action by boards of education/Conseil scolaire Fransaskois and their Association" (Saskatchewan School Boards Association, 2011, p. 1). These statements were also chosen because the issues addressed were similar to those covered in the documentation sent by the other organizations.

The sample provided had a total of 16 references to the concepts established in the constructs with an average of 1.6 per page. This number was lower than the averages for two of the Ministry samples and the sample provided by LEADS, and was only slightly higher in frequency than the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation.

### **Evidence for Market Reforms**

In a subsection entitled Teaching and Learning with Technology, the SSBA emphasized the importance of improving access to education through e-learning to ensure "... all students will have the opportunity to master the skills essential for success in a highly competitive and rapidly changing world" (Saskatchewan School Boards Association, 2011, p. 10). The organization also claimed e-learning "... provides a cost-effective and competitive alternative for delivering educational programs across Saskatchewan" (p. 10). From the delimited economic context of this study, the word *opportunity* can be viewed as a euphemism for increasing educational options, or

additional choice that enhances the ability of Saskatchewan students to compete in a global, and presumably, economic framework.

References to decentralization were far more explicit and pronounced. Under Local Governance of Education, the SSBA outlined the organization's priorities including their beliefs that "[l]ocally elected boards of education/Conseil scolaire Fransaskois (CSF) act to reflect the interests and educational needs of the communities they serve", ". . . support parental, family and community engagement in the education of each child for success in school", and "engage and support School Community Councils/Conseils d'écoles as partners in improving learning" (Saskatchewan School Boards Association, 2011, p. 4). The SSBA claimed further that "Boards of Education/CSF, school community councils, Conseils d'écoles, parents, and educators must be engaged and have a voice in defining student achievement" (p. 6). The importance of shared decision-making in the development of policies and programs at the local level was clearly valued.

In statements referring to the fundamental principles the SSBA believed should guide educational finance decisions, the organization claimed "[t]he amount of funding provided to boards of education/CSF by the provincial government must be sufficient to respond to the actual costs of provincial goals and priorities . . . to accommodate local programming, innovation and initiatives" as defined by the boards based on their authority derived from *The Education Act, 1995* (Saskatchewan School Boards Association, 2011, p. 12). These statements were likely developed prior to the changes the Ministry made to educational funding after March 2009, otherwise the claim "Boards of education/CSF are equal partners, along with the provincial government, in

meaningful decision-making regarding funding formulas” might have read, “*should be equal partners*” (Government of Saskatchewan, n.d.). Nevertheless, even though funding changes reduced the autonomy boards once had, it was clear that the SSBA believed that increasing autonomy at the local level was an important priority. There were no references to centralization.

References to accountability specific to student achievement were numerous. The SSBA defined student achievement “. . . as the attainment of the educational outcomes of Saskatchewan’s curriculum, and that boards “. . . are responsible for developing an accountability framework to establish standards, monitor and report on student achievement” (Saskatchewan School Boards Association, 2011, p. 6). The emphasis on the need to track student achievement through formalized validation processes to improve the responsiveness of providers (teachers) was clear. It was not clear, however, how the organization would continue to define student achievement if students fell short of achieving prescribed outcomes.

In the introduction of the initiatives aimed at tracking student data, the SSBA often began the rationale for requiring data with the claim that data was required to target resources to improve student achievement. However, following the introductory explanation was the claim that data was needed to track Saskatchewan student achievement to compare it with “. . . provincial, national and international norms” (Saskatchewan School Boards Association, 2011, p. 8). Taken together, both emphases implied a belief that public reporting equated to transparency, and that the resulting pressure might enhance provider responsiveness. One must also presume such

comparisons were made not solely as a matter of pride, but for the purposes of economic competition as well.

### **Other Observations Relevant to the Broader Historiography**

The SSBA emphasized the need for collaboration between educational partners by claiming they would work “. . . to promote partnerships to enhance student achievement” (p. 6). According to the organization, part of this work included developing a consensus between the partners on the goals of Saskatchewan education. No details were provided regarding how interpretations or methods to achieve those goals would change in response to policy trends or a change in political administrations.

The organization also made several statements in support of teacher professionalism even though the organization’s simultaneous support for an outcomes-based curriculum had the potential to undermine it. For example, one of the reasons the organization supported collecting student data was to help inform instructional decisions, professional staff development, and the adaptations required to assess the achievement of a diverse population of students, including students with special needs. There was no indication the organization was aware that outcomes-based approaches may not be congruent with the professional interests of teachers.

Finally, similar to the Ministry’s samples from 2006-2007 onward, the SSBA emphasized the importance of ensuring investments in public education correlated with future rates of economic return in order to “. . . demonstrate good value for money spent” (Saskatchewan School Boards Association, 2011, p. 11).

### **Summary of Data**

In consideration of the rational processes used to determine extent, the critical analyses of market reform evidence, and other issues related to the historiography, it was apparent that market reform themes were present in the sample examined. The predominant themes that emerged were related to decentralization and accountability. There were a few minor references to choice involving the promotion of e-learning to enhance access to public education, but when compared with consumers having a choice between educational institutions the promotion of this instrument was fairly minor. Nevertheless, the presence of the concept may inform the development of other choice-based instruments in the future, and an increasing availability of e-learning may also undermine the perceived need for professional teachers. Therefore, cost-effectiveness may come at the expense of education quality if it can reasonably be argued teacher professionalism correlates with quality instruction.

It was clear the SSBA valued input from the local level and believed the success of students was contingent upon community supports facilitated through instruments such as School Community Councils. It is important to note, however, that the organization relegated external supports to the local level, and did not describe the effect broader socioeconomic trends may have on supports for school systems. The organization also believed that program initiatives, and the funds used to pay for them, should be determined at the local level.

The SSBA also focused accountability pressures primarily on service providers and local communities, as opposed to holding the government to equal account for providing the education system with adequate resources. This may be because funding responsibilities were once shared, imposing accountability top-down is easier than

bottom-up, or because the organization derives its legislative mandate from the government. Regardless, if it can be reasonably argued that reform initiatives are on the rise and translate into increased expectations and accountability pressures on teachers, it would be reasonable to suspect the blame for perceived outcome failures would reside primarily with teachers.

### **Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation (STF)**

#### **Context of the Organization**

According to the organization's website, the STF is the professional organization representing teachers in publicly funded schools in Saskatchewan. Despite having represented Saskatchewan teachers for over 75 years, the organization's legislated responsibilities were most recently consolidated and articulated with the passage of *The Teachers' Federation Act, 2006*. Essentially, the organization acts to advance the collective and individual interests of Saskatchewan teachers that enable teachers to provide the best possible professional service. Fulfilling this mandate entails offering programs and services that enhance the professional growth, economic welfare, and workplace environments for teachers and taking an active role in public education policymaking processes to ensure directions are congruent with the interests of teachers and the public. However, the organization noted that membership in the Federation comes with responsibilities commensurate with the professional status conferred by the Act (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, n.p.).

As stated on the STF's website, the overlying principle "guiding the Federation's work is the fundamental belief that teachers want to provide the best possible educational opportunities for Saskatchewan students [and] . . . in working accomplish its purposes,

the STF continuously seeks a balance between teacher autonomy and accountability” (Saskatchewan Teachers Federation, 2011, n.p.). However, the Federation extended accountability to include the responsibilities public and private sector institutions and individual citizens have in providing the resources that enable the public education system to flourish in terms of supporting student learning and teachers’ work.

### **The Documentation Request and What Was Received**

A documentation request was sent to the STF in November 2010 asking the organization to identify and provide what the Federation considered to be its key public education policy direction documents in 2001, 2004, 2007, and 2010. In response, the Records and Archives department of the Federation provided the Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation’s Policies with Commentaries (2008) on November 22, 2010. In the letter accompanying the document, the Federation claimed the document provided the organization’s key education policy directions that have been in place since 2001. This document was 10 pages in length, and according to the organization’s website, “[t]he principles, beliefs and goals of Saskatchewan teachers are expressed in Federation policies adopted by the STF Council, on behalf of all Saskatchewan teachers” (Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation, personal communication, January 3, 2011). It is also important to note that many of the policies included commentary, and much of the quoted text that follows has been derived from those passages.

The sample provided had a total of 12 references to market reform concepts established in the constructs with an average of 1.2 per page. This average was the lowest out of all the samples.

### **Evidence for Market Reforms**

There were no references to choice but two primary themes emerged related to decentralization. The first theme pertained to the need for autonomy at the local level to ensure the goals and curriculum of publicly funded education “. . . balance provincial as well as local interests and needs” (Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation, 2010, p. 4). One rationale provided was that Saskatchewan has a sparse, and geographically, socially, and economically diverse population, and as a consequence, should have “. . . local options that reflect the somewhat unique characteristics, needs, and interests of each community” (p. 5). The second theme pertained to the need for shared decision-making in policy and in program development at the local level. For example, the Federation claimed “[t]eachers must have a central role in the processes used to define and revise the goals and direction of publicly funded education” at “every available opportunity” “given their expertise” through representation on relevant committees (p. 5).

It was clear the Federation valued community and local stakeholder input to enhance “constructive engagement”, and shared ownership for education goals between stakeholders and teachers to improve education. However, there were two primary differences in how this was framed when compared with the framing of local input in other organizational samples. One difference was that members of communities were encouraged to “. . . become involved in order to understand the diverse challenges and needs associated with providing public education”, which could be viewed as a way to gain empathy from society with respect to the perceived complexities of providing quality education or additional resources to assist provision (Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation, 2010, p. 5). The other difference was that the organization called for “release time, funding and other supports” to facilitate teacher participation in policy and program



initiatives, which for any cash-strapped government may act as a disincentive for soliciting teacher involvement (p. 5). There were no references to centralization.

Accountability references were minimal, and the context surrounding the use of accountability was quite different when compared with other samples. For example, the Federation stated that “[i]n the area of educational accountability, including student assessment and achievement initiatives, the STF’s contributions are informed mainly by its professional codes and extensive policy base” (Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation, 2010, p. 1). In supporting this statement later in the document, the Federation claimed “[t]he main purpose of student achievement goals and standards must be to improve teaching and learning” (p. 9). There was no reference or value placed on inter-jurisdictional comparisons for the purposes of competition, and the purpose of accountability indicators were viewed primarily as a tool for focusing the work of teachers and their students’ learning activities.

The Federation claimed that while “[t]eachers are not opposed in principle to standards in education, including student achievement standards, [standards] . . . should be attainable, equitable and, from a pedagogical perspective, methodologically sound” (Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation, 2010, p. 9). But subsequent to this statement, the organization went on to explain that “. . . the further away from the classroom that such goals or standards are developed, the less practical value they have for the improvement of teaching and learning” (p. 10). Essentially, the Federation believed the “. . . utilization of standardized testing should be voluntary” (p. 9).

When referring to situations where accountability assessment and evaluation instruments have been used beyond classrooms for the purposes of comparisons, the

organization claimed those using these applications often design the instruments “with fairly specialized objectives in mind” that “may be of questionable educational value”.

For instance, the Federation stated

[S]ome types of assessments or evaluations may be implemented more for political purposes than for sound pedagogical reasons. For example, some jurisdictions in Canada and the United States have begun to use student assessment and evaluation results to rank or rate teachers, schools, or even entire school divisions and education systems. Saskatchewan teachers are on record as opposing the application of student assessment and evaluation results as an indicator of the merits of individual teachers, or the equality of education in the school, the school division, the province, or the nation. (Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation, 2010, p. 10)

These positions stood in complete contrast with the rationale used to support the perceived need for market reforms. Essentially, the Federation’s notion of accountability was based on a notion of public trust in the professionalism of teachers. This trust was based on the assumption that teachers have “an ethic of care toward students”, and that “teachers will strive to act in the best interests of all students at all times” while carrying out their professional responsibilities (p. 8). This view conflicted with the market reform notion that teachers would exercise self-interest in the absence of market discipline, and thereby fail to adequately or efficiently achieve organizational objectives. As explained in the historiography, positions on either side of the spectrum are ideological, and thereby political.

Nevertheless, despite having somewhat different contexts, the references to accountability made by the Federation must still be considered as evidence given the criteria described in the construct themes, including a belief in the need for formal processes to track student progress to improve responsiveness, albeit at the school level.

### **Other Observations Relevant to the Broader Historiography**

In addition to a recurring emphasis on the need for collaboration between education stakeholders, the Federation valued “individual and collective empowerment” and believed that achieving “equity and social justice” was requisite to upholding the Keynesian-era principles of universal access to quality education, inclusion, public funding, and democratic governance. Under a section titled Responsibilities and Supports, the Federation also claimed that “[a]lthough publicly funded education has a central role in meeting the educational needs of students’, the general well-being of children is a collective responsibility that is shared among the home, school, and community” (Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation, 2010, p. 5). However, similar to the SSBA, there were no references to the need for holding government accountable for adopting responsible socioeconomic policies, which again, may be because the organization derived its legislative mandate from the government. Regardless, the Federation contended it was only within the context of a well-supported education system that the professional growth of teachers would flourish, and students would receive a quality, student-centred education.

One primary difference between statements made in this sample and others was the political framing of various issues. This may be because the Federation sent policies with commentary whereas the other organizations sent policy statements largely void of

context. Nevertheless, the statements made were telling. For example, the Federation stated that the goals of publicly funded education were developed collaboratively, and “. . . reflect a social and political consensus about the key learning needs of children and youth, [and] the purposes and expectations underlying the education system” (Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation, 2010, p. 4). A similar statement was made pertaining to the collaborative development of curriculum that “. . . represents a social and political consensus about what students will be expected to learn” (p. 7). Both statements implied a willingness to retain consensus, and presume a status quo of relations between stakeholders including the public. Yet on the other hand, the Federation made clear their awareness that some stakeholders had an ideologically different conception regarding either the purpose of education, or the processes used to provide it, when the organization stated that “[t]eachers have also taken various kinds of action in response to unfounded or politically motivated attacks on the education system” (p. 6). Whether the attacks were unfounded is likely a point of conjecture when considering reform views and the philosophies that ground them.

Lastly, when expanding on the consensus-based goals of education, the Federation contended the goals were broad and covered nine topic areas including: “basic skills, life-long learning, understanding and relating to others, career and consumer decisions, membership in society, self-concept development, positive lifestyle, spiritual development, and growing with change” (p. 4). While a few of the goals were career related, the majority focused on the holistic development of individuals or pertained to civic responsibilities. The Federation also emphasized the importance of students having “. . . a strong foundation of knowledge, skills, and experiences to prepare them for

adulthood in a rapidly changing world” (p. 4), but did not explain the manner in which the world was changing, or provide any details regarding what was required for students to flourish, and for what purpose, in a global framework.

### **Summary of Data**

In consideration of the rational processes used to determine extent, the critical analyses of market reform evidence, and other issues related to the historiography, it was apparent that market reform themes were present in the sample examined. However, when compared with the context surrounding the other samples provided, the lower frequency of references in the Federation’s sample was understandable.

The Federation made no references to choice, or centralization, but made several references to decentralization. It was clear the Federation valued local input and professional autonomy for teachers based on a notion of professional trust. References to accountability were few and centred mostly on the belief that formal accountability processes should only be used to track student progress in an effort to improve instructional practices, which by extension, enhanced teacher professionalism. It was important to note the Federation was opposed to the imposition of top-down accountability processes that result in comparisons, especially those made furthest from the classroom.

Similar to the other organizations examined, the Federation routinely emphasized the value of collaboration between educational stakeholders yet was unique in emphasizing the value of collective empowerment, a concept arguably incongruent with neo-liberal or market theories. Notions of collectivism were remnant of the Keynesian era, as were the principles of universal access and inclusion, both of which the Federation

supported. Ultimately, the Federation contended the effectiveness of the public education system was contingent upon society's willingness to uphold Keynesian-era principles and support the public education system accordingly.

While the presence of market reform concepts in this sample was important, the presence of market reform concepts in the other samples may be more important for the Federation to consider given the foundational context differences between organizations. As I explained in the final conclusions of Chapter Six, market reform policy directions are arguably incongruent with the stated principles, values, and the Federation's stated goals for public education. It is also important to remind readers that the statements made in this sample date back to 2001, and by the Federation's own admission, have remained largely unchanged since that time. This may mean the statements have either purposely remained stagnant to reflect traditional (Keynesian-era) beliefs, or that policies in these areas have not been revised to reflect broader policy trends or changes in political administration. However, given the organization's emphasis on the need for collaborative policymaking and the presence of market reform evidence in the sample provided, one must also suspect that the Federation may have inadvertently or openly supported market reform policy directions, or has simply been unable to mitigate this broader policy trend finally affecting Saskatchewan. This issue may be particularly important if one considers the Federation's claim that to fulfil the organization's mandate, the Federation must take ". . . an active role in public education policymaking processes to ensure directions are congruent with the interests of teachers and the public" (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, n.p. ).

Last, and similar to LEADS, the Federation is an organization representing the interests of members first and foremost. And while the organization acts to advance the interests of teachers to enable them to provide the best possible service, the organization is also responsible for advancing the economic welfare of teachers. This may result in economic and policy trade-offs depending on the priorities of teachers at any given time.

In this chapter, readers were presented with the context of each organization, the data, and analyses used to draw conclusions regarding the extent and context of market reform influence per organization. Chapter Six begins with a cross-comparative analysis of these conclusions before presenting readers with the implications that can arise should the construct themes be developed and adopted as policy instruments to reform the traditional public education system. Final conclusions follow, and recommendations for further analysis are made before closing this analysis with some general commentary in relation to the historiography for future researchers to consider.

## CHAPTER SIX

### **Cross-comparative Analysis, Conclusions and Recommendations**

This study was a historiographic content analysis of public education policy trends in Saskatchewan (Berger, 1983). The study used, as its analytic context, policy trends that have occurred in other Western market democracies, particularly those that are English-speaking and subscribe to the general tenets associated with Anglo-Saxon capitalism (Altman, 2009). As these nations began to restructure Keynesian (post-war) era education systems from the 1970s onward, each nation began to incrementally develop and adopt variations of market reforms based on four central foci: choice, decentralization, centralization, and accountability (Ball, 1998; Kachur & Harrison, 1999; Klees, 2008; Tomlinson, 2005; Whitty et al., 1998). Arguably, these changes developed in response to ideological, political, and economic global phenomena that led to a policymaking convergence between nations (Kachur, 1999a; Klees, 2008; Tomlinson, 2005). The purpose of this study was to determine whether or not, or to what extent, the public education policy trends occurring in comparable education and state systems elsewhere have likewise affected public education policy directions in Saskatchewan. Theoretically, since these trends constitute a deductive rule, evidence for market reform influence in Saskatchewan should exist—and a selected sample of documents published by stakeholder groups served as the arena of investigation. The underlying goal of this historiographic content analysis was to establish the existence or extent of market reforms in Saskatchewan educational policy in an effort to increase awareness and discourse among public education stakeholders with regard to the implications of market reforms.



In Chapter Five, I presented readers with the role of each stakeholder organization, the approximate extent of market reform influence in the documentation provided by each, and other contextual information deemed relevant to the historiography. In this chapter, I present readers with a synopsis of the findings that resulted from a cross-comparative analysis of the construct themes presented in Chapter Five to strengthen the final inferences drawn regarding the extent of market reform influence in Saskatchewan public education. Once the themes that emerged between organizations are established, I present the formal Implications constructs for each theme that inform the final conclusions drawn in the Potential Implications for Saskatchewan section of this analysis. These conclusions are based on the information included in the synopses, implication constructs, broader historiography, contexts of the organizations examined, and abductive inferences drawn by the analyst. This study concludes with recommendations for further research. Taken together, the conclusions and research recommendations address the research questions of this study, and fulfill the purpose of this historiographic content analysis, which is to enhance awareness by developing new holistic discourse that initiates further questioning (Berger, 1983; Collingwood, 1939, as cited in Morton, 1983; Elo & Kyngas, 2007; Gall et al., 2007; Krippendorff, 2004).

### **Processes Used for Comparative Analysis**

Prior to the rational and critical processes used to develop data observations and conclusions in Chapter Five, I questioned the extent to which evidence for market reforms existed in Saskatchewan public education policy documentation. But after carrying out both levels of analysis, it was clear evidence does exist since every sample contained at least some degree of construct evidence, and in the case of the Ministry,

increased throughout the decade examined. Thus, in order to draw inferences regarding the predominance of particular reform themes and thereby the extent of market reform influence, a process for determining which construct themes overlapped between samples was required.

The first part of this process entailed copying and pasting the Summary of Data sections from Chapter Five into a new digital text document. I then developed another digital document with headings for each construct theme. Next, I analyzed the summaries of each theme, per organization, and developed a general synopsis of the evidence for each, and wrote this information under the appropriate heading in the new document. Once these synopses were established, I reread the constructs, searching for information that pertained to the data found, and if relevant, wrote the information as bullet points under each appropriate synopsis. These synopses and construct supports were used as a writing scaffold for the Comparative Analysis that follows.

### **Comparative Analysis**

#### **Choice**

There were few references to choice across samples. The references that did exist were made by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education and Saskatchewan School Boards Association (SSBA), and pertained primarily to improving program flexibility to enhance access to public education. For the Ministry specifically, this entailed ensuring flexibility kept pace with other jurisdictions to retain demand for educational programs in Saskatchewan, whereas the SSBA touted the cost-effective aspects of distance education as opposed to its pedagogical merits. Even though both approaches were framed around the notions of competition and cost-effectiveness, they were also framed as a way to

enhance individual liberties that might appeal to the Canadian public's historic libertarian sensibilities (Apple, 2001; Ball, 1998; Harrison, 1983; Kachur, 1999b). It should also be noted that improving access to education through a broadening of educational options (choice) may also be viewed as a way to uphold the Keynesian-era principle of universal access. Nevertheless, the idea that participants in an organizational system should be provided with options that enable competition to improve productivity was present in these samples, and to remind readers, is an idea grounded in the ideological assumption of self-interest, foundational to the theoretical efficacy of markets.

The Ministry and SSBA also made reference to the belief that public reporting of student achievement scores inherently improve achievement without explaining why this is true. In lieu of an explanation, one must infer that reporting would either result in an increase in available data that assists providers in planning instructional or resource allocation processes, or may result in additional pressure on providers to achieve centrally prescribed and desired outcomes. However, there were no explicit references to the need to impose formal market discipline on organizational participants.

Nevertheless, given the ideological preference of market advocates and the prevalence of market reform trends, the existence of choice concepts in Saskatchewan public education documentation can be viewed as a gateway paradigm that may enable the development and adoption of the other instruments required for the full development of a quasi-market provision model (Carl, 1994; Tomlinson, 2005).

The League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents (LEADS) and the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation (STF) did not promote choice, but from the perspective of market advocates, this may come as no surprise. Both

organizations are a type of collective or union that works to advance the collective interests of members. As described in the construct, market advocates believe these types of organizations can only exist and prosper by retaining and by increasing membership that in many cases is mandatory. Thus, market advocates contend that if more choice in representation was available to prospective members it would collapse membership monopolies and the power unions have to block the transformational choice-based reforms that run contrary to union self-interests (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Dickerson & Flanagan, 1999; Friedman, 1997; Hepburn, 1999; Moe, 2003).

### **Decentralization**

Each organization valued the efficacy of shared decision-making among stakeholders at the local level but the extent to which shared decision-making actually takes place is questionable. While some may interpret this type of observation as making a judgment with respect to policy implementation effectiveness, that is not my intent. The purpose is to better understand the evolution of decentralization influence as delimited in this study. For example, beginning with the 2006-2007 report, the Ministry began describing the gradations of legislative responsibility between educational partners, which suggests that responsibilities or decision-making clout are not equal among partners. In the more recent samples, the Ministry also stated they had broadened stakeholder consultations to include input from the business community and entrepreneurs who historically have had a far different conception as to what the purpose of education is, and how it should be provided when compared with Keynesian-era bureaucrats (Ball, 1998; Kachur & Harrison, 1998; Robertson, 2000; Tomlinson, 2005). The Ministry and SSBA also claimed to value feedback from the broader community and

promoted the use of School Community Councils as an instrument for gaining it, but the extent to which councils have wielded meaningful influence over policy directions was unclear. Regardless, the Ministry claimed to value feedback, which reflected the primary principle central to decentralization as defined within the context of this study (Whitaker, 2003; Whitty et al., 1998).

Beyond the perceived need for feedback, the Ministry, SSBA, and STF also claimed student success was contingent upon community supports but did not define support to include how the traditional primary supports of public education systems (including formal funding or the overall socioeconomic welfare of society) may be affected by the broader public policies governments adopt. None of the organizations made explicit statements that referred to a need for holding governments accountable.

The three organizations also made references to the need for achieving a balance between provincial and local autonomy even though notions that defined this balance differed. For example, the STF believed teachers should wield professional autonomy over planning and assessment decisions at the local level whereas the SSBA emphasized that program initiatives, and decisions regarding the funds used to pay for them, should be determined at the local level. Alternatively, the Ministry promoted the need for autonomy at the local level through statements supporting the adoption and implementation of decentralized initiatives such as School<sup>PLUS</sup>. However, given the initiative was centrally prescribed, it may be worth questioning whether stakeholders exercised autonomy in choosing to adopt the initiative, whether it was meaningfully supported, and with whom accountability for the outcomes resided.

In Chapter Five, it was explained that the Ministry has increasingly centralized control over policy, standards, curriculum, and finances, but in other cases where these types of changes have taken place, it was often in exchange for increased autonomy over managerial rights, budgeting, or instructional autonomy at the local level (Chomos & Walker, 2006; English, 2006; Freeman, 1999; Kachur, 1999b; Sahlberg, 2008; Turner, 2006; Whitaker, 2003; Whitty et al., 1998). It was not clear, however, whether these types of exchanges have taken place in Saskatchewan. Nonetheless, if pressure on providers to achieve centrally prescribed outcomes increases, commensurate with a rise in decentralized initiatives to achieve those objectives, one might expect providers will eventually request more autonomy to respond to these pressures—especially if accompanied by the development of formal disciplinary instruments.

### **Centralization**

The Ministry was the only organization that made reference to the centralization themes established in the construct. The first references in 2003-2004 pertained primarily to the need for reducing the number of school divisions in Saskatchewan. These reductions may have increased the size and political clout of central government while decreasing the mechanisms available for gaining policy input at the local level (English, 2006; Klees, 2008). In 2006-2007, the predominant centralization theme focused on the need for developing an outcomes-based curriculum, a strategy that enables governments to track and to correlate student achievement with the type of employment and productivity needs that enhance a state's ability to compete in the global economy (Ball, 1998; Carl, 1994). In 2009-2010, the government announced the need for centralizing control over PreK-12 education funding and while references to centralized funding were

unique to this particular sample, the change itself was not when considering the funding changes that have occurred across Canada (Lawton, 1996). All of the centralization themes established in the construct were evident in Ministry samples after 2003-2004, despite there being few references to centralization overall.

The other organizations made no references to centralization, which is understandable given they are legislatively subordinate to government. In other words, it is unlikely organizations falling under the legislative scope of the Ministry would advocate for an increase of central authority in exchange for a potential decrease in autonomy.

### **Accountability**

As explained previously, the frequency of accountability references during the decade examined could only be determined for the Ministry since it was the only organization that fulfilled the chronological aspects of the documentation request. Nevertheless, there was a dramatic increase in accountability references between 2000 and 2006, and frequency plateaued thereafter.

Prior to 2004, the references pertained primarily to the need for enhancing the transparency of performance results, broader forms of social justice and public accountability, and standardized testing, along with explanations describing the limitations of those tests. After 2004, explanations regarding the need for publishing results, using standardized tests, the limitations of tests, or redistributive forms of social justice either decreased or were eliminated altogether. In exchange for these priorities was a steady increase in accountability initiatives intended to enhance student achievement. Thus, the 2003-2004 Annual Report marked a watershed change in the

Government of Saskatchewan's discourse regarding accountability. Not only were the initiatives intended to improve the competitive prospects of Saskatchewan students relative to their inter-jurisdictional peers, but they were also intended to inform the planning processes used to help align educational supply with labour market demand in order to enhance aggregate economic outcomes across the province (Ball, 1998; Lubienski, 2006; Moe, 2003; Robertson, 2000; Whitty et al., 1998). Given the perceived need for students to compete for achievement and states for economic growth, one must question whether increases in large-scale assessments, or the school-level data that results, will eventually lead to school, teacher, and student level comparisons guided by reward and sanctions within a quasi-market system.

Similar to the Ministry, the LEADS and SSBA strongly encouraged accountability reporting, the need for more data, and data-driven decision making to ensure public schools are formally accountable to stakeholders for student and system performance (English, 2006). Although there were no references to the need for formal reward and sanction processes to encourage responsiveness, the enhancing of public reporting can be considered a type of informal pressure used to encourage participants to be more responsive and innovative in achieving organizational aims (Robertson, 2000; Whitty et al., 1998).

Another similarity between the Ministry and SSBA was the emphasis on the need for developing an outcomes-based curriculum. One difference, however, was that the SSBA also emphasized the need for enhancing teacher professionalism and the use of data to inform instructional practice. It was unclear whether the SSBA was aware that outcomes-based approaches or accountability processes used for the purpose of



comparison are arguably incongruent with teacher professionalism, and are often adopted as an initial step in the development of quasi-market systems.

Similar to the SSBA, the STF promoted the Keynesian-era notion of teacher professionalism by only supporting accountability processes that inform instructional practice, and boost teacher professionalism.

### **Processes Used to Determine the Potential Implications for Saskatchewan**

With the analytic construct themes that emerged established, it is important to contrast those themes with the formal implications of each construct in order to draw inferences regarding the potential implications of market reform influence in Saskatchewan. The structure of this next set of constructs is similar to those used to examine organizational data (formal samples) in that it is grounded in peer review literature, can be used and improved by other researchers interested in replicating this study, and enables readers to draw their own inferences regarding the general implications of market reforms. It is also important to remind readers that market reforms themes tend to overlap, and certain Potential Implications for Saskatchewan conclusions may be drawn under one heading yet pertain to another. Thus, it is my intent to reduce redundancy wherever possible and introduce fresh insights in each conclusion.

The inferences drawn to inform the Potential Implications for Saskatchewan conclusions focus on the predominant themes that emerged from the evidence. This was achieved by copying and pasting each thematic synopsis into a new and separate digital document. I then reread each formal implication construct and contrasted those concepts with the information contained in each correlate synopsis. In the event there was an association, I described these relationships as bullet points under each appropriate

synopsis, in addition to any relevant information based on the issues addressed in the broader historiography.

### **The Implications of Choice**

#### **Tragedy of the Commons**

When defining various types of market failures, Howlett and Ramesh (2003) defined a *tragedy of the commons* as a failure that occurs when a common resource is exploited by individuals, or in the case of public education, an interest group without the necessary regulation or maintenance of that resource. In such cases, individual users benefit from increasing their use of the resource in the short term to the detriment of others over the long term as a consequence of depleting the resource. When considering this definition in relation to the ideological and political contest between capital and labour described in the historiography, it can be argued the capital lobby has disproportionately benefited from market reform policy directions at the expense of labour (comprising the broader public) that would otherwise benefit from retaining the Keynesian frameworks that preserve universal access to quality public education (Robertson, 2000). From this perspective, the tragedy is that market reforms may have enabled capital to gain increasing levels of influence over the organizational processes used and outcomes produced by public education systems without necessarily providing commensurate support to these systems (Klees, 2008). In an effort to contest such claims, it may be tempting for some to define support as purely financial and thereby dispute such claims on a case-by-case basis. However, support can also be defined as the need to ensure economic redistribution balances are maintained between capital and labour interests to reduce levels of socioeconomic strain on public education systems, or the

need to ensure these systems are kept free from market discipline to avoid the prospect of enhancing market failures (Krugman, 2007; Robertson, 2000).

As described in the historiography, market advocates have never been fully satisfied with the development or services provided by public institutions free from market discipline (Apple, 2001; CTF, 1997; Noddings, 2007; Robertson, 2000; Sears, 2003). Instead, advocates have largely viewed public bureaucracies as self-inflating market obstructions that inherently and increasingly impede entrepreneurship and competitiveness in regional and global economies (Marchak, 1993, as cited in Robertson, 2000). Thus, as part of the public provision framework, the work and monetary value of public educators has likewise been questioned. For example, Robertson claimed that as the number of teachers increased during the post-war era and their economic well-being improved, reform advocates increasingly came to view teacher salaries as an ineffective and uncontrolled drain on state resources that impeded the state's ability to redirect resources to policies and programs aimed at enhancing competitive advantage. In other words, reformers believed that teachers' labour and the revenue required to operate education systems should not exist as decommodified units of value outside capital control. Otherwise, it should only be expected that education systems would not provide adequate educational supply to meet the labour market demands foundational to capital accumulation processes (Lubienski, 2003). Robertson (2000) claimed further that as global economic competition intensified and the perceived importance of addressing this dilemma increased, advocates embarked on an ongoing campaign to reform public education systems through the promotion of choice policy instruments as a way to reduce

costs, increase responsiveness to market demands, and enhance private sector profitability (Bulkley & Fisler, 2003; Kachur & Harrison, 1999).

Several scholars suggested one issue advocates of the traditional system have had to contend with is how reform advocates have framed public discourse to promote choice instruments. For example, choice has often been framed as a way to enhance the liberty or autonomy of individuals and has rarely included the ideological or economic rationale in support of these instruments. By extension, there has also been little discourse that considers the provision or economic failures that can result from these policy directions, and as a result, choice has primarily been viewed by those opposed as a way to bring public education systems under capital control--a process that includes reducing the political clout of the collectives that have traditionally maintained these arrangements (Kachur, 1999a; Robertson, 2000; Whitty et al., 1998).

Whether citizens are given a choice between schools or teachers a choice between unions or opportunities to compete with other teachers for merit pay, the divisions that result may have the potential to reduce the ability of teachers and society to advance collective interests. Specific to teachers, choice may reduce their ability to bargain for improved wages, working conditions, enhanced professional status, or the influence teachers have over public education policy directions (Robertson, 2000; Whitty et al., 1998). Klees (2008) and Whitty et al. suggested further that increased autonomy may also make it easier for states and reform advocates to shift the blame of provision failures onto service providers as collective evaluations of government-provided resources decline. From this perspective, as the focus on teacher performance and teacher responsibilities increase, the public's attention may be distracted from the economic trends arguably

responsible for exacerbating the socioeconomic strains on public education systems (Robertson, 2000). Thus, any examination of performance within public education systems must consider how economic trends external to these systems affect system performance (Chell et al., 2009).

Chubb and Moe (1990) claimed the advancement and success of quasi-education markets through choice restructuring is dependent upon progressive levels of taxation to address the inequities that arise from inevitable market failures (these scholars viewed the failures of quasi-markets as less damaging than monopolized provision). However, scholars from across disciplines have claimed that in response to global competition, corporate taxation levels have regressed in Western states for decades while personal income taxation has increased. As a result, relative inequality has also increased and enhanced the socioeconomic obstacles that impede the ability of educators to succeed. In some cases, these trends have also led to a reduction of funding for public services despite a rise in accountability and expectations (Gingrich, 2009; Hargrove, 2009; Hurtig, 2002; Judt, 2010; Klees, 2008; Krugman, 2007; Noddings, 2007; Wilkinson, 2005). Thus, if it can be reasonably argued that educational stakeholders have largely ignored how economic trends pertain to system performance, it may be reasonable to suggest these trends have also contributed to negative perceptions regarding teacher performance and the idea traditional systems require reform.

Advocates of the traditional system contend that the majority of citizens in Western states have benefited from public provision free from market discipline since these arrangements have provided universal access to quality public goods and services. From this perspective, the introduction of choice may run contrary to majority interests

(Apple, 2001; CTF, 1997; Kachur & Harrison, 1999; Noddings, 2007; Robertson, 2000; Sears, 2003). Therefore, if it can reasonably be argued that capital has gained disproportionate influence over the direction of public education policies to suit their interests, or that broader neo-liberal public policy directions have reduced the supports that have traditionally enable public education systems to flourish, it can be argued a tragedy of the commons has occurred.

### **Imperfect Information and Imperfect Competition**

In cases where choice was discussed in a context other than autonomy in the literature reviewed, it was often with respect to how choice applied to consumer and producer relationships in a quasi-education market. And in cases where provision failures were discussed, it was often in reference to the issues associated with the market failures of imperfect information and imperfect competition between consumers that impede one's ability to obtain quality public education in education markets.

Howlett and Ramesh (2003) defined imperfect information as a type of failure that occurs when consumers lack adequate information to make rational decisions, and as a result, make decisions that do not serve society well as a whole. Thus, if one presumes quasi-markets are the reform solution, and that by extension, consumers should have choice within education markets, one must also consider the premise upon which equity between consumers is based.

Market advocates presume that, ideally, consumers should be reasonably equal and well-equipped to make choices in education markets, and in cases where exceptions exist, steps should be taken to rectify inequities. Lubienski (2003) suggested, however, that addressing the problem of imperfect information is difficult since producers are often

more aware of the complexities associated with education production processes than consumers, and often only provide information that secures the market position of the school. For example, even though choice is often promoted as a way to enhance competition to incite innovation, Lubienski claimed some administrators find there is little cost-benefit to investing in innovation or attempting to make innovative processes understandable for consumers. Instead, administrators will often invest resources on marketing their school or product, which is often a school's overall standardized achievement, in some cases reflective of the socioeconomic demographic of which the school is a part (Klees, 2008; Lubienski, 2001; Oplatka, 2006; Robertson, 2000). Essentially, a consumer is only privy to the information a producer chooses to provide that in some cases may not be sufficient for enabling a rational choice.

Beyond the type of information a producer chooses to provide, Pressman (2007) and Ryan and Heise (2002) suggested the primary factor in a consumer's ability to choose is socioeconomic status. Several scholars claimed privileged parents wield more cultural capital, status, and resources than those without, and are more likely to approach and process choice schooling data, already be involved in their child's education, and are least likely to be discriminated against where the potential for selective admissions exists (Bulkley & Fisler, 2007; CTF, 1997; Klees, 2008; Mintrom, 2003; Ogawa & Dutton, 1994; Wells et al., 1999). Moreover, Mintrom and Nash (2004) claimed quasi-market provision will only exacerbate existing inequities, and simply accord more choice and power to those already advantaged (Noddings, 2007; Skinningsrud, 1995). At the school level, Lubienski (2006) contended a similar process unfolds since deregulated schools already in an advantageous market position use this advantage to attract less costly

consumers (advantaged students), which further strengthens the relative market position of the school. Put another way, for schools in a good market position there are few incentives to teach difficult-to-educate students who consume additional resources especially when these students have the potential to drag down a school's competitive prospects (CTF, 1997; Lubienski, 2003; Oplatka, 2006). In brief, similar to markets for other consumer goods, quasi-markets are not defined by perfect competition, which from a humanist public goods perspective may be socially unjust, and from an economic perspective may be unwise (Lubienski, 2003).

The potential for disrupting universal access to quality public education given the market failures that can occur through choice restructuring is problematic for several reasons. First, from a broader perspective, choice may actually undermine the economic objectives sought by those promoting market reforms. For example, if quasi-market provision enhances stratified levels of educational quality, it is difficult to imagine how this would not impede the state's ability to harness and sustain the productive potential of the broader population. Enhancing autonomy through choice may also lead to uncoordinated decision-making that impedes the ability of schools to produce uniform results, and by extension, the state's ability to achieve desired aggregated economic outcomes (Keynes, 1926/2004; Krugman, 2007; Robertson, 2000; Skinningsrud, 1995). Second, if it can be reasonably argued that stratification within or between schools increases in response to quasi-market provision, it may also be reasonable to suggest these stratifications could manifest within our broader society. Should this occur and citizens are faced with having to choose schooling options in an education market, it may reduce general accessibility to quality public education and ultimately, put downward



pressure on the positive externalities once generated by the traditional public system free from market discipline (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003; Klees, 2008). Not only might this trajectory lead to costly social ills, lower productivity, and social injustice, but it may also render the freedom to choose illusory if quality public options become an exception as opposed to the rule (English, 2006; Keynes, 1936; Klees, 2008).

Finally, it may be important to consider the cost-benefit of quasi-market failures at the school level. As market proponents Chubb and Moe (1990) contended, the provision failures that occur in quasi-markets should be addressed through government incentives and regulatory bureaucracy. Accordingly, educational stakeholders may want to consider examining the cost of increasing and maintaining the bureaucracy required to monitor quasi-market systems. This may include considering the costs of merit pay structures, marketing, increases in internal or external management and inspection teams, or the capital expense of the school closures that can occur in reward and sanction systems, to name but a few considerations (Ball, 1998; Klees, 2008; Lubienski, 2001; Lubienski, 2003; Whitty et. al, 1998).

### **The Implications of Decentralization**

Several scholars claimed that decentralization reforms are one element of market reform that enable governments to reduce responsibility for state services while enhancing influence and expectations over the outcomes produced by public systems to suit economic agendas (Kachur, 1999b; Loxley & Thomas, 2001; Robertson, 2000; Saint-Martin, 2007). However, according to Murray (2007) and Wells et al. (1999), decentralization instruments are often framed to the public quite differently. For the most part, these scholars claimed the instruments are promoted as a way to enhance consumer

control, rights, or worker empowerment even though they are primarily intended to maximize worker productivity, reduce budgets, and download what were once government responsibilities onto individual citizens, families, and local organizations (English, 2006; Klees, 2008; Lubienski, 2001; Wells et al., 1999). Ball (1998) and Murray went further to suggest that these instruments enable governments to appear as if they are addressing public policy issues meaningfully but amount to superficial remedies for the larger structural problems that arise in response to the policies responsible for dismantling welfare states.

In expanding on Murray's (2007) claims, Ball (1999) and Robertson (2000) claimed governments have been attempting to spend less on public education while devolving more responsibility and higher expectations for improved outcomes to the school level. Whitty et al. (1998) summarized this phenomenon somewhat pejoratively as "... a budget cutting exercise masquerading under the banner of schools getting more control over their own affairs" (p. 45). The key point being that governments have been devolving unreasonable expectations to the local level without providing commensurate support while enhancing and retaining a mechanism of blame for poor performance (English, 2006; Klees, 2008; Robertson, 2000; Sahlberg, 2007; Wells et al., 1999; Whitty et al., 1998).

Moreover, even though decentralization instruments have often been promoted as a way to redistribute power to improve student achievement, English (2006), Mintrom (2006), and Whitty et al. (1998) all claimed that where decentralization has occurred, there has been little evidence to suggest meaningful redistribution has taken place. In cases where teachers have demanded more autonomy, these scholars claimed it has often

been in response to overt increases in centralized accountability, or the pressures that accrue once quasi-markets are established (Dressler, 2001; Lindquist, 1998; Madsen, 1997). And, in terms of the type of autonomy requested, it is not always the type used for activities that improve teaching and learning. For example, additional autonomy may be used to deal with the perceived need to market or improve the appearance of one's school to procure enrolment (Apple, 2001; Oplatka, 2006).

Mintrom (2003) and Murray (2007) claimed the increased autonomy of educational institutions may lead to isolation and a reduction of shared principles between teachers, school divisions, and other education systems, as well as reductions in centralized support and the mechanisms of recourse teachers once had to address common issues in traditional systems (Wells et al., 1999). In brief, decentralization may lead to an increase of teacher, principal and community expectations, and a reduction of the external supports required to improve student achievement (English, 2006). Should this occur, it may lead to the perception that teachers are primarily to blame if schools fail, and justify the perceived need for further market reforms.

Perhaps most disconcerting for collectively organized teacher groups is Kerchner (1988), Robertson (2000), and Whitty et al.'s (1998) assertion that the framing of these instruments as autonomy has been a simplistic yet efficient diversionary tactic to gain support for what is essentially a market reform. From the purview of these scholars, decentralization instruments are primarily intended to divide and conquer the collective political clout of teacher unions that enable teachers to bargain, influence policy directions, and resist further market reforms.

### **The Implications of Centralization**

As defined in this study, decentralization and centralization policy instruments tend to be adopted simultaneously as quasi-markets develop. As described in Chapter Four, centralization instruments are generally any policies that enable governments to assert control over curriculum, finances, managerial duties, school level monitoring, policy standards and regulations (English, 2006; Lawton, 1996; Turner, 2006; Whitaker, 2003). However, Klees (2008) illuminated the irony, that as governments assert this level of control they actually, and perhaps inadvertently, increase the size of the bureaucracy decentralization instruments are purportedly intended to address. Similarly, if governments increase control over what can be decided at the local level, it will obviously restrict the type of decisions stakeholders at the local level can make (Carl, 1994; Klees, 2008; Turner, 2006). Apple (2001) described this mix of neo-liberal instruments as a type of “regulated autonomy”.

At the school level, the primary implication of centralization is that assertions of control over policy, curriculum, and expectations for instructional practice may reduce the professional elements of teachers’ work by reducing autonomy and thereby the ability of teachers to experiment with curricular and pedagogical innovation (Ball, 1998; English, 2006; Kuchapski, 1998; Robertson, 2000; Whitty et al., 1998). Robertson and Whitty et al. claimed, however, that centralization instruments have little to do with teaching and learning at all, and are more about reducing notions of teacher professionalism in an effort to drive down the costs of teacher salaries as these perceptions decline.

### **The Implications of Accountability**

Several scholars suggested the ideological assumptions underpinning accountability reforms are rarely discussed or openly challenged in mainstream discourse which has contributed to an unquestioned belief among the public that adopting these instruments is the most effective way to control costs and improve responsiveness in education systems (Kachur, 1999a; Klees, 2008; Robertson, 2000; Whitty et al., 1998). Kachur went on to suggest that this impression, or misconception rather, has also enhanced the ability of reformers to keep reform discourse focused on the perceived need for improvements at the provision level without having to acknowledge the extent to which system performance is contingent upon socioeconomic trends external to education systems (Berthelot, 2006; Kachur & Harrison, 1999; Noddings, 2007; Whitty et al., 1998). However, given the gradual rise in relative inequality in Western states in recent decades, it may be in the interests of educational reformers and stakeholders to reconsider these assumptions (Gingrich, 2009; Hurtig, 2002; Judt, 2010; Krugman, 2007; Wilkinson, 2005).

If, for example, it can be reasonably argued student achievement is in large part contingent on the socioeconomic outcomes that result from broader public policy directions, it may not be an efficient use of resources to continue examining the efficacy of individual market-based instruments if it can be determined these directions undermine the support any instrument requires to be successful (Apple, 2001; Chell et al., 2009). Alternatively, stakeholders may want to consider examining the correlations between broader public policy outcomes and the implications or opportunities these present for public education systems in order to improve the transparency that enables the public to hold governments accountable for the instruments they adopt instead of focusing

accountability initiatives primarily on service providers (Robertson, 2000; Whitty et al., 1998).

Kachur and Harrison (1999) and Klees (2008) also claimed that market advocates tend to ignore the complexities of system inputs at the provision level. For instance, Klees claimed it is unreasonable to expect that all relevant inputs can be accurately measured student-to-student and correlated meaningfully to outcomes-based data. In other words, input and output correlations are mostly subjective and highly contextual, which may mislead decision-makers who presume such data to be objective.

In a quasi-market, the use of outcomes-based data may be especially problematic since principals, inspection teams, and other administrative personnel are often required to either reward or punish teachers based on student achievement through merit pay structures. For instance, assume there were several cases where merit pay was either denied or rewarded. If upon closer inspection it could be argued there was little evidence to attribute academic gains or losses to either good or poor teaching in consideration of broader contexts, one might conclude the initial judgments made by administrators were arbitrary, inaccurate, or worse, couched in nepotism. Should this type of error routinely occur, it may not be worth the breaks in collegiality, loss of morale, or the expenses associated with misaligned rewards and the bureaucracy required to carry out these processes. Klees claimed further that reward and sanction structures may also entice teachers to inflate test scores, excessively scaffold student work, and teach to the test (Lubienski, 2006; Marshall & Steeves, 2008).

Chubb and Moe (1990) claimed centrally determined curriculum, assessment criteria, and benchmarks are required to enable fair competition in education markets.

Although Lubienski (2001) claimed these competitions are often based on standardized evaluations of the core subject areas deemed most important in labour markets. As a result of this focus and the pressures that accrue from market-based accountability pressures, teachers may not have flexibility over instructional strategies, or may hesitate to experiment in fear of reprisal. There may also be less focus on other subject areas, particularly those in the humanities that promote creative, moral, and democratic thinking. This may further restrict the creativity of students that leads to the future innovations market advocates claim are essential in Western states for retaining an edge in the global economy (English, 2006; Sahlberg, 2007; Whitty et al., 1998; Wrigley, 2007). Finally, the push toward standardization may reduce the need for teacher assessments of individual students and the need to plan accordingly, which may reduce notions of teacher professionalism (Kuchapski, 1998; Robertson, 2000; Tomlinson, 2005; Whitty et al., 1998).

### **The Potential Implications for Saskatchewan**

#### **Choice**

Even though there were only a few specific references to choice as defined in the construct across samples, the existence of choice concepts did exist in Saskatchewan public education policy. Both the Ministry and SSBA made reference to the need for improving student achievement and system responsiveness to compete with other jurisdictions and satisfy labour market demands. In the case of the Ministry, these references increased after 2006, and by 2009 began to include the need for consulting with business groups, aligning the goals of education with the economic goals of government, and including entrepreneurialism in the curriculum. In other words, there

was a general increase in concepts pertaining to competition and business lobby influence over Saskatchewan public education policy directions. However, the existence of specific construct evidence is arguably less important than the existence of the concept itself, how the concept relates to the evidence that emerged related to the other construct themes, and market reform trends in other Western market democracies (Altman, 2009; Ball, 1998). Once these relationships have been explained and the extent to which the evidence indicates a likely policy direction established, this section focuses more specifically on the implications choice stakeholders may want to consider given the general level of quasi-market development in Saskatchewan.

As mentioned, there were no specific references to choice instruments that impose market discipline or provide organizational participants with choices within education markets, but choice concepts were present in the data. This alone may indicate a general acceptance of the paradigm and openness to change in this direction, but the emergence of decentralization, centralization, and accountability concepts suggest that market reform trends have influenced Saskatchewan public education policy directions. However, in an effort to better support the final inferences drawn regarding the extent and implications of quasi-market development in Saskatchewan, it is important to briefly recontextualize the evidence that emerged in consideration of broader reform trends.

As explained in the historiography, market reforms were developed and became predominant public education policy options in response to the ideological preferences of the capital lobby and the pressures this lobby placed on governments to develop and adopt market instruments. Over time, this led to a policy and discourse convergence between Western political administrations that began to influence Canadian education



reform agendas by the early 1990s (Ball, 1998; Kachur, 1999a; Kachur & Harrison, 1999; Klees, 2008; Noddings, 2007; Pressman, 2007; Robertson, 2000; Tomlinson, 2005).

Several scholars claimed these changes were accepted by stakeholders primarily because there was little alternative discourse to challenge the assumptions underlying the instruments, or discussion regarding the implications that could result. As a consequence, reformers were able to gain support for these proposals while continuing to claim reform instruments would respect, if not advance, welfare state principles in addition to being more efficient and effective, despite how the economic imperative underlying these initiatives undermined those very principles (Altman, 2009; Ball, 1998; Chan et al., 2007; Kachur, 1999b; Kachur & Harrison, 1999; Loxley & Thomas, 2001; Saint-Martin, 2007; Tomlinson, 2005; Whitehorn, 2007). Therefore, given the prevalence of market reform trends and the practice of policy borrowing between Western states, it was reasonable to expect that Saskatchewan public education policy directions would eventually be affected, and that similar discourse methods would be used to gain public approval for these types of instruments.

In this analysis, the economic imperative underlying educational change in Saskatchewan was clear. References to the perceived need for restructuring education to suit the needs of capital were most pronounced in the Ministry's documentation and increased substantially after 2006, including the need for strategically adopting accountability processes to enhance student achievement and economic growth. While the SSBA was somewhat less explicit in correlating education and economic objectives, the organization similarly emphasized the need for processes that ensure student outcomes are competitive. Moreover, both organizations routinely emphasized the need

to be efficient, effective, and accountable, which further confirms that the concepts and discourse that emerged were evidence of market reform. However, evidence alone does not help stakeholders assess whether this direction is likely to continue or abate, which is important to consider to better assess whether they should or should not be concerned.

At the outset of the post-war era, academics and welfare state developers had generally agreed that in order for public goods to be efficaciously provided, provision frameworks should be kept free from market discipline (Carl, 1994; Finer, 1999; Keynes, 1926/2004; Robertson, 2000). Within a contemporary context, this means that once market reforms begin, this tenet no longer holds and a hybrid between a traditional and market system will develop that scholars on either side of the spectrum contend is less efficacious than either a pure market or traditional system (Apple, 2001; Chubb & Moe, 1990; Whitty et al., 1998). Put differently, it also means that a steady adoption of market reforms within a traditional framework may increasingly impede effective provision until either a pure market system is developed or a pure traditional system is reestablished. From this perspective, anything in-between, such as a quasi-market, is inefficient and ineffective. This is problematic since market reforms are increasingly viewed as the solution to improving provision as opposed to the foundational issue impeding it. This may also mean that the incremental adoption of market instruments has been responsible for the perceived failures reformers have been attempting to address, and for enhancing the perception traditional systems are ineffective by virtue of organizational structure and in need of reform (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Friedman, 1997; Hayek, 1960, as cited in Lubienski, 2006; Heywood, 2003; Howlett & Ramesh, 2003).

Since the type of arguments posed above were notably absent in the literature, one might suspect these points of view were also missing from the discourse used to contextualize or challenge market instruments, and contributed to the general acceptance of these changes. In addition to the reasons proffered by scholars, it would also help explain how market reforms became the primary reform options available (Ball, 1998; Kachur & Harrison, 1999; Klees, 2008; Noddings, 2007; Pressman, 2007; Robertson, 2000). Therefore, in consideration of the rationale and economic drivers that have underpinned broader reform trends, and the lack of critical discourse that has underpinned this new status quo, it is likely quasi-market development will continue, if not accelerate, in Saskatchewan. It is important to note, however, that in some cases where market reforms have begun, quasi-markets have developed quite quickly, whereas in others, reforms have been adopted incrementally resulting in a more minor hybrid between a traditional and quasi-market system (Ball, 1998; CTF, 1997). In consideration of the data examined in this analysis, Saskatchewan can currently be described as a more minor hybrid.

With an approximate sense of the extent of market reform influence established, it is important to assess what the potential implications of choice might be. For example, since full quasi-markets have yet to be developed, there is little reason to discuss the failure implications associated with imperfect information or imperfect competition since these issues pertain more specifically to circumstances where markets have been established. Nevertheless, it is still important for stakeholders to be aware of these implications in the likely event these trends continue. However, assuming these policy directions continue in the meantime, stakeholders may want to consider the potential

issues associated with negative externalities and a tragedy of the commons as these directions unfold.

Again, if it can be reasonably argued the adoption of market instruments within the traditional system obstructs efficacious provision, one must also presume the positive externalities once generated by these systems may decrease in exchange for those negative as quasi-markets develop. Consequently, stakeholders may want to consider what type of negative externalities may result, how these may manifest as socioeconomic implications, and what the humanist and fiscal costs of these implications may be. But perhaps more important for all Saskatchewan stakeholders to consider is the extent to which market reforms may result in a tragedy of the commons.

Given the evidence that emerged related to the analytic constructs and historiography, including the perceived need for restructuring public education processes to reduce costs, increase responsiveness to market demands, and enhance private sector profitability, one can argue that market advocates and the business lobby have gained increasing levels of influence over Saskatchewan public education policy directions. This may mean stakeholders, other than market advocates, have either been unwilling or unable to stop market reform trends, or have unwittingly accepted these changes by not realizing they were market-based, or by believing these changes may result in stand-alone improvements to public education. Either way, market reform influence was apparent in the discourse used to promote reform instruments, the processes used to provide education, and the criteria used to determine what constitutes a desirable outcome. Yet simultaneous to gaining control, it can also be argued the capital lobby has decreased levels of support traditionally considered requisite for public education systems to

flourish, in addition to undermining the theoretical efficacy behind keeping public provision systems free from market discipline (Robertson, 2000).

Similar to other Western states, corporate and personal income taxation rates in Saskatchewan have also increasingly become less progressive, which decreases the percentage of the population that benefits from economic growth, exacerbates relative inequality, and essentially impedes effective public education provision (Chell et al., 2009; Gingrich, 2009; Hargrove, 2009; Hurtig, 2002; Judt, 2010; Klees, 2008; Krugman, 2007; Noddings, 2007; Wilkinson, 2005). These trends are significant considering Chubb and Moe's (1990) assertion that progressive taxation is required to address the market failures that inevitably accrue as education markets develop. In a different vein, Krugman (2007) contended these trends are also emblematic of the unravelling of the post-war consensus. Several scholars contended the balance of interests that was achieved was necessary to limit the power of capital, and mediate class conflict through an enhancement of rights and redistribution of wealth to sustain capitalist democracies over the longer term without having to consider different forms of political organization, and modes of production. As part of this balance, the development of universally accessible quality public goods was also considered necessary to better harness the economic potential of citizens to sustain what became progressive economic growth until growth stagnated for reasons arguably other than underperforming school systems (Heywood, 2003; Humphries, 2006; Kachur & Harrison, 1999; Keynes, 1926/2004; Keynes, 1936; Klitgaard, 2006; Krugman, 2007).

Therefore, in consideration that market reforms may result in more market failures than would otherwise result from monopolized provision, and that regressive

socioeconomic redistribution trends have become the norm, Saskatchewan stakeholders may want to consider whether the current status quo of public education policy directions is conducive to honouring the principle of universal access to quality public education, and by extension, achieving the government's economic goals (Krugman, 2007; Mintrom, 2003; Nash, 2004). On the other hand, assuming stakeholders accept these directions, they may want to focus more specifically on the costs of potential provision failures, the bureaucracy and incentives required to maintain quasi-markets, and ultimately, whether these directions are in the socioeconomic interests of the broader public these organizations represent. Once these issues have been explored, stakeholders will be able to more meaningfully determine whether market reform policy directions have enabled capital to exploit public education to suit self-interests at the expense of the taxpaying majority.

### **Decentralization**

Between 2000 and 2010, the Ministry consistently claimed to value collaboration and input, but in 2006 began describing their legislative authority over other stakeholders. This may indicate a desire to remind stakeholders the government is in control and primarily responsible for education, or that collaborative policymaking practices are less valued than they once were. On the other hand, the government may also believe flexible policy frameworks at the local level are no longer necessary given trends toward urbanization or that autonomy is an obstacle to achieving aggregate outcomes (Ball, 1998). Given these hypothetical assertions and the Ministry's assertion of control over policy, standards, and finances, it may be reasonable to expect the autonomy of other stakeholder organizations will decrease. This may be particularly problematic for the

SSBA and STF since both organizations seek to enhance autonomy for members. It may also result in two other substantive issues for all stakeholders to consider.

First, if the autonomy of subordinate organizations decreases in exchange for centralized control as the data indicates, the resulting loss of power, resources, and ability to meet local needs may be perceived as an attack and impetus for disengaging with traditionally collaborative partnerships. This may mean relationships once based on trust, collaboration, and consultation in Saskatchewan will evolve into the type of conflict and opposition patterns that characterize stakeholder relationships in other Canadian provinces (Chan et al., 2007; Humphries, 2006; Newton et al., 2007). Second, if centralized control and expectations increase without a commensurate rise in the autonomy or resources required to meaningfully achieve those objectives, pressure on providers is bound to accrue. As a consequence, providers may eventually request more autonomy over budgeting and instruction or managerial rights (principals) to respond to these pressures without questioning the assumptions that underpin the efficacy of a new provision framework, or the implications of the instruments being imposed (Ball, 1999; English, 2006; Kachur, 1999b; Murray, 2007; Robertson, 2000; Whitty et al., 1998).

In some respects, it is understandable why Saskatchewan stakeholders may not perceive these issues as imminent concerns since the adoption of market-based instruments is just beginning in the province. However, given the steady increase in centralized control, decentralized initiatives, and construct references amid broader reform trends, the changes that have occurred may already be incentive enough to encourage teachers to pressure government to adopt more instruments they believe will enable them to achieve expectations and appear successful. The problem is that this cycle

may inadvertently accelerate the process of quasi-market development, and may draw further attention away from what are arguably the primary underlying causes impeding achievement.

The extent to which the Ministry supported service providers to implement various initiatives whether to improve achievement or address the socioeconomic obstacles that impede it was also unclear. For example, in the data examined there was a steady increase in initiatives intended to improve achievement between 2000 and 2010, including the Continuous Improvement Framework (CIF), Assessment for Learning (AFL), Inspiring Success, and an increased emphasis on the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), yet there were few, if any, details provided regarding the supports providers received to implement these initiatives (English, 2006; Mintrom, 2003; Whitty et al., 1998). Supports external to the public education system were another matter.

The Ministry, SSBA, and STF each claimed student success was contingent upon community supports but relegated supports to those potentially available at the local level while paying scant attention to how supports may include the broader public policies governments adopt to maintain education funding, improve general socioeconomic welfare, or keep public services free from market discipline. This may be problematic if it can be argued the success of initiatives is largely contingent upon factors external to public education systems, particularly if such correlations are not made transparent in the promotion of various initiatives.

For example, the initiative Inspiring Success was introduced in 2009-2010 and was framed as a “critical effort” to improve First Nations and Métis achievement and



labour market participation. Yet, to be fair, the Ministry also claimed there was a “moral imperative” for improving achievement, but the logic underlying this emphasis aligned closely with rationale underlying the “economic imperative” that followed. Moreover, all of the solutions to improve achievement pertained to the need for improving relationships, programs, and services at the local level. There were no details regarding broader contextual issues such as rising inequality rates between First Nations and Métis versus the mainstream population, nor were there explanations describing how this gap may increasingly obstruct the ability of the disenfranchised to succeed, or pursue the opportunities provided (Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, 2009). However, the Ministry did support an initiative entitled School<sup>PLUS</sup> intended to improve student outcomes through the delivery of a learning program through schools that serve as centres for social, health and other services for children and their families (Government of Saskatchewan, 2011).

Essentially, the Ministry’s website claimed that School<sup>PLUS</sup> is an initiative intended to address socioeconomic obstacles at the provision level, and claimed it is based on the idea of “long-term change”, “principles of shared responsibility”, “holistic approaches”, “accountability”, “effective practices” and “continuous improvement” (Government of Saskatchewan, 2011, n.p.). However, no details were provided regarding what shared responsibility, accountability, and continuous improvement meant within a context of regressive socioeconomic redistribution trends even within mainstream society (Gingrich, 2009). Thus, it may be helpful for stakeholders to also consider the extent to which a regressive socioeconomic context affects the effectiveness of these types of initiatives to avoid getting caught in a cycle of developing or supporting superficial

remedies for what are larger structural issues, or blaming service providers for perceived failures (Apple, 2001; Ball, 1998; Berthelot, 2006; English, 2006; Kachur & Harrison, 1999; Murray, 2007; Noddings, 2007; Robertson, 2000; Whitty et al., 1998).

The type of decentralization instruments and initiatives the Ministry supported were similar to those used in other Western states, which may indicate further that Saskatchewan has been influenced by market reform trends. There was also a general increase in the number of initiatives adopted during the decade examined, and a lack of data in the documents to suggest that initiatives have been meaningfully supported. Thus, it may be fair to conclude the government has been attempting get more for less as described in the implication construct for decentralization (Ball, 1998; Robertson, 2000).

With respect to the SSBA, there was no apparent decrease in the organization's teaching and learning responsibilities, but the organization's capacity for raising funds to meet locally determined needs was in the process of being eliminated. This may be problematic if the SSBA finds itself in the unenviable position of having to carry out increasing responsibilities while at the mercy of whatever funds happen to be devolved from central government at any given time (Government of Saskatchewan, n.d.). LEADS, on the other hand, may gain from an increase in decentralized initiatives given the organization's mandate to enhance the leadership expertise available to Saskatchewan's education community (League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents of Saskatchewan, n.d.). Quite simply, the more initiatives there are to provide leadership for, the better.

Similar to the SSBA, the STF may be greatly affected by the implications of decentralization as defined in this study. Although it is a desire of the organization, it is

unlikely professional autonomy will increase for teachers given the centralization changes that have occurred during the decade examined. But perhaps most troubling is the extent to which teacher workloads may increase to satisfy increases in decentralized bureaucratic expectations. For example, should the bureaucratic aspects of a teacher's workload increase, it may detract from a teacher's ability to fulfill the irreducible minimum of the planning and assessment tasks traditionally required to improve student achievement. Thus, if expectations become unreasonable and centrally desired outcomes are not achieved, it may appear as if educators are either unable or unwilling to perform to the best of their ability. In the absence of broader discourse, this may enhance the perception more market reforms are necessary to improve performance even though these changes may impede the ability of teachers to carry out responsibilities further (Ball, 1998; Robertson, 2000; Whitty et al., 1998).

### **Centralization**

The only evidence of centralization themes was found in samples sent by the Ministry, which is understandable since legislatively subordinate organizations have little incentive to relinquish autonomy. The evidence increased between 2003 and 2010 and included an assertion of control over policy standards, school level monitoring (increases in centrally derived accountability initiatives), curriculum, and finances.

In the 2003-2004 report, centralization references pertained primarily to reducing the number of school divisions, which may have increased the size and political clout of central government while decreasing the mechanisms available for gaining policy input at the local level. As several scholars suggested, decreasing these mechanisms may lead to a disconnect between actual local needs and perceived needs as determined by central

government, a process that is essentially less democratic (Carl, 1994; English, 2006; Turner, 2006). A more centralized bureaucracy may also increase the overall size of bureaucracy, and may consume additional resources that were either previously used at the provision level, or arguably should be (Klees, 2008). This is ironic given that the intent of market advocates is often to reduce bureaucracy (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Moe, 2003).

In 2006-2007, the main theme was the perceived need to develop an outcomes-based curriculum, which, similar to the Ministry's accountability initiatives, enables governments to track and correlate achievement with the employment and productivity needs of the state. Put differently, it enables a restructuring of public education to promote private development, efficiency, and competition in the global economy (Ball, 1998; Carl, 1994; Lubienski, 2001). However, the primary rationale for tracking achievement provided throughout the samples was the need to enhance transparency, but such transparency may be limited by what is deemed reasonable to be transparent about, from a neo-liberal perspective. One must also question whether the intent behind developing this type of curriculum is to increase teacher accountability, and whether the framework will eventually be used to establish points of comparison within a quasi-market. Either way, it may result in more centralized control over instructional practice that may reduce the professional elements of a teacher's work, and the ability of teachers to experiment with pedagogy that improves teaching and learning or promotes innovation (Ball, 1998; English, 2006; Kuchapski, 1998; Robertson, 2000; Whitty et al., 1998).

By 2009-2010, the government announced it would centralize PreK-12 funding. This may become particularly problematic if centrally determined initiatives are

increasingly devolved and underfunded. One must also question whether centralizing finances was an attempt to force service providers to do more with less, assuming it possible, and how it may affect the focus of providers or the quality of education if fundraising or corporate sponsorship ever become necessary (Apple, 2001; Oplatka, 2006).

All of the centralization themes present in the data reflected an assertion of control by the Ministry without any significant exchange for increased autonomy. Thus, the Ministry may want to consider the extent to which top-down control versus bottom-up collaboration is an effective mechanism for change. Also, if it can be argued economic principles are driving educational change, the Ministry may want to consider the costs of increasing the size of educational bureaucracy since by 2009, improving efficiencies was a goal. For instance, an increase in initiatives requires expertise, monitoring, and implementation. Therefore, it might be useful for the Ministry to determine what percentage of total education spending bureaucratic initiatives require in comparison to what was required for similar expenditures in the previous decade, and how the money and time spent implementing these initiatives affect provision.

Again, the SSBA and STF are bound to be adversely affected by centralization changes. The centralization of education funding severely reduced the autonomy of the SSBA, and may eventually render the organization more an initiative implementation arm of government that bears a disproportionate responsibility for perceived teaching and learning failures. On the other hand, the centralization of policy standards may lead the STF to believe that meaningful teacher input is no longer valued in public education policymaking processes, or that the development of outcomes-based curriculum

undermines notions of teacher professionalism, the latter of which may drive down teacher salaries (Robertson, 2000; Whitty et al., 1998).

### **Accountability**

All of the organizations made references to accountability but notions regarding what accountability means slightly differed. For example, the Ministry, LEADS, and the SSBA primarily supported market-based notions of accountability whereas the STF based their understanding on the assumption that society has a public trust in the professionalism of teachers. Accordingly, the STF believed accountability processes should mostly be used to track student progress to improve instructional practice, as opposed to publicly reporting these results, and should not be imposed top-down or used for inter-jurisdictional comparisons.

The other three organizations each supported more formal and externally imposed accountability processes to improve responsiveness, but the evidence from LEADS was limited. However, the samples sent by the Ministry and the SSBA contained plenty of evidence to suggest there was a perceived need for top-down accountability initiatives, generating more data, and making data more transparent to enhance competition and achievement to fulfill labour market demands and the government's economic goals. Alternatively, there were no statements in any of the samples that acknowledged the importance of governments adopting responsible public policies to hold governments accountable, nor were there statements acknowledging the extent to which accountability initiatives are market-based. Given this omission, it is difficult to imagine how any of these organizations could develop solutions for market reform implications without

recognizing these instruments for what they are (Ball, 1998; Robertson, 2000; Whitty et al., 1998).

One possible explanation for this omission may be that public education policymakers in Saskatchewan policy borrowed from other Western states, and adopted the associate discourse to frame instruments accordingly. In other words, the construct evidence that emerged may be more an extension of what is now an entrenched political and public policy discourse convergence elsewhere. The problem, as explained in the historiography, is that this discourse was narrow, ideologically derived, and has arguably led to a status quo lack of transparency in educational reform debates (Ball, 1998; Kachur, 1999; Kachur & Harrison, 1999; Klees, 2008; Noddings, 2007; Pressman, 2007; Robertson, 2000; Tomlinson, 2005).

Kachur (1999b) claimed that during the 1990s, market advocates in Alberta developed discourse to promote accountability around the notion these instruments would enhance the common good. This was achieved by creating a new “common sense” around the links between economics, technology, and education that captured the imagination of ordinary citizens (Ball, 1998). According to Kachur, the language developed appeared to be objective, value-free, and borne of a rationale consensus between experts and the general population, even though the foundational rationale of the instruments clearly reflected a preferred ideology. For example, accountability initiatives were often framed as the most effective way to control costs and improve system responsiveness, an approach that boded well with common sense given the difficulty of arguing against the need for either. The issue, however, was that this rhetorical strategy arguably distracted the public’s attention away from discussions regarding the theoretical

foundation of these instruments and the potential implications. In other words, Alberta policymakers attempted to impose “discursive disclosure” on educational reform debates that limited the ability of stakeholders to meaningfully assess the benefits and implications of reform instruments (Kachur, 1999a; Kincheloe & McClaren, 2000).

In this analysis, it was apparent the Saskatchewan government had used a similar, but perhaps an inadvertent, strategy of omission to promote and justify educational change, a trend most pronounced in the 2009-2010 Annual Report. The discourse used by the SSBA was similar in presuming new accountability instruments were more efficacious than those used in the past but included less commentary regarding neo-liberal perceptions of the links between education, civic, and economic principles. For example, in the Ministry’s 2009-2010 report, the government claimed the early childhood education program would support “. . . the development of socially responsible, engaged citizens, which will contribute to the sustainable economic growth of Saskatchewan” (p. 8). The government also claimed the overlying goal of government is to secure a “prosperous Saskatchewan” that leads the country in economic growth while providing “a high quality of life for all”. While these goals are admirable, and appeal to common sense, the rhetorical strategies used impose discursive disclosure by presuming market reform directions are conducive to achieving these ends when arguably they are not (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000).

Similar assumptions were also made in other topic areas, such as the Ministry’s view on the factors that influence student performance. For instance, the Ministry claimed some factors “. . . are beyond the control of the Ministry or the boards of education, such as individual motivation and personal circumstances” (Saskatchewan



Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 12) without recognizing the extent to which certain public policies can either rectify or exacerbate such circumstances. In brief, the Ministry and SSBA's accountability initiatives were primarily focused one-way, and on service providers.

According to Whitty et al., (1998) market-based accountability initiatives often focus on “. . . school-centered solutions with no sense of the structural, the political and historical as constraints” (p. 5; Noddings, 2007). Thus, if a similar assumption persists that increased accountability and data at the service level is required in Saskatchewan, it may distract stakeholders from larger structural issues and keep educational reform discussions mired in the more superficial aspects of implementation or the efficacy of various instruments. Not only would this distract stakeholders from recognizing these changes as market reforms, but it may also consume resources while further solidifying, albeit inadvertently, the ideological and public policy convergences that have occurred elsewhere (Ball, 1998; Kachur & Harrison, 1999). However, breaking with the status quo enough to recognize or provide solutions for these issues may prove difficult for stakeholders.

First, recognizing foundational problems that exist external to the public education system may require political and economic skill-sets that have not previously been considered a priority in the education field, and accordingly, may not have had the opportunity to adequately develop within traditional provision systems. Second, if it can be argued that developing new skill-sets, discourse, and resource allocations are necessary to reassess the efficacy of past organizational practices and deal effectively with market reform trends, there may be an unwillingness to change among those who

have built academic and professional careers based on the existing status quo. Third, there may be a temptation for stakeholders to continue policy borrowing market instruments since these comprise the majority of reform instruments available, and the ease of incorporating ready-made solutions. Thus, if it can be reasonably argued market reform directions undermine the efficacy of the public education system and are occurring in Saskatchewan, yet have not been recognized as such, market instruments may ironically become more attractive to those stakeholders tasked with endlessly improving the system. However, assuming these organizational barriers can be overcome and holistic discourse develops, stakeholders could proceed with determining whether moving in this direction is wise, or, at the very least, better determine what constitutes an efficacious accountability instrument within what could become a quasi-market. However, given Saskatchewan's current accountability policy trajectory, quasi-market development is likely to continue.

As a result of this trajectory, stakeholders may want to explore, in advance, questions they may eventually have to consider should these directions continue. For example, organizations legislatively subordinate to the Ministry may want to consider the extent to which governments should be held accountable for the socioeconomic policies they adopt that either enable or obstruct quality learning. This level of accountability could be achieved by developing public discourse to ensure this level of transparency exists. All stakeholders may also want to consider the potential costs of reward and sanction-based failures. For example, what are the costs of school closures and how might this affect capital funding issues? What is the cost of administering a merit pay structure or the bureaucracy required to monitor a quasi-market systems? Would these

funds be better spent at the provision level? However, in the shorter term, there are more immediate issues for stakeholders to consider.

As one branch of government, the Ministry democratically represents Saskatchewan citizen interests, and in that role, provides legislative stewardship for the Acts and Regulations that guide the other stakeholder organizations (Government of Saskatchewan, 2007). However, in the absence of holistic and transparent discourse, citizens may not realize the implications that could unfold from the public education policy platforms for which they vote. Therefore, if the overlying goal of the Ministry is to provide citizens with universal access to quality public education, the organization may want to reconsider how it frames reforms to the public by including the foundational logic behind the instrument, how new instruments relate to one another within a broader framework, and what the potential short- and long-term implications of moving in this direction are. Otherwise, the public may presume market-based accountability instruments are the most effective way to control costs, and improve responsiveness—largely because there is little, if any, discourse that suggests otherwise (Kachur, 1999a; Klees, 2008; Robertson, 2000; Whitty et al., 1998).

For the SSBA, failing to address one-way accountability may have dire consequences for the organization. For example, if governments adopt policies that compromise the wellbeing of the broader population and thereby reduce support for public education systems, it would make little sense for the SSBA to hold teachers increasingly accountable for higher expectations or devote additional resources for data development to achieve that end. In other words, given the recent elimination of the organization's ability to raise funds to meet locally determined needs, the organization's

budgets may decrease along with supports external to public education systems while expectations increase. In this scenario, the organization may find itself in a position where it can no longer provide meaningful leadership, accountability, or “. . . ensure the wishes of the community are reflected in the educational considerations made at the division level” (Saskatchewan School Boards Association, 2009, n.p.; Government of Saskatchewan, n.d.). Therefore, the SSBA may want to consider developing discourse to enhance transparency around these issues for the electorate since the electorate is with whom government accountability ultimately resides.

With respect to LEADS, as described previously, any increase in market-based instruments that increase top-down bureaucracy, including those associated with accountability, may lead to an increase in leadership opportunities for LEADS members. Given it is within the organization’s mandate to enhance these types of opportunities, and advance the professional status of members accordingly, LEADS may have the most to gain from the development of accountability frameworks (League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents of Saskatchewan, n.d.).

Conversely, the STF likely has the least to gain from the imposition of top-down accountability initiatives. For example, the stark increase in accountability initiatives infers that teachers have not been adequately responsive in achieving centrally set expectations, and cannot be trusted to meet expectations in the absence of these frameworks. The standardization that results may also simplify a teacher’s work, and reduce notions of teacher professionalism and the will of the population they serve to pay them accordingly (Ball, 1998; Robertson, 2000; Whitty et al., 1998). Consequently, the STF may want to consider exploring market reform trends, and particularly the

implications to inform the development of an alternate discourse in the organization's interests as well as the public's (English, 2006; Kuchapski, 1998; Lubienski, 2001; Robertson, 2000; Sahlberg, 2007; Tomlinson, 2005; Whitty et al., 1998; Wrigley, 2007).

### **Conclusion**

As described in the Note on Limitations at the beginning of Chapter Five, conclusions regarding the extent of market reform influence in Saskatchewan are approximate. Sample sizes were limited and the Ministry was the only organization that was able to or chose to fulfil the chronological aspects of the documentation request that would allow for an analysis of changes in construct evidence during the decade examined. Nonetheless, all of the samples provided contained at least some construct evidence.

The Ministry's 2000-2001 report contained the least amount of evidence whereas the 2006-2007 report contained the most. The watershed increase in evidence began in the 2003-2004 report and peaked in 2006-2007. All three of these samples were developed under a New Democratic Party administration. In the 2009-2010 report developed by the Saskatchewan Party government, the frequency of evidence decreased slightly but references to neo-liberal perceptions of the connections between education and economic principles increased substantially when compared with earlier reports. In brief, the Ministry samples contained the highest level of construct evidence followed by LEADS, the SSBA, and last, the STF. However, these findings were not surprising.

As the first and possibly last bastion of social democracy in North America, it was probable that Saskatchewan would eventually borrow market instruments from other Anglo-Saxon market democracies given the ideological, political, and economic

similarities between these states, and the convergences that have occurred accordingly in recent decades (Altman, 2009; Ball, 1998; Humphries, 2006; Kachur & Harrison, 1999; Klees, 2008; Robertson, 2000; Tomlinson, 2005). It was thereby no surprise that the Saskatchewan government has begun to adopt market instruments, or that the organizations legislatively subordinate would follow this lead, with the teacher union most resistant (Moe, 2003). However, from the delimited perspective of this analysis, the amount of evidence that emerged per organization is arguably less important than the fact evidence generally exists. An existence of evidence infers quasi-market development may be occurring, and that accordingly, at some future stage, variations of the implications described in this study may affect the Saskatchewan public education system. However, stakeholders may not be aware of the trend, implications, or even that this process is taking place—hence the need for critical analysis and discourse to enhance transparency (Ball, 1998; Gall et al. 2007; Kincheloe & McClaren, 2000; Krippendorff, 2004).

Out of all the themes that emerged, there were relatively few explicit references to choice across samples, but the concepts that did exist can be viewed as a gateway paradigm that enables the adoption of the other instruments required for the full development of a quasi-market (Carl, 1994; Tomlinson, 2005). Conversely, there were numerous references to decentralization. For example, each organization claimed to value shared decision-making between stakeholders despite the increasing imposition of top-down control in the form of centralized policy, standards, curriculum, and finances. There was no evidence to suggest meaningful levels of autonomy at the local level had been exchanged for these centralization changes, which suggests shared decision-making is

likely valued less than the statements by the organizations suggest. References to accountability were also numerous, and in the case of the Ministry, evolved from a traditional emphasis on the need for social justice and trust in the professionalism of teachers to more market-based understandings by the close of the decade. By 2009-2010, the emphasis on the need for students to compete for achievement and states for economic growth, as well as the links between the two, were clear. Therefore, in consideration of the government's increasing desire to control education processes and outcomes to enhance competition, it would not be a leap to suggest that the large-scale accountability and school-level data frameworks that have developed may eventually be used for reward and sanction-based comparisons within a quasi-market framework.

In consideration of these trends, other scholars who have explored market reform influence in Saskatchewan may want to reconsider the extent to which Saskatchewan has remained insulated from broader reform trends relative to other Canadian provinces and Western states. For example, both Chan et al. (2007) and Newton et al. (2007) suggested Saskatchewan has generally resisted market reform, as well as centralized governance, accountability, and curriculum frameworks. Of the scholars reviewed, only Kachur and Harrison (1999) suggested Saskatchewan education policy had been influenced by neo-liberal and neo-conservative interests prior to the decade examined.

Similarly, researchers and Saskatchewan stakeholders may want to consider exploring whether market reforms are conducive to achieving mandated objectives whether civic, democratic, economic, or educational, particularly over the longer term. For example, each organization claimed as essential: improving student achievement, promoting the cause of education, and ensuring that organizational aims were congruent

with the public interest. If, as established within this analysis, stakeholders determine market reforms may not be conducive, the organizations concerned may want to consider developing an alternate discourse to enhance transparency in public education debates and policymaking circles. Otherwise, quasi-market development may continue unabated and unrecognized by all stakeholders, including the public, and result in an unfortunate misapplication of resources to address perceived educational failures. However, in concluding this analysis, I have also grown to appreciate the complexity of identifying and providing solutions that address market reform issues. Accordingly, and in keeping with the secondary purpose of this study, I intend to provide other researchers and stakeholders with ideas to consider should one decide to develop holistic discourse that broadens awareness. This includes considering and understanding the concepts that follow.

### **Concept and Discourse Considerations**

As explained in the historiography, the 1970s marked the emergence of market reforms for public goods and services including education (Krugman, 2007; Robertson, 2000; Saint-Martin, 2007). On the surface, this emergence may have seemed a victory for market advocates and the capital lobby since both appeared to have gained from these changes (Ball, 1998; Kachur & Harrison, 1999; Klees, 2008; Krugman, 2007; Robertson, 2000). For example, market reforms may have satisfied a preferred ideology and the continuous lobby to lower taxes, deregulate state systems, and procure freer trade may have retained or improved profitability and led to public policy advantages in the shorter term. However, the majority of society, including the citizens who are part of these lobbies, have arguably benefited more from the immediate post-war public policy balance



than they have, or will have, from market reform trends given the implications of this direction over time. Essentially, the traditional structures of welfare states have diminished in response to market reform trends, and as a consequence, it can be argued that governments should expect fewer civic and economic returns from citizens and public services as a result.

Keynes (1926/2004; 1936) reasoned that sustaining market democracies depends upon maintaining civic and economic progress, which is best achieved through adequate regulation, redistribution, and the absence of market discipline in the provision of universally accessible quality public goods and services within these frameworks. Without these features, or in the event these features are not reflective of a balance of interests between capital and labour, Keynes believed the state would be unable to harness the civic and economic potential of all citizens, which appeared to be an overlying goal of the Saskatchewan government in 2009 and 2010 (Carl, 1994; Finer, 1999; Heywood, 2003; Krugman, 2007; Robertson, 2000; Tomlinson, 2005). Therefore, researchers and Saskatchewan stakeholders interested in exploring market reform phenomena may want to revisit the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century political and economic rationale for separating the provision of public and private goods, and to examine the pivotal historical events that enabled market reforms to eventually become predominant public education reform policy options.

It is important to note that arguably, the role of preserving the post-war balance should have fallen primarily to labour since capital perceived it had less to gain from welfare state arrangements, preferring a return to the lower redistribution and limited government intervention era of the pre-war period. Also, for capital, lobbying for a return

to a classical state apparatus may have been easy relative to labour's task of maintaining this balance since anyone with business interests arguably benefits from the lobby to lower taxes, deregulate, and liberalize trade networks. In other words, business or market advocates would have had few incentives to work at cross-purposes to achieve those aims whereas labour, and particularly public sector groups, would have had an ongoing incentive to disengage from cooperative efforts that maintained favourable public policy directions on behalf of labour as a whole.

For instance, teacher union leaders would have had a responsibility to gain as many resources as possible for union members from a limited pool of taxpayer funds at the competitive expense of other public sector groups trying to achieve the same end. Trying to cyclically satisfy these types of short-term interests may have provided these groups with a disincentive to cooperate that may have inadvertently weakened the ability of labour to assert a coordinated front that could resist capital lobby efforts. Therefore, education stakeholders in Saskatchewan may want to consider whether their organizations have provided adequate discourse to meaningfully challenge broader labour policy changes, and whether these changes affect their organizational long term interests, or the interests of the public. Otherwise, in the absence of such discourse, one could argue these types of omissions may have been responsible for the political, economic, and public policy convergences that have occurred, and essentially, the enabling of market reforms. Other assumptions to explore include the extent to which student achievement can endlessly improve, and the extent to which economic growth depends on education outcomes. Thus, if it can reasonably be argued that traditional systems were most efficacious in their purest form, prior to the advent of market reforms, then

declining student performance should have been expected as market reform ensued (Apple, 2001; Chubb & Moe, 1990; Whitty et al., 1998).

This is only to say that in the absence of discourse to explain these correlations, it would have been relatively easy for reform advocates to attribute accruing failures to the classical presumptions they held regarding public bureaucracies, and to uphold the argument that further reforms were required. Similarly, if teachers were held responsible for the economic troughs inevitable in any market economy, yet little holistic discourse was provided by teacher groups to counter these claims, these omissions would have provided the reform movement with cyclic opportunities to critique the traditional system and build the case reforms were necessary to enhance economic growth. Therefore, given that market reforms have become predominant public policy options, one must question whether teachers have become caught up in trying to fulfil provision expectations in a system increasingly less conducive to achieving them without paying adequate attention to developing or promoting the discourse required to maintain public policy or organizational interests.

Accordingly, it may be useful for researchers, stakeholders, and teachers to deconstruct the foundational root of educational issues. For example, if the real crisis underpinning the imposition of market reforms is the Western Anglo-Saxon states' inability to improve productivity and profitability because these states have exhausted easy sources of wealth, then the crisis may be more economic than educational, and may require a different conversation with the public. This may be especially true if it can be argued market reforms escalate perceived failures and act as a barrier to addressing them (Cowen, 2011; Kachur & Harrison, 1999; MacEwan, 1999; Robertson, 2000).

Nevertheless, as Keynes (1926/2004) contended, perhaps the greatest challenge in challenging the efficacy of market reform trends is that “. . . devotees of Capitalism are often unduly conservative, and reject reforms in its technique, which might really strengthen and preserve it, for fear that they may prove to be the first steps away from Capitalism itself” (p. 44). Consequently, revisiting the socioeconomic forces that led to the historic conditions and rationale behind the development of welfare states may be worth considering to avoid a repeat of the consequences that unfolded in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, including the failure to provide universal accessibility to quality public education.

### **Recommendations for Further Study**

In the literature reviewed, several scholars suggested that market reforms have become the predominant reform instruments available to support educational change and constitute the new orthodoxy in public policy discourse, inspired primarily in response to the development of neo-liberal frameworks in Western states (Ball, 1998; Kachur & Harrison, 1999; Klees, 2008; Loxley & Thomas, 2001; Robertson, 2000; Tomlinson, 2005; Whitty et al., 1998). In consideration of recent statements made by the media, economists, and key public education policymakers at the time of this writing in 2011, there are few signs to suggest these trends are abating.

As established in the historiography, the post-war compromise between capital and labour has increasingly unravelled in favour of capital from approximately the 1970s onward. According to Krugman (2007), the resulting imbalance has enabled the development of a plutocracy whereby a decreasing minority of society captures the surplus generated by an exploited class of workers. As a solution to this crisis, Krugman

claimed progressive taxation and redistributive public policy instruments are necessary to offset labour's position of weakness relative to capital (as cited in Cowen, 2011, p. 84). However, neither measure currently appears to be considered a popular policy option for mitigating the adverse effects the 2008 global recession has had on Western labour.

Alternatively, in states like Wisconsin, the state assembly recently voted to approve a plan that would strip public-sector unions of most of their bargaining rights, a move Republican Governor Scott Walker claimed was necessary to help balance the state's budget deficit ("US judge blocks," 2011). Meanwhile, "[t]he collective wealth of billionaires hit a record high" ("Carlos Slim tops," 2011, n.p.). The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (2011) also claimed that although Canadian corporate profits have been increasing, corporate reinvestment in the form of employment, relative to profits, has been decreasing. This trend, along with increases in relative inequality in Western states, suggests that trickle down redistribution has not been occurring in exchange for the progressively lower taxation, deregulation, and freer trade sought by the capital lobby (Gingrich, 2009; Hargrove, 2009; Hurtig, 2002; Judt, 2010; Wilkinson, 2005). From this perspective, the Marxian notion that capital begets capital to the eventual detriment of labour is seemingly accurate, and the way in which this occurs in public education, clear (Marx, 1867/1977). For instance, instead of acknowledging the impact decreasing corporate taxation or market reform may have on the accessibility or quality of public goods and services, Western governments have been attempting to assert greater control over education through market reform based on the belief education will enable Western capital to retain global trade advantages, and build resilience to economic downturns (Duncan, 2010; Klees, 2008; Robertson, 2000; Wells et al., 1999).

When discussing the motivations underlying educational change, Jeffrey Simpson from Canada's *Globe and Mail* insisted that student achievement must “. . . keep improving because the world won't keep still, and the single most important factor in a country's productivity and social well-being is the education of its population” (Simpson, 2011, n.p.). Similarly, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan (2010) claimed “[e]ducation, in short, is the new game changer driving economic growth” (p. 68). Yet neither columnist nor key policymaker questioned the efficacy of market reform, or recognized the implications of capital's increasing public policy advantages.

Instead, Duncan (2010) promoted market reform as the only solution for improving student achievement and enhancing economic growth. Duncan also claimed that under his leadership, the U.S. public education system had received the largest investment of funds in U.S. history, and that access to those funds was contingent upon the adoption of market reforms. Essentially, Duncan (2010) suggested that in the absence of market discipline, public schools are inefficacious and have been largely responsible for exacerbating the achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students. Not once did Duncan suggest that socioeconomic policies external to public education systems may have been responsible for creating or exacerbating this gap, or impeding accessibility to the incentives his administration does provide.

Instead, like Simpson (2011), Duncan (2010) surmised that “demography is not destiny” (p. 73) and “. . . education is the great equalizer that helps overcome differences in background, culture, and privilege, and opens up economic opportunities” (p. 68). In other words, Duncan's reform approach focused solely on “. . . school-centred solutions with no sense of the structural, the political and the historical as constraints” (Whitty et

al., 1998, p. 5; Ball, 1998; Robertson, 2000). When considering market reform trends, Duncan's approach epitomizes the usual fare and is problematic for several reasons.

For one, this approach enables the U.S. government to ignore the implications of regressive socioeconomic trends and the extent to which these trends impede the ability of American educators and students to succeed, despite how well the correlations between the two have been established in epidemiological and educational research (Chell et al., 2009; Judt, 2010; Kachur & Harrison, 1999; Noddings, 2007; Wilkinson, 2005). Second, Duncan's (2010) article demonstrated how one of the world's most powerful public education leaders has no intention of spending resources on examining the implications of market reforms, and instead, is fully intent on imposing market reforms that could dismantle the remaining efficacious aspects of the existing system further. Third, Duncan reinforced the classical presumption that the organizational structures of traditional systems are inherently inefficient, ineffective, and should be blamed for perceived failures. Market reform trends are not abating.

For researchers interested in exploring market reform phenomena, or challenging this status quo, it is essential to gain an understanding of the extent to which ideology and economic drivers are responsible for contemporary policy directions before examining whether the implications that arise from quasi-market provision exceed those that arise from monopolized. Once researchers have a confident grasp of the foundational concepts that drive market reform, it would be invaluable to explore how these instruments and associate implications manifest within traditional systems. In taking this level of research further, it would also be useful to examine what the comparative financial and social costs of those implications may be when juxtaposed against those that arise from

monopolized provision. The conclusions reached would help determine whether market reforms are conducive to enhancing economic growth, and if not, would assist in the development of solutions that satisfy both capital and labour interests. More generally, researchers may also want to consider examining the success of other education systems in Western countries that have rejected market reforms, such as Finland, and determine the extent to which the rejection was responsible for the nation's subsequent educational and economic success (Sahlberg, 2007).

For researchers interested in replicating this study specifically, strengthening the historiography would be helpful given the breadth of topic areas, and particularly the links between the pivotal historical events that gave rise to the market reform movement. A replication would also help determine whether quasi-market development is still occurring in the province and would help build theory specific to the Saskatchewan context.



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