More than Words:
A Critical Discourse Analysis of the University of Victoria Co-operative Education Program

By

Helen Kobrc
BCom, University of Victoria, 1998

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
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Abstract

This study explored the discourse of the University of Victoria Social Sciences Co-op Program. It reviewed literature that illustrates how neoliberal ideologies due to globalization lead to the marketization of post-secondary education. It provided an overview of the neoliberal discursive context in which the Co-op Program is situated and a semiotic analysis of the discourse of three documents. Particular focus was paid to metaphoric representations.

A co-op practitioner conducted the study, which included a reflective discussion of the findings related to the role of the Co-op Program staff, students and employers. The study highlighted neoliberal discourses that may impact a student’s educational experience by limiting student agency, reinforcing power structures, and focusing on career training with little emphasis on learning. As a way forward, the study presented different discourses and metaphoric representations that could be drawn upon to emancipate the students and harness the potential of an experiential education program.
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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Sitting at my desk at the University of Victoria Social Sciences Co-op Program Office I often wonder what I can do to provide the best possible educational experience for all students. I look at my bookshelf or online folders of professional resources and know that I have much to draw from. As a caring practitioner, I often engage in activities to improve our Program. In fact, I believe that all my colleagues are caring practitioners; we all care about the well being and success of the students. We perform program evaluations, student surveys, and comparative analyses. Yet, we still face challenges that I feel may be caused by hidden forces, those that are not exposed by our current practice or evaluation methods.

Different conversations I have with various people whiz around in my head as I reflect about the program. Speaking with some of the other staff members, I know that most are also committed to providing an excellent co-operative education program but sometimes the terms they use leave me with the feeling that either they do not care about the individual students or their visions of a good program are very different from mine. Perhaps they believe students are simply part of the Co-op Program, rather than being whom the Co-op Program is for? In particular, I wonder about the words we use to describe the students or the program and whether they have a negative effect on program delivery or whether they are just ‘words’.

One of the terms that precipitated this contemplation was heard during a discussion in a group staff meeting about recruiting and retaining students in the Co-op Program. It happened over three years ago but I have not forgotten it. A coordinator referred to the fact that once students joined the program in her academic area, they usually stayed so she focused on recruitment. She did not feel that program delivery needed improvements or changes. Her
words were, as I heard them, “All I have to do is get them in to the mousetrap.” I could not help but ask myself, is the Co-op Program a trap? How does this comment and the metaphor of a trap - almost definitely intended to be humorous I will acknowledge - pervade the relationship between the students and staff in that Co-op Program? What effect does that have on the student experience? Are there other instances where ‘words’ have coded or metaphoric meanings that could be problematic?

Another phrase that bothered me occurred during a discussion about job performance. A major component of performance measurement is based on the number of interactions we have with potential and current co-op employers. During these interactions, called job development, the main goal is expected to be the development of co-op positions. I questioned why we weren’t measured on student development or interaction. I commented that much of my time is spent speaking with students to learn about their interests, their courses and their career goals in order to better support their professional development and academic learning. I was told that I was doing the right thing and it was important to get to know my ‘widgets’ before I could ‘sell’ them. Again, most certainly meant in jest, the metaphor in that comment appalled me. The students I work with are people, not mice or widgets. Furthermore, I do not sell them, I try to find work opportunities that provide benefits, including learning experiences. How is it that someone who undoubtedly cares for students and their learning experience uses metaphors to refer to students like that?

I also think about conversations I have with faculty members regarding the learning outcomes of the various programs. In Co-op, there is focus on determining specific competencies that students gain while at university. Competencies, according to the co-op staff experiential learning committee, are important to identify and define so that we can support
students in articulating what they can do, what knowledge they can apply, and how they can approach tasks in the workplace. This of course is also helpful when we are promoting the benefits of hiring co-op students. In addition to ten core competencies that all university graduates and professionals in the workplace have to some degree, each academic program helps students develop discipline-specific ones. We are tasked to determine what those are. In a recent conversation with a faculty member, I tried to discuss what the discipline-specific competencies might be in that program. The responses I got was something like: we are not a vocational program; we do not teach students to do specific things for the employer community; we teach them to think so they can decide what to do, how to do and when to do specific tasks. That’s what co-op does – it prepares students for the working world.

The faculty member’s comment that co-op is a program that prepares students for the working world was an eye-opening comment for me because it challenged my own beliefs. I have always felt that I work in the education field, not in a workforce preparation program. Undoubtedly people pursue education for career development but I believe that there is much more to education. Yet the faculty member’s comment coincides with countless conversations I have with students who tell me their goal in the Co-op Program is to get a good job or a good salary. A few, however, do tell me they would like to learn more about a certain topic or about themselves.

These conversations fade in my thoughts as I start to visualize an image of a production facility. Through leading-edge technology, high-quality work, and a personalized touch, a commodity of the highest calibre is produced. The production facility, third best of its kind in Canada, transforms widgets into products that are better than the competitor's and are easily upgradeable. The brightly shining products, suitable for the global marketplace, are bought
faster and for more money. But the benefits do not stop there. During production, a buyer can
test out the product and help mould it to ensure that there is a perfect fit, an extended trial period,
one could say. The production process is so efficient that over 1000 purchasers benefit from
over 40 varieties of this valuable resource each year.

This machine-like metaphor is what comes to mind for me when I consider the words
used to describe co-op students and the Co-op Program at the University of Victoria. I continue
to wonder whether images or words such as those described have an impact on the way we
deliver the program or the experiences by those involved. My feelings towards these images and
words have always been of discomfort and I decided to look deeper into the issue. Perhaps our
pursuit of offering and providing a quality cooperative education program for our students is
compromised by another pursuit, one of training students, rather than educating them, for the
working world (rather than for the students). My study is a focus on the words and metaphors
we use in this program.

Cooperative Education at the University of Victoria

Located on the southern tip of Vancouver Island, the University of Victoria (UVic)
enjoys an abundance of quality educational programs. One such program is co-operative
education. The University of Victoria has the third largest cooperative education program in the
country, having grown from a small science-based program in the mid 1970s to a program where
one in every four UVic students from 45 academic disciplines participates in co-operative
education. (University of Victoria Co-operative Education Program and Career Services, 2009)

Co-operative education (Co-op) is an educational program whereby students combine
classroom-based learning with workplace learning. According to the 2009 website Co-op “is an
integrated approach to higher education which enables bright, highly motivated students to alternate academic terms on campus with relevant, paid, full time work experience.” The program’s intent is to enhance degree programs so that students receive theoretical information as well as practical training. By doing this, the program positively contributes to the education of its students, what the Program refers to as producing “high-calibre graduates who are better prepared to pursue productive careers.”

In the Faculty of Social Sciences, co-operative education is an optional experiential education program within each of the seven disciplines. Students can choose to apply to the Co-op Program and will be admitted by meeting academic requirements, including GPA, being in the right stage of their degree program (between second and third year and after taking prerequisite courses in some disciplines), as well as by intending to complete the Co-op Program requirements. The Program requires four co-op placements, or approximately 16 months of workplace-based learning. When students complete these requirements, they earn a degree with 'co-op designation' and practical experience that enables them to better compete for career positions, and in some cases enables them to better understand concepts learned in coursework.

The idea of co-op seems to be very popular with Social Science students since many apply and enter the program. In fact, as a Social Sciences Co-op Coordinator, I have noticed that many students state in their Co-op Program applications that they came to UVic solely because of the co-operative education opportunities. Upon analysing the admission statistics of the Social Sciences Co-op Program, one can see that the number of students admitted into the program has grown over the past few years with 164 new co-op students in the 2003-04 school year to 196 new co-op students in the 2007-08 year – an almost 20% increase.
However, despite the apparent popularity of the Social Sciences Co-op Program, almost half of the students who are admitted into the program don't even complete one co-op placement. This is according to my analysis of the admission and co-op placement statistics from the co-op database. These students have passed admission requirements, which included convincing program staff through their application letter of interest that they intended to complete four co-op placements. These students have also attended the preparation seminars, which consist of over nine hours of class time and assignments. They have agreed to the Terms and Conditions of Co-op and have likely heard from program participants and staff about the various benefits and potential experiences. For some reason, when the times comes to apply for co-op placements, the students do not or give up trying if they have been unsuccessful in a given term. Co-op Program staff members commonly attribute this to a lack of student engagement.

Student engagement is a concept that has gained much attention from the UVic Co-op Program. In 2006, a Co-op committee was designated to conduct researched on student engagement. “The goal of the project was to discover how the program can best motivate students to actively participate in co-op” (University of Victoria Co-operative Education, n.d., p. 8.) This research included a review of relevant literature about student participation in universities, career education, employee engagement, and youth culture. The committee did not, however, find published work that explored student engagement in co-operative education programs. In order to fill this information gap and find out more about active student participation, or engagement, at the University of Victoria, the committee conducted surveys and focus groups with current and non-co-op students, and interviewed staff. Through these methods, they explored numerous factors that affect student engagement with the intent of using
this information to create strategies for the Co-op Program to increase students’ participation and increase student retention.

In addition to this UVic initiated study on student engagement, the Co-op Program evaluates its success by various quantitative measures. Numbers, numbers, and more numbers help practitioners evaluate whether the program is succeeding. Co-op Program admission statistics help us measure how well we have communicated the benefits of co-op to potential students. Comparison of these statistics with the number of students in the Social Sciences disciplines guides us in deciding which disciplines to focus our marketing efforts in. The number of co-op opportunities posted indicates how well we are locating viable co-op opportunities. Placement statistics indicate how well we are preparing our students to compete for these opportunities. Other numbers are the ratings that students and employers give to the questions on the program evaluation forms, which help us measure the quality of our service.

Some qualitative information helps us evaluate the Co-op Program and guides our practice. Through the course of administering the Co-op Program, we meet with students and employers. Although difficult to quantify and rarely tracked, during these meetings it is common to be told information that influences the way we deliver the program. For example, students indicated that they do not read generic mass emails. As a result, I send targeted messages and always include a subject line that indicates the content of the email.

The Co-op Program does gather qualitative information about the quality of our services through formalized processes as well. The program evaluation forms include areas where employers and students can comment on the evaluative questions, as well as give a rating. During student and employer advisory boards meetings, co-op students and co-op employers
discuss important issues that Co-op practitioners are faced with, which can lead to co-op policy and process changes.

I believe there are many effective processes in place to analyze the Co-op Program’s effectiveness and success. Staff members regularly gather and contemplate qualitative and quantitative information and when unique issues arise, special projects are undertaken. For instance, in 2008, a coop student was hired to investigate the factors that contribute to aboriginal student involvement in UVic Co-op. From my perspective there is a wealth of information about UVic Co-op. Many established processes help us evaluate the program, identify areas of concern, contemplate alternate ways of doing things, and generally guide us in practice. However, is this enough? Perhaps the very evaluative processes we use disable us from seeing other perspectives or issues. I believe this to be the case.

**Statement of the Problem**

As a Co-op Coordinator I have spoken with numerous students whose main objective is to ‘get a good job’ and this concerns me because for many the definition of a good job is a well-paying one. The definition of a good job for these students does not include factors such as contributing to a healthy society, one in which the incumbent learns something new everyday, or one that the incumbent feels excited to go to every day. For some reason, other potential goals of good jobs seem to be subordinated by a goal to make money.

I understand that it is crucial from an economic perspective to make a salary that will pay for rent, food, tuition and all of life’s expenses but I also believe that we, as an educational program, and the students are missing out on a huge opportunity if ‘good jobs’ are the only goal,
let alone if ‘good jobs’ are defined only by economic factors. Why would the goal of an education program not be learning?

Discourses of globalization.

My reflections about the goal of education stem from the effects of globalism. In Chapter Two I outline in more detail the importance of globalization; however, for introductory purposes I will outline how I understand globalization and why it is important to this study. Globalization – as a discourse that influences organizations and social relations is primarily concerned with increasing global connectedness and uniformity: among its effects are an emphasis on international competition, increasing access to resources, and a neoliberal business-minded focus (Bell & Stevenson, 2006). Competition at a global level therefore is seen to facilitate the notion that students are mobile intellectual resources that are acquiring skills to meet the needs of a globalized economic system; when they graduate, they become mobile capital in the labour market (Whiteley, Aguiar, Marten, 2008). “Students have much more information on where to study, and study choices are not limited to national boundaries; academic staff have easier access to sources, materials, and colleagues across the world; and many higher education institutions themselves experience that the days of competition at solely a regional and national level are over” (p. 117).

Neoliberalism is a focus on economic and business imperatives. “The marketization is evident from the way universities worldwide adopt or ‘import’ free market practices from the corporate sector and let themselves be guided by managerial doctrines in their decision-making” (Askehave, 2007, p. 724). Through a neoliberalism lens, people make decisions by considering financial implications rather than social ones and operate institutions as if saving money outweighs other organizational goals.
The effects and characteristics of globalization in education is a debated topic. Education institutions are “deeply challenged by a worldwide and pervasive process known as ‘globalization,’ which is affecting them in several ways. This process is extremely complex and has therefore been discussed and analyzed from different points of view, some celebrating and emphasizing this phenomenon and others severely attacking and denigrating it” (Striano, 2009, p. 379). It is generally acknowledged that globalism has influenced social institutions such as schools and universities (Burnett & Huisman, 2010), which can be traced by monitoring its effects on the organization, social relations, and discourse of these institutions.

Bureaucracy is a way that institutions are organized to maximize precision, speed, clarity, regularity, reliability, and efficiency of operations through prescribed rules, fixed roles for organizational members, and authorized supervision by senior members (Morgan, 2006). A focus on efficiency has resulted in a production metaphor within education, which minimizes educator’s roles as producers and administrators (Goodman, 1995) and reduces the students’ role to consideration as human capital or as clients (Askehave, 2007). Bureaucratic education reinforces a divide and ensuing power relations between groups of people because of the overt forms of control including hierarchical structure, rules, and processes (Ferguson, 1984). Regimented structure and process in education programs has reduced learning to a process whereby students are learning how to live in a bureaucratized global economy, rather than learning to critically assess situations, contemplate alternatives, and collectively create a future in which the society, economy, and environment thrives (Goodman, 1995).

It seems to me that the UVic Co-op Program co-op may communicate through its policies, processes, and its communication materials in ways that address an underlying neoliberal ideology that some of us – the stakeholders - may not be fully cognizant. This carries
an ideological goal that is centred on economic imperatives such as preparing students for the working world (one that pays for work), rather than social ones such as educating students to be civic-minded or committed to life-long learning. Analyzing the discourse, or the use of language as a form of social practice (Fairclough, 1995) is a useful way to further understand what is happening in the Social Sciences Co-op Program.

**Discourse and discourse analysis.**

To elaborate on a definition of discourse and the importance of considering it, discourse is the medium through which economic, social, and cultural processes transpire. It is problematic, however, when the ideologies manifest in discourse are opaque, when unjust discourses proliferate uncontested, and when discursive alternatives are not considered. In these circumstances, it is of paramount importance for critical educators to reveal and confront such ideological-discursive practices through critical discourse analytical research. (Ayers, 2005, p. 529)

To re-phrase a popular slogan, sticks and stones may break bones but words can change lives. I have always been fond of words. It is very interesting to me how words are able to have an effect on perspectives, attitudes, and behaviours (Ferguson, 1984). Indeed, they “provide a parameter within which notions of truth and knowledge are formed” (Bell & Stevenson, 2006, p. 18).

So if discourses confine us to thinking in specific ways, possibly without our awareness, it would be useful, if not crucial, to expose and analyse these underlying ideologies of the Co-op Program to ensure that the program is organized, through its discursive elements, in a way that does not undermine its purpose or exploit any of the stakeholders, namely students.
An understanding of how discourses influence beliefs and understanding has lead to numerous discourse analysis studies in education, including Whiteley, Aguiar, and Marten (2008), Ayers (2005), Fisher, Rubenson, Jones & Shanahan (2009), Oughton (2007) and Fairclough (1995). Discourse analysis “is concerned with relations between discourse and other social elements, and relations between texts as discoursal elements of events” (Fairclough, 2005, p. 924) and genres as discoursal elements of networks of social practices.

When looking at critical language studies in various research journals, even in for example, the *Journal of Cooperative Education and Internships*, which is the key international publication on experiential education (http://www.ceiainc.org/journal/), I found no publication about critical discourse analysis or any critical language study on co-operative education or work-integrated learning programs. This presented an opportunity to contribute to bodies of knowledge in higher education, co-operative education, and discourse analysis. Through research, there also is opportunity to inspire educators in co-operative education or other work-integrated learning programs to consider the ideological forces that influence the experience of the participants and the impact of the programs.

**Research Question**

How are economic-centred ideologies perpetuated in the discourse or the language and other communicative elements of the Co-op Program? That is the main question that guides this study but other questions are also explored and contemplated. How is ideology as it appears in the discourse involved in shaping the social processes of the program, and specifically the educational experience? As shown in past critical discourse studies (Ayers, 2005), does the discourse reflect a tendency to favour a particular stakeholder, other than the students, through
dominant discourses that shape the meanings of social and material processes so as to secure the interests of powerful regimes?

**Personal Research Objectives**

Looking at the discourse in the Social Sciences Co-op Program is significant in two main ways. I foresee it making an impact in the practice and profession of a co-op coordinator by contributing to the theories about work-place learning. Secondly, I expect it to have personal significance to me, as it will facilitate my academic and professional growth.

Through this study, I hope to contribute to the advancement of co-operative education at the University of Victoria. As noted, the staff members at the UVic Co-op Program continually measure the program’s success through various evaluations. Through critically analyzing the discourse, I hope to highlight issues that are opaque, such as underlying assumptions and processes that limit students’ freedom, choice, and potential. Issues such as these are not normally considered, explored, or exposed through current research and evaluation practice. I believe that a study such as this one can remind practitioners to critically think about what we say and do, as well as how that can affect the educational experience of students in our programs.

As a graduate student of leadership, this study required me to learn more about and conduct discourse analysis, a type of study that I have been long interested in, without realizing it existed or knowing what it was called before being in a graduate program. It enabled me to self-reflect about my ontology and future in academic research. I purposely chose an analytical framework that is new to me so that I could learn about a new way of research.

As a practitioner in the Co-op Program, I work directly with the various stakeholders and issues. I am affected by my daily experiences and cannot help but reflect on theoretical
implications on practice. I believe that in addition to what we know about the obstacles and challenges already vis-à-vis, coop, there is much more to learn. Because none of the current research methods used in the University of Victoria Co-op Programs and only a few studies have explored the language of Co-op Program practitioners, I believe there is opportunity to create new knowledge.

Methodology

This study is borne from my feelings of discomfort as a practitioner in the University of Victoria Social Sciences Co-op Program. Using my discomfort as a starting point of my research, I analysed the discourse of the Co-op Program by identifying and describing the word choice, grammar, and other semiotic features such as length, format, and social position of the writer/reader of three texts used in the program, and then analyzed the relationship between the text and the subjects: students, employers, co-op practitioners, and other members of the University community. What I mean by semiotic features are those conventions that convey meaning, particularly how social relations and underlying ideologies are represented and conveyed in such conventions. The three texts include a webpage that describes co-operative education at the University of Victoria, a contractual document that outlines the terms and conditions of student participation in the Co-op Program, and a brochure for employers promoting the services of UVic Co-op and Career. More details about discourse analysis of specific texts will be offered in Chapter Three: Methodology.

In addition to considering texts in this analysis, I looked at the greater discursive environment of the UVic Social Sciences Co-op Program. This entailed looking at the discourse of the BC Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development, the University of
Victoria, and the Canadian Association for Co-operative Education (CAFCE). This step in the study enabled me to better understand the relationship between the textual representation, including the social interaction represented in that representation and the greater social context (Fairclough, 1989).

**Researcher’s Standpoint**

As a staff member in the UVic Social Sciences Co-op Program for over two years, I work within the discourses that I wish to explore and analyse. My exploration and analysis will be influenced by this daily interaction, which I cannot help but reflect upon and be guided by. This, I believe, is acceptable because the knowledge of the stakeholders being studied (I am one) is important and valid. I believe that there are multiple realities; there are various ways to experience, see, and interpret the world. While each way brings a valuable new perspective, it is important to note that I was guided by my own experiences, observations, and interpretations. I do not believe that it is the only way to study the UVic Co-op Program, nor do I believe that it should be.

The standpoint I have combines critical theory approach with postmodern approaches to research. By critical, I mean that I attempt to detect and unmask of beliefs and practices that limit human freedom, justice and democracy (Scott & Usher, 1996). In researching the discourse of UVic Co-op, namely in the Social Sciences program, I believe that it is important to explicate underlying assumptions and processes that may limit student’s freedom, choice, and potential. Also referring to Scott & Usher’s writing on epistemological assumptions, I follow a postmodern approach and reject the notion of a single truth: “Postmodernism challenges the powerful view that there is a determinate world which can be definitively known and explained” (p. 25).
Through this perspective, I hope that my analysis will enlighten me and other co-operative education practitioners in one of many points of view.

One of the research perspectives that has influenced my study is institutional ethnography, which is a mode of enquiry that explores social relations through texts and social events (Smith, 2005). It fits well into a critical, postmodern research perspective since it is based on the notion of multiple realities and that each reality is true to those that experience it. This approach considers people as the experts of their own lives. Therefore, I used my experiences, observations, and interpretations as a starting point and as a guide to investigate the Co-op Program’s discursive elements. Although I am the ‘researcher’, I am also the subject: “Identifying what is to be made problematic puts the researcher into the picture as an actor in what is going on” (Campbell and Gregor, 2002, p. 48). As a Co-op Coordinator and the ‘researcher’ for this study, I am very much involved with what goes on in the Social Sciences Co-op Program and it is from that standpoint that I conducted my exploration.

It is also relevant to state my orientation towards education. I believe that the goal of post-secondary education should be multi-faceted but should primarily focus on student learning and development. A focus on learning and development helps students succeed in life by facilitating critical thinking, self-confidence, civic engagement, and life-long learning with a ‘good job’ being a great outcome if the other goals are met. I believe that learning should be personal in that it is unique and internal to each individual, but shared through discussion, which leads to greater understanding, reflection and growth. Learning should lead to the development of personal schema and the ability to reflect on one’s experience and knowledge to be able to thrive in new situations (like employment). This type of learning is called constructivist learning (Walker, 2002) and fits well with the Deweyian perspective of reflective learning through
experience (Striano, 2009). If students learn to interpret and learn from their own unique experiences, then I believe they can become better prepared to adapt to new experiences and understand the practices and institutions that may limit their freedom, social justice and democracy.

Co-operative education, as an education model centred on experiential learning, is an excellent way to promote constructivist learning, however, because it is an interface between organizations that employ students and the university, it cannot or does not always seize the opportunity to facilitate constructivist learning. Instead, cooperative education may facilitate the training of students for the labour market. I realize that many believe that this benefits our economy and is great for student’s bank accounts and career growth but I’m not sure that co-operative educators mean to fast track students into the labour market with the absence of or minimal focus on learning in between. If this were the case, perhaps the Co-operative Education Program would be called something like the ‘Get a Good Job Program.’ I feel that the Co-op Program operates in many ways like a job placement program, rather than an educational program and that is the social problem that I hope to address through this research.

**Limitations Of This Study**

As with all research, there are limitations in a study such as this. These limitations are the result of the fact that I, Helen Kobrc, am the researcher, and the institution that I hope to benefit may not be able to respond to my findings. It is important to identify these limitations so that the readers of this study have as much information as possible to better interpret the information and that I am not seen to have false hopes or inaccurate perceptions of the institutions I am working within.
I am a student who has chosen to use critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1988) an analytical framework that I found during my research of academic writing. My use of this framework is as good as my interpretations of the framework. I have not taken a class that taught me how to follow a critical discourse analysis framework. I have read numerous methods books and articles (such as Fairclough, 1988; Fairclough, 1995; Fairclough 2003; Campbell and Gregor, 2002) as well as read articles by others who have conducted critical discourse analyses (including Whiteley, Aguiar, and Marten, 2008; Ayers, 2005; Fisher, Rubenson, Jones & Shanahan, 2009; Oughton, 2007). While I feel that I chose an analysis framework that I am capable of using, this is the first time that I have used it.

Because there are multiple truths, it is important to remember that I have presented just one of them. Anyone else could have explored other discourses and made other interpretations. Therefore, my study has revealed only partial truth. It has not found an answer; it has found a new perspective.

In this study, I looked at and interpreted a range of communication documents and have reflected on their significance, purpose and outcomes from the textual and visual features, as well as from my experiences. I did this without speaking to students, colleagues, or other stakeholders as part of this study. Thus, the data and interpretation revealed only partial truth: my truth.

Working within the institution that I analysed poses a possible limitation in that my professional duties and my academic exploration may clash. It is possible that the dominant ideologies that I highlighted and then challenged will be those that are upheld by management. I may be seen as an antagonist or, worse, as someone who is embarking on an unrealistic ideological crusade that isn’t grounded in reality.
CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

In this chapter, I examine the literature that provides the theoretical background for my study. I begin with a broad discussion of globalization, as it is a characteristic of our society that influences the neoliberal lens through which some see and interpret the world. A description of neoliberalism is included, which is followed by a discussion of how both globalization and neoliberal effects are actualized in educational institutions. Then I explore how the literature shows that bureaucratic organization is a favoured way of organizing institutions, including education ones, in a globalized and neoliberal society. Bureaucracy and neoliberalism has ill effects on education, which is explored in the following two sections. I conclude this chapter with sections that discuss how dominant ideologies can be illusive but identifiable in discourse, define what discourse it and outline why it is important to analyze it within the research methodological frameworks of semiotic analysis.

Globalization

We live in a globalized society where our lives are increasingly converged with lives of those across the world. Convergence is the main theme of globalization discourses; it emphasizes “the coming together of economies, industries, communications, media, entertainment, cultures, people into a universal, post-historical Utopia” (Bates, 2002, p. 139). This convergence has led to

…’turbo-capitalism’, which on a world scale now seems unstoppable, is destroying its own foundations as it undermines democratic stability and the state’s ability to function. The pace of change and the redistribution of power
and prosperity are eroding the old social entities more rapidly than the new order can develop. The countries that have so far enjoyed prosperity are now eating up the social substance of their cohesion even faster than they destroy the environment. (Martin and Schumann, 1997, as cited in Bates, 2002, p. 140)

Social destruction is most evident in the developing world, where capitalist-based policies are globalizing poverty. This results in a “20:80 world in which the wealthiest 20 percent of nations control 80 percent of the wealth and the poorest 80 percent make do with 20 percent of the wealth” (p. 140). So while globalization is about convergence, it is also a process of separation and exclusion. Indeed, “the globalization of the free market appears to produce not the universal, rationally ordered, equitable society that its advocates promised, but rather a condition of polarization and maldistribution, of privilege and exclusion which is unstable and unsustainable economically, ecologically, socially and politically” (p. 141).

Four issues that many agree upon as causes of discontent are the globalization of technology, finance, production, and culture (Bates, 2002). Technology facilitates “instant access to prodigious amounts of information and the rapid transfer of information between those who have access to the technology” (p. 141), which can allow for the distribution of misinformation and maintains power to those who have access to technology versus those that do not. Technology also enables the rapid distribution of products and resources, includes transfer of financial capital between nation states, which destabilizes currencies and create devastating effects on economies through the “disconnection between the paper value of assets and the productive capacity of particular firms and countries” (p. 142). A focus on efficient production due to intense competition and a migration of production to countries with lowest
costs and minimal or absent environmental and social standards ensues and contributes to a culture of competitive individualism instead of a culture of collectivism and civic engagement.

Similarly, within the field of education, there is reference to four interrelated pressures experienced globally: international competition, mobile capital, an aging population, and the domination of economic imperatives and the discourse of ‘affordability’ over social objectives (Bell & Stevenson, 2006). With the rise of economies in South East Asia, many industries in the West face greater competition. Technology has also contributed to competition because advances in communication and transport have resulted in mobile capital.

Some demographic trends that are experienced globally include a lower birth rate, an increasing life expectancy, and human mobility. These trends are creating pressures on state resources (Bell & Stevenson, 2006). An aging population impacts almost all parts of our society as less people are in the workforce and more people are in retirement. Therefore, social issues have become aligned with the need to regenerate the labour markets, “The dominance in recent years of economic interests has had a significant impact on how education policy has been aligned with the need to develop human capital” (p. 37).

The fourth interrelated pressure within our globalized world is the promotion of economic imperatives, rather than social ones. “Advocates of these economic principles argue that the sole purpose of government is to provide a favourable climate for business and industry; this public well-being becomes less a civic endeavour and more a function of market activity” (Ayers, 2005, p. 530). Many organizations, whether private for-profit, public, or not-for-profit, design programs, policies, products, and services based on economic principles such as supply and demand, price, quality, and efficiency, not social objectives. While one can expect economic principles to dominate in revenue-driven, or ‘for-profit’, companies, these ‘marketization’
pressures are felt in public institutions such as hospitals, schools, and social service providers as well.

The dominance of economic perspectives that pervades society is what I will refer to as neoliberalism. Neoliberalism is a political ideology that has been studied by many including sociologists, political scientists, policy analysts, and educators. In simple terms neoliberalism can be described as an ideological perspective that is based on market ideologies (Bell & Stevenson, 2006). In the context of government, one can define neoliberalism as “the subjection of the state to the requirements of capital, including the privatization and marketization of state functions” (Bates, 2002, p. 149). A broader definition considers neoliberalism as a political ideology that

promotes free markets and unfettered free-trade. It prescribes a limited role for government and emphasizes the role of the private sector, encouraging deregulation, decentralization and privatization. Drawing on the micro-economic theory of rational choice, and rational actor theory, neo-liberalism is also a microeconomic theory that promotes freedom and choice for individuals. (Fisher, Rubenson, Jones & Shanahan, 2008, p. 550)

As with globalization, neoliberalism is a perspective that impacts many parts of our society, including post-secondary education.

**Education, Globalization, and Neoliberalism**

A shift towards entrepreneurialism in the post-secondary education sector was noted by Fisher, Rubenson, Jones and Shanahan (2008) in their comparative analysis of the political economies of post-secondary education in British Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec. In their
paper, they identify and analyse five policy themes by describing how they actualize in each province. These five themes are accessibility, accountability, labour force development, marketization, and research and development.

As a mechanism to develop national labour force and increase national competiveness, education has a prominent role in a globalized world. As the world’s workforce ages the mobility of people and the access to international goods and services increases and competition for goods and services becomes fiercer. Competition for power between countries escalates. Education plays a major role in helping states create wealth, known as human capital, which is defined as “sum of education and skill that can be used to produce wealth” (Bell & Stevenson, 2006, p. 42). This perspective is based on the assumption that there is national economic benefit in having an educated and skilled workforce and economic prosperity is the most important benefit to be enjoyed. Indeed, “the dominance in recent years of economic interest has had a significant impact on how education policy has been aligned with the need to develop human capital” (p. 37). Education is instrumental in helping develop strong economies and societies.

While education is an important means to national success in a globalized world, the post-secondary system itself is deeply affected by neoliberalism. “Where universities were once centres of education, they have now also become hubs of entrepreneurial activity on many levels” (Whiteley, Aguiar & Marten, 2008, p. 134). Education institutions compete against each other for the best students, for government funding and for private sponsorship. They spend vast amounts of money to attract academic superstars for grants, prestige, merit and knowledge creation. Their operations and policies closely mirror those of business in that market forces guide decisions.
Business principles pervade the administration and organization of education as well. Contemporary education policies “tie together individual, consumer choice in education markets with rhetorics and policies aimed at furthering national economic interests. The administration of education in many ways mirrors the management of business” (Ball, 1998, p. 123).

Fairclough (1995) calls this phenomenon the marketization of higher education and believes that “institutions of higher education come increasingly to operate (under government pressure) as if they were ordinary business competing to sell their products to consumers” (p. 141). According to Fairclough, post-secondary institutions are changing their organizational structure to align with business such as using managerial approaches in staff appraisal and training, financial accountability, and marketing.

Ball (1998) points to “a new managerialism that is the insertion of the theories and techniques of business management and the ‘cult of excellence’ into public sector institutions” (p.123). An impact that is emerging from this new managerialism is that educational institutions have tried to develop quality programs in the pursuit of competitiveness (Bottery, 2000). As such, “the concept of ‘quality’ is being widely used to pursue particular (privatized) agendas in education, and in other areas of the public sector as well” (p. 82). Bottery identifies seven conceptions of the term - traditional, expert, bureaucratic, ‘cold’ management, ‘hot’ management, consumer, and civic qualities - and concludes that there has been a glossing over of the differences between the public and private sectors, and through the pursuit of almost exclusively private sector agendas, managerialist and consumer uses of quality have produced a reduced professional autonomy, increased political and managerial control over the working of the education system and the strengthening of an ‘evaluative’ state. Crucially they lead to the loss of personal visions
concerning what a public good might mean, and how education might contribute to the development of an internal locus for a concept of quality, based upon the notion of civic culture. (p. 82)

As an illustration of neoliberalism in education, Goodman (1986) writes, “the costs of building schools, hiring new administrators and teachers, and obtaining new types of resources (e.g., textbooks) were justified almost entirely within a functionalist, marketplace rationale” (p. 4). In the United States, the education of children was justified under the assumption that there would be a ‘positive return’ on taxpayer’s investment because there would be a more productive workforce in terms of their parents working and them being trained to work in the future.

**Education and Bureaucracy**

Efficiency is a concept that has much appeal to those who are leading organizations based on neoliberal imperatives since maximizing revenues while minimizing costs during operation is key to financial success. For Goodman (1996)

Perhaps more than any other values during this century, efficiency and productivity have been the foundation on which our current educational system exists. These values have significantly shaped the organizational structure of schools, including the staffing arrangements, curricular and instructional development, the definition of learning, and the way in which we have come to measure the quality of our children’s education. (p.15)

One of the ways to achieve efficient and productive organizations is by design. A prominent instructional design ensued that includes three stages: determining learning objectives; aligning resources and activities to achieve that; evaluate programs to measure
whether objectives were learned. Perhaps the most famous design, but certainly the most prevalent, is that of a well-run machine – a bureaucracy- understood as “the most efficient form of administration known in industrial societies” (Perrow, 1986, p. 4).

Organizations are established because they fill some sort of need as an instrument to achieve other ends (Morgan, 2006). This is just like machines. Through the industrial revolution and the subsequent mechanization of labour, organizations also became mechanized and bureaucratic. Operations were designed to enhance efficiency and tasks were therefore to be done in a precise way, by the best person.

The development of bureaucratic organizational theory is credited to Max Weber and the bureaucratic organization is typically referred to as ‘bureaucracy.’ Bureaucracy is “a form of organization that emphasizes precision, speed, clarity, regularity, reliability, and efficiency achieved through the creation of a fixed division of tasks, hierarchical supervision, and detailed rules and regulations” (Morgan, 2006, p. 17). As a sociologist, Weber was interested in the social consequences of bureaucratic organizations. He believed that while bureaucracy could be credited to routinizing and mechanizing processes, it also had the potential to erode the human spirit (Morgan, p. 17).

Conceptualizing organizations like machines and organizing them into bureaucracy can have many benefits when there is a straightforward task to perform or when the environment is stable so that the products produced are always and consistently in need (Morgan, 2006). Bureaucracies can easily produce exactly the same product again and again, very precisely. Organizations can have spectacular success using that model as long as the human parts of the bureaucracy are as compliant as an inanimate part of a machine. This would apply to the human workers, as well as the human inputs and outputs.
However, there are limitations and negative impacts of bureaucratic organizations, or seeing organizations like machines. Focusing solely on process and organizational design can put the organization in jeopardy of not adapting to its environment because of incapability to change or incapability to detect when change is necessary (Morgan, 2006). However the most important limitations that relate to this study are those that directly impact the social fabric of the organization – the people. Bureaucracies can result in mindless and unquestioning behaviour where people perform their tasks as per plan but do not take time to realize the bigger picture or to contemplate improvements. “The mechanistic approach to organization tends to limit rather than mobilize the development of human capacities, moulding human beings to fit the requirements of mechanical organization rather than building the organization around their strengths and potentials” (p. 31).

Hodgkinson (1991) maintains that modern education is essentially bureaucratic in its structure. “The reality of life in the late twentieth century is an organizational environment of large and generally efficient bureaucratic systems: ministries, hospitals, police and armed forces, research institutes, schools, colleges, universities” (p. 55). He lists several bureaucratic characteristics found in education such as hierarchy, role formalism, recordkeeping and paperwork and impersonal rules and regulations. He refers to education’s claim to superior efficiency and effectiveness through rationality as “the superior deployment of reason in decision making policy analysis, and organizational structure and function” (p. 54). He also gives credit to bureaucracy for providing society with rational order, impartial and impersonal equity, and extensive numeration and quantification and statistics:

Bureaucracy in its technical sense, as expounded in the Weberian ideal type, is a good thing. It is rational, benevolent, efficient, reflective, and fair. It connects
means with ends according to the best principles of logic, science and jurisprudence. This ideal remains unimpeached *qua* ideal. Yet both layman [sic] and social scientist have other views. For the man [sic] in the street, bureaucracy is a *bad* thing. It seems to him to be irrational, malevolent, inefficient, ineffective and inequitable. For the social scientist it is a more problematic thing. The problem for social science is to explain why the empirical reality so often departs from or falls short of the ideal type. (p. 57)

Six interrelated negative outcomes, or illnesses, of bureaucracy are hierarchy, superficiality, dramaturgy, power, consensualism, and characterology (Hodgkinson, 1991). These ‘bureaupathologies’ are universal and endemic in complex organizations, including post-secondary institutions. Hierarchy facilitates the dissonance between seniority level and knowledge of the organization’s core process, which results in situations where managers do not understand or know what it is like to do the main activity of the organization and thus rely on their subordinates for information needed to make decisions. This results in inefficiency. Assuming that people are influenced by perception and are political in nature they may focus on playing the part of a productive employee rather than being one. Bureaucratic structures also give “ample scope for the Machiavellian administrator who can pursue personal ends behind the façade of bureaucratic reality” (p. 56). These personal ends usually entail the enlargement of their organizational power bases by avoiding conflict and making decisions based on gaining consensus. Lastly, bureaucracy is a social construction; it is only as good as the people.

Through hierarchy and predetermined roles, bureaucracy facilitates power differences. Perrow (1986) believes that bureaucracy has become “a means, both in capitalist and noncapitalist [sic] countries, of centralizing power in society and legitimating or disguising that
centralization” (p 5). Bureaucracy gives a few members of society social power as they control large numbers of other members just by virtue of where they are situated in the hierarchy and what roles they have. Admittedly, bureaucratic organizational life is ubiquitous; everyone has grown up in them so to stand outside them is almost impossible. If one could, one would identify and understand the effect of bureaucracies on people’s beliefs, values, and experiences.

The Ill Effects of Bureaucracy on Education

Bureaucracy has been scrutinized for its negative effect on academic institutions and education for failing to be a successful form of organization and for its negative effects on people. Goodman (1995) highlights that a focus on efficiency means that people’s jobs are seen as means of production. In other words, employee experiences are not specifically considered in decisions how the organization is run or how it produces. “The goal of ‘task analysis’ was solely to increase the efficiency and productivity of those responsible for getting the job done” (p. 8). Educators are less and less involved intellectually with curriculum content or learning but rather are concerned with administering education. One can easily see the similarities between the school system and business:

Throughout this century, schools in our society have been based upon a model of the efficient and productive business organizations. Test scores have become the product of schools, students have become the workers who produce this product using the instructional programs given to them by the organization, teachers have become shop-floor managers who oversee the students to make sure work gets competed correctly and on time, school principals have become ‘plant’ supervisors who manage the school’s personnel, and the emotional concerns of students and
their families are addressed by specialist such as social workers and school counsellors. (p. 11)

Although this comparison relates to primary/secondary schooling, its principles can be applied to post-secondary schooling by changing a few of the descriptions such as products being skilled labourers, rather than test scores and supervisors being managers, directors, and deans, rather than school principals.

Bureaucracy and its discourse has infiltrated our lives by pervading the institutional discourses we interact with everyday, including family, sexuality, and education (Ferguson, 1984). In the case of educational institutions they serve as links between organizational complexes and also between levels of society, mediating between the personal experiences of individuals in families and peer groups and the collective political culture at the organizational level…it has long been acknowledged that educational institutions reinforce the class structure, that middle-class schools prepare future managers, that working-class schools prepare industrial employees and service workers, and that lower-class schools perform basically custodial functions. (p. 43)

All schools contribute to the perpetuating reality of hierarchy and domination. The ‘better’ schools prepare the middle class students to be bureaucrats and managers, while other schools prepare students to be employees and clients.

By reinforcing power relationships through hierarchical structure and extensive processes, bureaucracy also disables critical thinking (Ferguson, 1984). In many cases education is reduced to a process whereby it is a matter of acquiring the right credentials or technical skills to stand in the right line. Put another way, education may be an exercise in
learning to tick the right boxes or earning the right initials, rather than engaging ones’ mind to contemplate theories and occurrences or dream up new perspectives.

**The Ill Effects Of Neoliberalism on Education**

Some believe that neoliberalism has taken over in Western societies (Whiteley, Aguiar & Marten, 2008). Conceptualizing social and political issues using market mechanisms is not only normal, but all-pervading. Neoliberalism has resulted in a tendency or way of life that favours individualism over collectivism, where everyone looks out for themselves and competes for salaries or scholarships. Individualism prevails in larger institutional scales as well, as in the case of governments transferring publicly owned entities such as universities to private ones that have to fend for themselves.

Neoliberalistic framing becomes an inescapable form of reassurance and that discursively constrains the possibilities of response (Ball, 1998). It constrains imagination and innovation by presenting only one way to consider a situation, by economic market indicators. Ultimately, neoliberalism reduces education to a process to train students for a predetermined neoliberal world, one that is a ‘fait accompli’ (Goodman, 1995). Education gives the “impression of inevitability woven into its socio-temporal vision” (p. 6). This predetermined fate stifles students’ potential and precludes the opportunity for transformative discussion about the kind of society that could be collectively created. A functionalistic orientation leads “to cultural reification rather than societal amelioration. Schools should be locations for utopian thinking, not crystal ball gazing. In a democracy, children need to be educated in ways that will assist them in creating the future and not merely to exist in it” (p. 6).
The purpose of public education has migrated from democratic ends to economic ends and from a spirit of participation and leadership to production and consumerism (Ayers, 2005). The result is an education system that reinforces inequality and widens the gap between the rich and poor. The focus on economic imperatives is at the expense of human rights imperatives.

Anderson and Grinberg (1998) apply Foucault’s notions of disciplinary practice to education. They state that education practices constitute forms of disciplinary power and result in effective control mechanisms, rather than ways to empower citizens. People internalize correct behaviour and perspectives through self-discipline, rather than external control. In education, “students will be exposed to discourses of the good worker, the team player, and the community builder which will provide the discursive incentive for subjects to accept authority and the norms and goals of social institutions” (p. 335).

What You Don’t Know Could Hurt You

While neoliberalism does have its critics, it is the dominant perspective in the Western world and is what most people relate to and are used to. It may now be the only way many can comprehend their world. “When people cherish some set of values and do not feel any threat to them, they experience well-being” (Mills, 1959, p. 11) and when people are unaware of any cherished values there is a time of uneasiness and indifference. Mills believed that this condition was the single feature of his era and I believe this continues to be extremely relevant today. A lack of acceptance or awareness that neoliberalism dominates our institutions, our perspectives and our relationships is a key threat because it limits our imagination of what is, should or could be. “’Man’s [sic] chief danger’ today lies in the unruly forces of contemporary society itself, with it alienating methods of production, its enveloping techniques of political
domination, its international anarchy – in a word, its pervasive transformations of the very ‘nature’ of man and the conditions and aims of his life” (p. 13).

Apart from the negative aspects of neoliberalism, the very fact that it is a dominating ideology is oppressive. Some people believe that it is important to understand a society’s system of beliefs, behaviours, myths, and rituals--in a word, its culture--to understand its ideological influences. Bates (1987) takes this perspective in studying organizations and societies. He believes that the culture of a society cannot be understood unless the complexity of people’s relationships and the struggles between dominant and subordinate cultures are taken into account.

The concept that relates to a dominating culture in society is hegemony (Bates, 1987). The education system is major contributor to reinforcement of cultural values such as relationships of power within society, as well as privileged positions of dominant groups. Bourdieu (1966) made similar assertions when stating that schools are “one of the most effective means of perpetuating the existing social pattern, as it both provides an apparent justification for social inequalities and gives recognition to the cultural heritage, that is, to a social gift treated as a natural one” (p. 33).

Language, Discourse and Power

Bourdieu (1966) believed that language was the most important part of cultural heritage because it “provides a system of transposable mental postures which themselves completely reflect and dominate the whole of experience, and as the gap between university language and that spoken in fact by the different social classes varies greatly, it is impossible to have pupils with equal rights” (p. 40).
Critical language analysts such as Fairclough (1989), maintain that it is important to increase consciousness of how language is significant to the production maintenance and change of the social relations of power and how language contributes to the domination of some people by others. He believes that this “consciousness is the first step towards emancipation” (p. 1) because unless we realize our assumptions of what is common sense, or what are our ideologies, we are at risk of reinforcing societal inequalities without our knowledge or consent to do so. “This means helping people to see the extent to which their language does rest upon common-sense assumptions, and the ways in which these common-sense assumptions can be ideologically shaped by relations of power” (p. 4).

**Discourse Analysis**

As Bourdieu’s and Fairclough’s analysis makes clear, the neoliberal agenda also manifests itself through discourse – the language, structure, and other semiotic features that convey meaning and social practice. Discursive practises represent knowledge not only in language and texts, but also in institutional and organizational practices and determine what counts as true or important in a particular place and time” (Anderson & Grinberg, 1998, p. 338). Discursive elements therefore directly and indirectly shape the way we see the world, the reason why so many social scientists take great interest in describing and explicating them.

The power of words, images and structures is not a new concept in social science research. The notion that language, texts, images, processes and structures can affect how people interact with each other and the organizations of which they are a part is the underpinnings of the research called discourse analysis. “Language can be said to 'have' people rather than people 'having' languages” (Ferguson, 1984, p. 60). She is referring to Foucault's
ideas that we are bound by our language (or discourse) in that it controls the way we see the world. By studying words and structures, one can discover unfair, and potentially unknown, biases towards certain groups. This type of critical analysis helps uncover instances whereby certain groups are marginalized based on economic class, demographic characteristics, and academic ability (Bensimon & Marshall, 1997).

The study of language is considered by some to be an important step in educational policy analysis. Discourses “shape and constrain the scope for individual agency” and “provide a parameter within which notions of truth and knowledge are formed” (Bell & Stevenson, p.18). The words, or ‘text’ of a policy tells us what the policy is about, who it is for, and what it aims to achieve. By doing so, the words frame how people understand the policy problem by using metaphors and other linguistic symbols, which also can illuminate power relations.

**Metaphoric analysis.**

Looking at the metaphors represented in discourse is another way to analyse it. Metaphors are linguistic features that are powerful communication tools and thus are used every day in a variety of mediums. They help people make connections between one thing to another without much thought. Metaphors are successful because they are “especially persuasive and emotionally compelling because [their] story line is hidden and [the] sheer poetry is often stunning” (Stone, 1997, p.156). They “can better penetrate our perceptual screens because they do not come into conflict with existing beliefs and values” (Ferguson, 1991, p.147). “Metaphor is often regarded just as a device for embellishing discourse, but its significance is much greater than this… it implies a way of thinking and a way of seeing that pervade how we understand our world generally” (Morgan, 2006, p. 4). However, while metaphors facilitate understanding of concepts by enabling us to see similarities between one thing to another, it always produces only
partial insight in that we see only similarities between those two concepts, not differences, and also challenges us to see other similarities that may exist. “Metaphor is inherently paradoxical. It can create powerful insights that also become distortions, as the way of seeing created through a metaphor becomes a way of not seeing” (p. 5).

Systemic functional linguists, or systemicists ask how people use language to make meaning and how the language is structured (Eggins, 2004). This research explores social and cultural dimensions of language use and includes a detailed and systemic description of language patterns, including morphology, the analysis of word structure; syntax, the analysis of sentence structure and semantics, the analysis of meaning (O’Grady & Dobrovolsky, 1996). Systemic functional linguistics “explores both how people use language in different contexts, and how language is structures for use as a semiotic system” (Eggins, 2004, p. 21).

This study also draws upon institutional ethnography, which is a method of inquiry used to explore the social relations that organize “institutions as people participate in them and from their perspectives” (Smith, 2005, p. 225). Its goal is to explicate power relations embedded in written materials and organizational talk and actions around texts (Campbell & Gregor, 2002). Institutional ethnography is not based in established theories but begins with individuals, their work and the material conditions of their work, as well as the forms of their cooperation and the social relations. There is no methodological framework; it is seen as a process of discovery where researchers expose new things to study while observing interactions, speaking with people, or reading texts.

It is important to also consider images when doing critical discourse analysis (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). “We see images of whatever kind as entirely within the realm of the realizations and instantiations of ideology, as means – always – for the articulation of ideological
positions” (p. 14). Visual design fulfils three major functions: images represent the world external and internal to us, called the ‘ideational’ function; they also represent social interactions and relations, called the ‘interpersonal’ function; lastly, they bind these activities together in a coherent communication event, called the ‘textual’ function. To analyze the images, researchers consider the features such as image contents, symbols represented, medium on/through that the image is presented, and image characteristics like style, colour, perspective, and size.

Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of academic theories related to this study. It described how globalization is a phenomenon that results in and facilitates commonalities experienced around the world in organisations and processes, including education. A neoliberal focus on business imperatives and human capital production are two such commonalities and are criticized as having negative effects, while bureaucracy is a prevalent form of organisation in a neoliberal globalized society. From an educational perspective, neoliberalism and bureaucracy are said to have negative effects including a concentration on business and administration factors versus pedagogical or student and teacher experience ones, which ultimately may limit the potential of learning and societal benefits.

Discourse as a communicative artefact of such ideologies is a useful focal point of study. Understanding the ideologies that are embedded and reinforced by words, images, processes, and structures can illuminate unforeseen outcomes and unjust situations. The body of knowledge in this chapter thus provides the theoretical underpinnings and motivations of the study explained in the subsequent chapters.
CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is based on the view that language is social practice within society (Fairclough, 1989) and that there is meaning, or semiosis, in all social processes (Fairclough, 2001). “Semiosis includes all forms of meaning-making – visual images and body language as well as verbal language” (p. 234). The overall purpose of language can be said to have a semantic one and that each instance of language use is a record of the meaning that has been made in a particular context (Eggins, 2004).

Texts are components of social events and provide a way in which people can act and interact (Fairclough, 2003). Language carries multiples meaning simultaneously: the ideational meaning, which is the literal translation of something or someone doing something; the interpersonal meaning, which represents relationships and attitudes towards those relationships and the textual meaning, which is about how the text hangs together and relates to the social context (Eggins, 2004). For instance students make meaning in class project based on the instructions of what to do, based on how they perceive the point of the project from things like their past experiences, knowledge and beliefs, and based on their attitudes towards the subject or the professor.

The culmination of past experiences, knowledge, values, and attitudes is sometimes referred to as ‘members’ resources’ (MR) (Fairclough, 1989). People draw upon the MR to produce and interpret texts. Such MR’s are both cognitive and social: cognitive in the sense that it is a mental process and social in the sense that MR are “socially generated and their nature is dependent on the social relations and struggles out of which they were generated” (p. 24).
Meaning “must deploy the resources of (inevitably more than one) semiotic resource system” (Lemke, 1999, p. 21).

Ideologies are embedded within people’s MR and are representations of who we are, what we stand for, what our values are and what our relationships with others are (Oktar, 2001). Ideology is associated with language use as it is expressed and reproduced in and through language. Language and all communication tools, as well as how they are used, is ideological; “ideology is a self-serving schema and a shared framework of social beliefs that organizes and coordinates the social representations and social practices of groups and their members, and that functions as a means of regulating social practices constructed as discourse (p. 314-315).

Dominant ideologies can pervade people’s concepts of what is universal and common-sense (Fairclough, 1989). However, despite a pervading dominant ideology, there are differing discursive worldviews of people with different social positionings [sic] (Lemke, 1999). “Each distinct heteroglossic voice has its own ideational-thematic semantics, its own way of construing the way the world is, and its own axiological-evaluative semantics, its own orientation to how the world ought to be” (p. 27). An aim in critical discourse analysis is therefore to make explicit the dominating ideologies that may be opaque but common sense and facilitate the existence of various heteroglossic voices. “The capacity to exercise social power, domination and hegemony includes the capacity to shape to some significant degree the nature and content of this ‘common ground’, which makes implicitness and assumptions an important issue with respect to ideology” (Fairclough, 2005, p. 55).

**Intertextuality**

Relating to the fact that textual meaning is linked to social context is what is meant by
intertextuality. Texts of all types are related in complex and dynamic ways to the contexts that it organizes (Iedema & Wodak, 1999). As a semiotic event, it is linked “in a chain of texts, reacting to, drawing in, and transforming other texts” (Fairclough, 2001, p. 233). Texts cannot stand alone and have meaning; it is through their intertextual interplay that people can comprehend the multilayered meanings in text (Parkison, 2009). During the process of making meaning, people draw from their MR and their ideology to situate the meaning of a textual event within a context of their histories, perspectives, and their aspirations. It is important to consider what ideologies are drawn from. Ideology therefore lies at the pragmatic level where social relations are enacted; and shared communication (though it is related to code) is therefore not simply a function of code but rather is anchored in shared realities to which discourse participants index texts in similar ways (Price, 1999).

**Discourses: Ways of Representing**

Discourses constitute different representations of social life, which are a part of social practice (Fairclough, 2003) “Representation is clearly a discoursal matter, and we can distinguish different discourses, which may represent the same area of the world from different perspectives or positions” (p. 26). Fairclough elaborates this point in saying that the lives of marginalized people in society are represented through different discourses in the social practices of government and other social institutions, and within each of these practices, through different discourses that correspond to the different positions of the social actors (Fairclough, 2001). Because of the different positions of the social actors, the description, and indeed the discourse, is different.
**Genre: Mode of Interaction**

The way that texts are used and structured differently in various social contexts is called genre, a concept “to describe the impact of the context of culture on language” (Eggin, 2004). Different genres will be used based on what is socially acceptable in a given time. “We can distinguish different genres as different ways of (inter)acting discoursally” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 26). So a classroom may consist of different genres, the communication between a professor and students could be one genre, while whispering among classmates could be another. It is important to consider how text is used in social occasions because it can illuminate power relations. “Power is signalled not only by grammatical forms within a text, but also by a person’s control of a social occasion by means of the genre of a text. It is often exactly within the genres associated with given social occasions that power is exercised or challenged (Weiss & Wodak, 2003).

**Methods: What, How and Why I studied**

As a staff member in the University of Victoria Social Sciences Co-op Program and a graduate student at the same university, I have spent much time reflecting on what I do as a co-op practitioner, how the program is structured, and the benefits and challenges that students face within the program. It is clear to me that my perspectives of what the co-operative education program does and intends to do are not aligned with others’ perspectives. Starting with a social issue or problem that may have different representations of a social practice to different people has guided me to analyze texts, images, processes, and interactions to “discern connections between language and other elements in social life which are often opaque” (Fairclough, 2001, p. 230) with the opportunity to contribute to social change. For this study the issue was how the
University of Victoria Co-operative Education Program might represent different things to different people. Many may not realize the prevailing neoliberal ideologies that could lead to a student-institution relationship whereby the student is relatively powerless and disadvantaged.

There is a plethora of available texts within the Social Sciences Co-op Program that I looked at and contemplated analysing. There are promotional texts meant to educate people about co-operative education and promote its benefits. The texts are targeted at different groups including faculty members, potential staff members, employers, potential employers, students, and prospective students. The genres range from online advertisements to personalized letters and from program brochures to promotional videos.

There are administrative texts typically used for coordinating information between different Co-op Program stakeholders. The genres range from one-on-one student and co-op coordinator meetings to online databases and from application forms to contracts. In some cases, these texts could be considered as educational because depending on the use, it could facilitate learning. For example the Co-op Term Information and Expectations form collects student and supervisor contact information and solicits a description of the work expectations and learning goals for the given co-op term. In some cases, students and employers may use the form to facilitate a conversation about the opportunities, challenges, and strategies for success; in other cases they may simply fill out the information without a meaningful discussion. In the former instance, the form would have an educational use; in the latter instance the form would have an administrative use.

**Background on co-op and career.**

In order to explain which texts I will analyse, it will be useful to provide a brief description of the organization of the University of Victoria Co-op Programs, which is contained
in this section. The Co-op Program at the University of Victoria has a decentralized and
centralized organizational structure. Every faculty offers co-operative education programs and
have Co-op Program offices that work with their students. Staff members within these offices
coordinate the programs to meet the needs of the specific academic degree programs. Because of
this, each co-op program may have different features such as admission criteria, program
timelines, participation requirements, and culture. Things like dress code expectations,
communication styles and mediums, the use of technology, and the style of student-staff
relations are results of different cultures among co-op programs.

The Social Sciences Co-op Program is part of an entity called Social Sciences Co-
operative Education and Career Services, which is part of a larger entity called Optional and
Professional Co-op Programs and Career Services (OPP). OPP is comprised of co-op programs
and career services in the Faculties of Education, Fine Arts, Humanities, Human and Social
Development, Law, Social Sciences, and Science. All of these programs and the staff within
them are overseen by a Manager and share some similar features such as the Terms and
Conditions, a document that outlines Co-op Program rules and processes. Students from all the
OPP must read and agree to abide by the Terms and Conditions before participating in the
program by signing the document.

All Co-op Programs are part of UVic Co-operative Education and Career Services and
are under the overall direction of a Director. Co-op Programs and Career Services share a
common organizational vision, which is “UVic Co-op and Career strives to develop graduates
who are prepared to excel in their chosen field, to contribute to the community and society and to
achieve their personal goals. We aim to guide and support students as they develop knowledge,
skill competencies and self-awareness leading to successful and rewarding careers” (2009). For
organizational efficiency, certain program activities are done centrally such as program budgeting, accounting and marketing.

While most programs have specific brochures and websites, much of the content is written and developed centrally. A marketing and communications coordinator works out of the Director’s office with the various programs to ensure consistent and clear messaging about Co-op and Career. Typically, communications and marketing materials about specific Co-op Programs contains general information about co-op, which is consistently written for all Co-op Programs, as well as program-specific information that is co-developed between program staff and the communications and marketing coordinator.

Texts analysed in this study.

In Fairclough’s (2003) analytical framework outlined earlier, text is seen as part of a social event. Traditionally understood to be in written form alone, it also can be in spoken form (Fairclough, 1995). In fact, text can be in many forms that combine language and other modes of communication such as body language, images, and sound. In Co-op, it can be the content of conversations, presentations, web pages, forms, advertisements, posters, and more.

For this study, I looked at three texts used in the Social Sciences Co-op Program. These texts have different purposes and therefore are typically used in the Co-op Program at different times, with different participants. Of the three texts, two share a promotional discourse and the other has an administrative one. Neither have an educational purpose. In terms of genre, each is unique: one is a webpage, the other is a contract, and the last is a one-paged brochure. In this section I will identify each text and describe where it is found, how it is used, for whom it is developed, by whom it was developed (if known) and why I have chosen it for this study.
The first text I analyzed is a general description of the Co-op Program found on the following website http://coop.uvic.ca/index.php?page=prospective_students_whatis_uvic_coop. I will refer to this document as ‘What is UVic Co-op.’ This is a general text that is a public conversation between the University of Victoria Co-op Program and various stakeholders, including potential students, current students, potential employers, current employers, and staff.

The description of the Co-op Program is an important text to describe because it sets the foundation for participation in the program, regardless of who you are. It sets to create a common understanding of what the Co-op Program is, why it exists, and how it operates. Before participating in the program, most people would read this description, or a variation of it. When I speak to potential students, many of them have already browsed through the program website for basic information. This particular description was written and is managed centrally but is linked from the Social Sciences Co-op website.

The second text that I analyzed was the UVic Co-operative Education Program Terms and Conditions of Participation (Terms and Conditions), which is used as a contract between co-op students and the Program. All co-op students are required to read and sign this two-page form before participating in the Co-op Program. This document was edited by the Manager of the Optional and Professional Co-op Programs and Career Services and Assistant Director of the University of Victoria Co-operative Education and Career Services in September 2009. The current edition lists thirty-three terms and conditions, organized into chronological themes: once accepted into the Co-op Program, while looking for a work term, while on a work term, after a work term, legal and safety issues, and freedom of information and privacy.

In the Social Sciences Co-op Program, students are given this form after they have been accepted into the program but before they are able to apply for co-op placements. This typically
happens during or before the first meeting with their coordinator because the Terms and Conditions is one of the topics of this initial student and coordinator meeting as part of an introduction to the Co-op Program.

As a coordinator, I feel uncomfortable when introducing this document to students because it seems like an unnecessary bureaucratic process that puts the student in a powerless position. I often preface the presentation of the document with a joke such as, “I realize that this document looks like something that will make you sign away your first unborn child but it is important to read it so that you can understand the parameters of the Co-op Program and know the consequences should you contravene the policies” and then ask them whether they would like me to tell them about the contents or whether they would like to read the document at their own pace and ask questions as they come up. While I know, and consistently say, that there are benefits to ensuring everyone has a common understanding of the rules and regulations of participation, I question how the document is framed. In fact, I question the purpose at all since there is an overarching governing document, where all terms, conditions, rules, and regulations of participating in any program at the University of Victoria are described, called the Academic Calendar. There is also another, less formal, document that covers basic processes and requirements of the program, the Social Sciences Co-op Student Handbook.

My discomfort with the document is the main reason why I chose it for this discourse analysis. I believe that by systematically studying the discourse of the Terms and Conditions, I would find linguistic and semiotic reasons behind my discomfort. If I didn’t, then it could dissipate my negative feelings by showing me that they were unjustified. Other reasons why I chose this document is because of the timing it is used in the program and the fact that every co-op student has signed it. Being one of the first documents students are exposed to after joining
the Co-op Program, I believe that it has a strong capacity to set the tone of participation. It can create a student’s first impression of what it is like to be a co-op student. While there are many other documents that all students receive and interact with such as introductory emails, the student handbook, and the co-op online information system, mycoop.ca, it is the only one where there is a guarantee that students read or, at least view it. This is because they must sign it to continue participation and, in the case of the students I work with, I am in the room while they read/view it, which is followed by discussion.

The third document that I studied was a brochure for employers, which I will call “Your one-stop hiring shop” because that is the most prominent message on the brochure. It is a one-page leaflet that introduces the UVic Co-operative Education Program and Career Services and the ways in which they can engage with students in an employment relationship. It is distributed through the Social Sciences Co-op Office, as well as other UVic Co-op and Career offices and events. UVic Co-op and Career Services merged in 2009 so this brochure was centrally developed to promote the services that the newly merged institution could provide. It is has a corresponding brochure for students, which looks almost identical but has a different colour theme and the prominent message is “Your one-stop career shop.”

Employers are a key stakeholder group in co-operative education as they are co-educators, providing opportunities to students for professional development. I believe that the way we communicate to employers about the Co-op Program effects how they understand the co-operative education process, as well as their roles in it. Even though the brochure is targeted to the employer community, it is readily viewable by students.

UVic Co-op and Career has many texts through which it communicates. These three items bring together a range of types of communication tools for different participants in the
Social Sciences Co-op Program. By studying these, I believe it provides sufficient data from which to conduct a discourse analysis and explicate the neoliberal ideologies embedded within.

**Methodological steps: Identifying the social context.**

During this stage, I identified the social context of the discourse being analyzed. This illuminated discourses from which the Social Sciences Co-op Program draws from, particularly the dominant neoliberal ones. It was important to do this to determine the discursive environments that can be found to illustrate how discourses operate intertextuality among the UVic Co-op texts being analyzed. The social context is the environment outside of the social event, or text, that occurred. The social context contains conditions which shape the social actor’s perspective and discourse, which in turn shape the way in which texts are produced and interpreted (Fairclough, 1989). I read various organizational documents such as websites, strategic plans, and media releases identifying the dominant ideologies expressed through the discourse.

Since the University is a post-secondary institution within the Province of British Columbia, the provincial agenda was the discursive environment that I explored first. I looked through the communications material of the ministry that is involved with post secondary education, the BC Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development. This involved reading documents such as web pages, media releases, letters from the Minister, and service plans.

As a program within UVic, the university’s discourse influences the discourse of the Co-op Program. As such I explored the discursive environment of the university. The documents that I drew from came from different genres and included the university website. Some
promotional web pages were targeted to students. Another was an online version of the strategic plan, an organizational planning document.

The University of Victoria Co-operative Education Program is also situated within a national post-secondary co-op and internship industry. The association that binds these programs together is called the Canadian Association of Cooperative Education (CAFCE). CAFCE provides national standards and advocates for accredited co-operative education programs across Canada to various stakeholders such as the employer community, government, and the post-secondary education system. I read through the CAFCE website identifying its definition of co-operative education

**Methodological steps: Textual analysis.**

After I explored the discursive context of the Co-op Program, I started the analysis of the three texts chosen for this study. This included identifying and describing the textual features and interpreting how they influence relationships and processes within the Co-op Program. I took a top-down approach, starting with a whole-text structure, then with sentence structure, and lastly with word choice, following Fairclough’s (1989) CDA approach. Fairclough emphasizes that choosing the linguistic features to describe and analyze in the discourse is highly selective and researchers should choose those relevant for their purposes. I chose features in each text that represented neoliberal discourses, which ultimately positioned co-operative education as a mechanistic function of labour market development and commented on how it affected students’ social positioning. Following is a description of textual features I considered, as well as the implications they have to possible meanings of social practise.

In terms of overall textual structure, I determined what interactional conventions and other larger-scale structures were present. This meant noting what genre it was, as well as what
the overall purpose of the document was. I was looking for revelations on a dominant neoliberal and bureaucratic discourse and how it illustrated students as subordinate. I also looked at the images portrayed in and by the texts.

For sentence structure, I contemplated what meanings – ideational, interpersonal and textual - were present in the grammar, as well as how sentences are linked together. I considered the choice between different grammatical processes and how it highlighted or backgrounded agency of participants by looking for active or passive sentences and nominalizations, which is when a process is converted into a noun. Nominalizations may hide the agency or responsibility of action by actors (Van Dijk, 2008). Looking at various elements of sentence structure, I determined the sentence modes, which are declarative, grammatical question, or imperative to determine the modality. Modality is an important feature to consider because it indicates the degree of truth believed by the speaker/writer and illustrates implicit and assumed ideologies embedded in the text (Fairclough, 2005).

I also looked for and considered how sentences and clauses were connected to each other. Logical connectors can cue ideological assumptions because depending on how ideas and messages are connected, it can show consequential, conditional, temporal, or other types of relationships that are taken as common sense. Noting whether complex sentences are characterized by coordination or subordination can explicate whether certain information, which is ideologically significant, is emphasized and more valued, while other information is less important.

In terms of word choice, I looked at how words conveyed ideological perspectives, including social relationships and certain meanings. If words were repeated or the meaning was repeated through the use of synonyms, I interpreted it to show a preoccupation with some aspect
of reality (Fairclough, 1989), while if words were omitted, I interpreted it to show the opposite, the lack of interest of some aspect of reality.

I took special interest in identifying metaphors because “on the surface, they simply draw a comparison between one thing and another, but in a more subtle way they usually imply a whole narrative story and a prescription for action” (Stone, 1997, p. 148). They draw upon people’s MR and ideologies without them even noticing. Our conceptual system, in terms of how we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature and so metaphors structure how we perceive, how we think, and what we do (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Metaphors draw upon classification schemes that create and proliferate differences between objects, entities, groups of people, etc and can subvert the difference by representing them as equivalent to each other (Fairclough, 2003).

**Methodological steps: Reflection and interpretation.**

After describing and interpreting the discourse in the three Social Sciences Co-operative Education and Career Services texts, I reflected on what it all means. I considered whether those that most benefit from the current situation have an interest in the problem not being resolved. I also thought about new possibilities that could change the dominating neoliberal discourse to discourses that embrace different ideologies. My social position in this study – as a researcher and as a co-op practitioner – has guided my study and enabled reflection that is grounded in Co-op Program experience.
CHAPTER FOUR

Critical Discourse Analysis

This chapter contains my critical discourse analysis of three documents of the University of Victoria Social Sciences Co-operative Education Program. In the pages that follow, I identify and describe the neoliberal discursive context, in which the Co-op Program is situated. I then reflect and interpret the neoliberal discourses represented in and reinforced by the Co-op Program documents. In doing so, I discussed the overall text structure such as imagery and genre; the sentence structure, such as clauses and sentence modes; word choice and metaphors, as symbolic devices, for each of the three texts.

For each of the texts analyzed, I describe how the text conveys particular understandings and then offer how they reinforce a neoliberal discourse. I also explicate some of the power relations that the discourse indicates and comment on how it may negatively impact student engagement and limit critical thinking in the learning situation. The first section explores the discursive context that the Co-op Program operates in. The second section presents the description and interpretation of each of the documents. The last section presents alternate discourses and alternate metaphors that could have been used to appeal to difference discursive communities.

Echoing discourses: Drawing from and meshing with a neoliberal agenda

The discourses of neoliberalism within the Co-op Program draw from and mesh with other discursive communities: the provincial government, the university, and the national association of co-operative education programs in Canada. Those discourses represent the relationship between people, social events and social structures (Oughton, 2007). Therefore it is
worth noting some of the discursive resources available from which the Co-op Program discourse can draw from (and can contribute to).

**The provincial government context.**

Post-secondary education in the Province of British Columbia is mainly overseen by the BC Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development (the Ministry). “The Ministry’s overarching purpose is to position British Columbia to meet the competitive challenges of the twenty-first century through better aligning labour market supply and demand” (Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development, *2009/10-2011/12 Service Plan Update*).

The *2009/10-2001/12 Service Plan* is a current document that was created by the Ministry as a communication tool to report on government activities to supporting the goal of accountability and transparency. It describes the Ministry’s mandate, performance and future plans. It is an effective document to analyze the discourse of the government due to the fact that its very purpose is to describe itself and its functions. Many of the neoliberal discursive elements found throughout other government communications are captured and summarized within it. The main message communicated in the purpose statement is that advanced education is a means to develop human capital for the labour market. It does not describe advanced education as a means to achieve civil liberties, social well-being, or even industrial innovation.

The neoliberal imperative to develop human capital in response to international competition, mobile capital, an aging population, and the domination of economic imperatives is a very prominent discourse of the Ministry, with little attention to alternative discourses. Within this discourse, education is represented as a way towards economic growth and prosperity. Its success, in a significant way is measured by fiscal indicators such as how many dollars are spent.
Perhaps this money talk is exasperated by the recent economic situation, in which the liberal government public states that it is very important to spend government dollars wisely so as not to waste public resources. Nevertheless, money is an important factor in describing post-secondary education in British Columbia, as opposed to other indicators such as happiness or learning outcomes, for instance. The following paragraphs will illustrate some of this prominent discourse in the text of various media releases and program descriptions found on the Government of British Columbia website (www.aved.gov.bc.ca).

Perhaps the most obvious textual indicator that the Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development concentrates on economic imperatives is its name. The latter portion ‘Labour Market Development’ was added to ‘Ministry of Advanced Education’ when the Ministry took over responsibility for labour market development initiatives from the Ministry of Housing and Social Development in the summer of 2008. This is outlined in the 2009/10-2011/12 Service Plan Update, where the Minister reflects on the structural changes to the Ministry in her Message from the Minister and Accountability Statement that prefaces the report:

“The Ministry aligns and coordinates the province’s post-secondary education system with the growing and changing needs of the labour market” (p. 3).

The Strategic Context section within the Service Plan (p. 8) describes the internal and external conditions that underlie and contribute to the plan. The first condition is the Economic Environment and Labour Market Conditions, which outlines the necessity for the province to address the challenge of competitiveness due to the aging workforce and decades of low birthrates by “having the human capital necessary to meet current and future workforce needs” (p. 8.) The other conditions include the current demand for post-secondary education and training because of the economic recession and the forecasted deficit of skilled and educated
labour; the diverse population that is underrepresented in society, namely immigrants and Aboriginal peoples and the necessity to manage the cost of staffing in government. The text, namely the use of words such as demand, costs, and human capital clearly situates advanced education as an economic imperative to ensure that the province is nationally and globally competitive and has a strong workforce to meet the demands of the labour market. It states nothing about a social imperative to ensure that the citizens of British Columbia are healthy, happy, engaged with society, or confident.

Reviewing the news releases describing Ministry initiatives, one can also easily see a tendency towards framing advanced education activities within a neoliberal context. The theme I noticed that is most prominent relates to improving the quality of education because of the necessity for the province to compete nationally and globally to be a “destination of choice for people from across Canada and around the globe as a place to live, learn, work and study” (Ministry of Advanced Education, Service Plan, p. 9). Quality is an interesting term to consider because it has become a buzzword in the recent times and “says a great deal about the colonization of educational concepts and practice by the private sector” (Bottery, 2000, p. 81). The word and concept of ‘quality’ is used numerous times throughout the discourse of the Ministry and denotes several of the conceptions that Bottery describes.

The traditional meaning of quality denoting high standards is the meaning that the government of British Columbia uses blatantly throughout much of its text. One example is the development of the Education Quality Assurance Program (EQA). As defined on the website (bceqa.ca), “EQA is a Government of British Columbia brand for quality for private and public post-secondary education in British Columbia”. Participation in the program is voluntary and if a provincial institution meets the quality assurance standards, they are can use the standard logo
that is meant to be recognized globally as a symbol of quality for potential foreign students. EQA encourages competitiveness between post-secondary institutions because not all institutions are recognized with the EQA brand and using the logo can be considered a competitive advantage. Having quality assurance standards helps position advanced education in British Columbia as being not only competitive but also accountable.

The Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market maintains expert and bureaucratic quality (Bottery, 2000) in the post-secondary education industry by legislating professional ethics and standards on service-delivering institutions (universities, colleges, schools, etc). Examples are the services it provides to maintain and improve mechanisms for post-secondary accountability and the processes it requires for the introduction of new degree programs. Post-secondary education programs in British Columbia programs must meet standardized criteria as determined by the Ministry.

Giving people choice of affordable, quality products (traditional quality) is crucial from a market-driven ideological perspective. In line with this ideology, the BC Ministry of Advanced Education boasts another type of quality – consumer quality (Bottery 2000.) In a document called “Nothing but the Facts: Post-secondary Education in B.C.” several consumer-based factors are highlighted to illustrate strong post-secondary education in B.C.: Record investment, more choice, more affordable, more trained professionals, and more students are the descriptors used. This text outlines that increased spending into post-secondary education has ensured high quality for the ‘consumer’ by providing more quantity. More buildings (over 50), more universities (seven since 2001), more degree programs (over 270 new programs since 2001), and more student spaces (35,500 new full-time spaces since 2001) show that post-secondary
education performance is strong. Quantitative performance measures are a key aspect of discerning quality in a neoliberal context.

Several news releases announce this quantity-type quality over the past two years. A January 5, 2010 headline reads “New Degrees give B.C. Students More Choice” and goes on to describe that twelve new programs will give students more access to relevant, in-demand post-secondary education. Moira Stilwell, Minister of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development states in that news release, “We continue to expand our post-secondary opportunities to provide better access closer to home for our students, saving them time and money…the skills and knowledge students acquire in their studies and experience at our institutions will help them access more opportunities in the current and future economy.” The news release goes on to describe how new degrees help B.C. improves its competitiveness and productivity. Money and growth are other themes.

Similar headlines include “12 New Degrees Equal More Choices for B.C. Students” from July 30, 2009 and “New Degrees Offer More Choices for B.C. Students” from September 18, 2008. In the latter article, the Minister at the time commented that, “B.C. has built a solid reputation for providing excellence in post-secondary education that is second to none. Approval of new degrees provides greater access for students, helping them achieve their educational goals without leaving the province or, in many cases, their home town or city.” Although this comment resembles a potential alternative discourse for post-secondary education, it also highlights the necessity for convenient and affordable choices, a key aspect of offering quality post-secondary education.

Many news releases highlight the financial investment that goes into post-secondary education. This investment helps build new campuses and buildings, as well as decreases the
operational costs of post-secondary institutions. An emphasis on the monetary aspects of post-secondary education frames post-secondary education as a business. It is evident that fiscal prudence and financial investment is valued. Because of the number of press releases that highlight spending outnumbers the amount of press releases that highlight the advancement of social, cultural, and health aspects, one can infer that accounting is deemed more important than, or perhaps is a key factor in the determination of the social benefits of post-secondary education. This is confirmed by the Minister’s message in the 2009/10-2011/12 Service Plan, where she writes, “That’s why we have made unprecedented investments in education in British Columbia, helping to create a world-class post-secondary system that is sustainable for the future both in meeting learners’ expectations, and from the perspective of fiscal responsibility” (p. 3).

The importance of economic growth is an underlying factor that drives much of the Ministry’s activities and is embedded in the discourse it uses. This is an important consideration because economic growth ties closely with market ideologies. The discourse shows an assumption that economic growth is the goal, therefore precipitating a constant need to supply the labour market with human capital. It also shows an assumption that economic growth helps B.C. be competitive in a national and global marketplace, and ensures prosperity for all.

There are some alternative discourses within the Ministry communications that relates to advanced education contributing to individual freedom, cultural diversity, social justice, and societal health and wellness. It is important from a political perspective for government discourse to draw upon and relate to various discourses so that it appeals to a wide audience. The Minister states, “Post-secondary education provides British Columbians with knowledge, skills and tools to meet their full potential, thereby enriching the lives of everyone” (2009/10-2011/12 Service Plan, p.3). One could imagine that lives are enriched when citizens have the skills and
knowledge to harmoniously engage with each other and with government. However, the
government does not provide a definition of what enrichment means. This is an example of the
symbolic device called ambiguity (Stone, 1997). Ambiguity is “the ability of statements, events,
and experiences to have more than one meaning … it allows people to agree on laws and policies
because they can read different meanings into the words” (p. 161).

So while the discourse has a high level of ambiguity, it mostly frames the purpose of
advanced education within a framework of economic growth as the imperative. Framing
connects or disconnects elements of the composition, so proposing that we see them as joined or
separate in some way (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). As an example, in the Service Plan, the
Ministry states, “People in British Columbia must have the knowledge and skills to compete
effectively in the global economy, and to build prosperous and sustainable communities.” It
contains an example of ambiguity and of framing. Through ambiguity the statement allows
people with multiple definitions of ‘sustainable communities’ to agree without really knowing
which definition the government meant. As an illustration of framing, the statement could have
ended very differently. For example, it could have used ambiguity that mostly frames the
purpose of advanced education within a framework of individual freedom, cultural diversity,
social justice, and societal health and wellness. Why not “People in British Columbia must have
the knowledge and skills to engage with each other, societal institutions, and themselves to co-
create a future where everyone and everything thrives together?”

The university context.

The University of Victoria is one of the major post-secondary institutions in British
Columbia. It is overseen by the Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market
Development and receives all of its provincial funding from that Ministry. As such, its
discourse, as well as its mandate, programs, and initiatives, is connected to the discourse and mandate of the provincial government. However, it is operated independently to offer unique programs and services that attract thousands of students from across the world. In doing so, it contributes to the provincial goals of developing a strong labour market by and graduating students who are skilled, knowledgeable, and experienced so that they can contribute in a variety of industries province-wide.

The discourse within which the university operates is arguably more people focused than the provincial government discourse. The majority of the text on the website is geared towards students and parents with stories and information about student experiences. In the strategic plan, a document that formally outlines the university’s mandate, future vision, and operational strategies, there is a focus on people and learning, however they are within neoliberal realities such as competition for human capital. The university “sees education, knowledge creation and creative activity as crucial, not only to social and economic progress and competitiveness, but to constructive global citizenship and civic engagement” (A Vision for the Future: Building on Strength, p. 9).

Co-operative education, as an experiential learning program and a way for the university to connect with its community, is an integral part of the University of Victoria’s mission and strategy. In the University’s 2007 strategic plan (A Vision for the Future: Building on Strength), the UVic mission reads as follows:

The University of Victoria enriches its students and society by creating knowledge, fostering academic and experiential learning and serving communities in British Columbia, in Canada and around the world. We build on the strength and diversity of our people – students, faculty, staff and alumni
– to strengthen our position among the best universities in Canada, recognized for excellence in teaching, learning, research, artistic creativity, professional practice and service to the community. (p. 6)

The University’s vision is “to be a university of choice for outstanding students, faculty and staff from British Columbia, Canada and the world [and to be] the university that best integrates outstanding scholarship, inspired teaching and real-life involvement [through challenging its people to] become thoughtful, engaged citizens and leaders, prepared to contribute to the betterment of a rapidly changing global society” (A Vision for the Future: Building on Strength, p. 5). This vision illustrates that competition for people, as a signature of a quality university, is an important aspect of university’s success. Being the best is a central theme as there are many superlatives used to describe the university and its goals. The need for human capital and to be the best is the first statement made in the vision and comes before the aspiration to be a place that integrates outstanding scholarship, inspired teaching and real-life involvement. While learning is a central part of the vision, its role is a vital one to ensure that the University is the best at what it does in the competitive market of post-secondary education.

In the pages that follow in the strategic plan, much emphasis falls on the people, as well as being the best. Even though it is framed within a competitive framework, the university embraces people’s strength, diversity, and participation. The Mission includes statements of commitment to providing opportunities for all members of the university community to participate in governance, promoting civic engagement, sustainability and global citizenship and establishing a safe, supportive, inclusive and healthy environment.

People are the first key area that the university focuses its objectives and strategies on. The University’s goal in regards to people is to “recruit and retain a diverse group of
exceptionally talented students, faculty and staff and to support them in ways that allow them to achieve their highest potential” (p. 13). The goal states that people should become the best they can be. However, the document does not elaborate on why or what that actually means. This connects with the ambiguity of statements in the provincial government discourse. Assuming that the goal is measured, how is “their highest potential” measured? Is it in terms of productivity, engagement, health, or some other measure?

The strategic plan also identifies Co-op as a key player who helps the university achieve its goals of offering quality programs, a broad learning environment, and opportunities for experiential learning and community engagement. The plan goes on to describe actions to achieve quality programs as offering teaching, research and support programs to place the University in the upper 20 per cent in Canada. It also describes actions to establish UVic as a recognizable mainstay in the community that contributes to the sustainable social, cultural and economic development of the region and country. Lastly, it provides actions to generate resources to enable the University to achieve its objectives and to use the resources sustainably. While UVic recognizes that it can contribute to its community’s social and cultural well-being, it highlights the economic growth it facilitates and the fiscal responsibilities it has. Money and reputation stand out as being important issues in the University’s operations. It is important to remember that while students are central to the process of learning, they also help attract resources (both from government funding and tuition) and so the university’s intention to be positioned as the best is inseparable from its goal to generate resources.

Browsing UVic’s website (www.uvic.ca) it is not hard to find inspiring stories of people. For instance, I found a story about an ‘inspiring’ professor on January 19, 2010 at 12:25. “Our passion inspires. ‘Students exceed all expectations when empowered, mentored and supported’”
topped the page and got my attention. It linked to a story of a writing professor, Maureen Bradley, who facilitated a directed studies class that saw students write and produce a web series called *Fisherman’s Wharf*. This is an example of how the university promotes itself as the best place to learn and teach because of the outstanding people, “UVic faculty like Maureen Bradley are passionate about the topics they teach and the research they undertake.” Following the article, web readers are invited to learn more about classroom experiences at UVic. This is a powerful narrative that tells a story of a heroic professor. It is an effective genre to generate support because it “works to capture the imagination, also shape our perceptions and suspends scepticism, at least temporarily” (Stone, 1997).

Another look at the UVic homepage welcomes viewers to another people story. “Making a difference. University 101 gives adult a chance to discover a world of knowledge” ([www.uvic.ca](http://www.uvic.ca)) is a narrative about a humanities course offered free to adults who face economic and social obstacles. This story is an example of how “UVic is making a substantial contribution to the building of social capital at local, national and international levels.” While the story illustrates how UVic engages with its community and helps individuals reach their potential, it frames it within a context of creating wealth, or capital, to society. This is another effective narrative that offers a solution to a scary problem, facing economic and social obstacles that is. It grips our imagination by encouraging us to support higher education.

In the competitive marketplace of advanced education, UVic plays its part, through its people, to promote itself as the best choice.

A great university is more than a place to learn. It's where you live, in every sense of the word. Our students will tell you . . . there's no comparison to living and learning in Canada's far west at one of the nation's leading comprehensive
universities. You'll have access to world-class professors, life-changing opportunities, and possibly the most attractive and vibrant location that any university can offer. (www.uvic.ca)

With terms like world-class professors and life-changing opportunities, as well as images like smiling students and format that includes plenty of white space and easy-to-read headings, it certainly seems like the University is caught up in convincing the reader to choose the University of Victoria as their post-secondary institution. The University can be seen to position itself as best by again using various forms of superlatives: “more than a place to learn,” “no comparison,” “one of the nation’s leading” “most attractive and vibrant.” One way to read this is that the university is competing for resources in the student marketplace so that it can create wealth for itself and for its community in the pursuit of creating human capital. It is not hard to note the promotional nature of the university website that uses words and visual elements that more resembles a marketing genre than an education one.

**Canadian cooperative education context.**

The University of Victoria Co-operative Education program belongs to the national association called the Canadian Association of Cooperative Education (CAFCE). CAFCE represents about 80 member institutions in its mission to foster and advance post-secondary cooperative education in Canada (http://www.cafce.ca/pages/home.php). Discourses used by CAFCE are similar to those encountered in the British Columbian government and the University of Victoria. Quality post-secondary co-operative education programs are the key goal.

As the national association for co-operative education programs in Canada, CAFCE provides a comprehensive definition of co-operative education programs. It describes it as a
program where students alternate periods of academic study with periods of work experience in relevant fields including business, industry, government, and social services. The definition also outlines six criteria that must be met that relate to various aspects of the work and educational value. It uses words that relates to paid work, careers, employer relations and professional development. There is no mention of concepts that could be considered beneficial and relevant such as personal development or social interaction.

The definition of co-operative education program highlights the employment aspect of co-operative education, rather than the education aspect. Within this definition, co-op placements or terms (the time students spend working and learning at a host organization) are consistently referred to as ‘work’ or ‘jobs.’ This fits into a neoliberal discourse where university education is framed as a means to develop human capital for the labour market. In this case, students are not only producers in a labour market during their co-op terms but are also in the process of being developed for their career.

CAFCE describes co-op education as an educational strategy whereby employers and educators share the responsibility of preparing students for the rapidly changing conditions of the labour market.

Co-operative Education prepares students by providing them with opportunities to operate as a learner/worker. Employers become co-educators helping to develop today’s students to become productive members of society…While the goal [of co-operative education] is to develop high calibre, well-trained graduates ready to assume productive careers in a dynamic and demanding work market, all parties involved benefit from this work and learning model.
Manual: A Guide to Planning and Implementing Co-operative Education Programs in Post-Secondary Institutions, p. 1)

There is very little ambiguity in the defined goal of co-op placements; the word choice indicates that the goal is for students to be developed into graduates ready to assume productive careers in a dynamic and demanding work market.” There is little room to interpret others ways that employers could help students such as ‘supporting their reflection on workplace experiences’ or interpret other goals such as ‘to become self-aware and self-actualized professionals’.

CAFCE also stresses the goal of developing the highest quality of post-secondary co-operative education programs in Canada (http://www.cafce.ca/pages/home.php). One of the ways it develops highest quality is through national standards. Again, the notions of Bottery’s (2000) traditional and bureaucratic conceptions of quality come to mind. Through CAFCE accreditation, one can assume co-operative education programs across Canada operate consistently, transparently, and under the highest quality standards in the interests of students, post-secondary institutions and employers. “Accreditation standards establish Co-operative Education as a valid and valuable educational strategy, and provide guidance in ensuring quality Co-operative Education programming across Canada” (http://www.cafce.ca/pages/benefitsofaccreditation.php.) This quest for quality and especially highest quality confirms the competitive nature of co-operative education programming.

Join Co-op! Analysis of ‘What is UVic Co-op’

The first document that I analyzed is a web page that describes what UVic Co-op is. This web page contains links on the header and on the left side, as well as announcements on the right side. These features are on every web page and were not analysed in this study. What I have
analyzed is the unique content of the web page that includes a heading and four paragraphs to describe the UVic Co-op Program. The text of this webpage can be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1: What is UVic Co-op

Text structure.

As a description of the UVic Co-op Program, this text is similar to that of a narrative in that it is making statements about the Co-op Program to tell a story about its evolution and its participants’ benefits. It provides readers, specifically students, with a definition of co-operative education, a brief history and background on the program’s status, and the goals of the program in how students accrue benefits of the program.

The overall tone of the document is to promote the program to students. It is a persuasive genre as it highlights a particular kind of benefit to participating in co-op but leaves out
descriptions of what participation in the program means. It also does not articulate any negative impacts of participation; it positions the Co-op Program as a high quality program. Quality is an important point to consider because it links to the business-style management and the ability of the Co-op Program to compete in the education market (Bottery, 2000).

The text of this promotional narrative found on the webpage is merely a lot of words. It is not complemented with photos, diagrams, or an abundance of headings. It does have one heading “What is UVic Co-op,” which asks a question that the rest of the text answers. The reading is linear and strictly coded so that it controls the reader to read the text in the way it was designed to be read – from top to bottom, from left to right (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

**Sentence structure.**

Sentences in this text are simple or complex sentences that make assertions about the Co-op Program. For instance in the simple sentence, “Since the mid-1970’s UVic Co-op has grown to become the third largest co-op program in Canada” there is no room for debate. It is a statement that in itself does not indicate a value but one can assume that the writer believes that the reader would be interested in that information. This relates to modality in the sense that it produces shared truths aligning readers with some statements (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

Stating that the program has grown and that it is now the third largest in Canada denotes that growth and size are important. Concepts such as growth and size relate to business principles as it is linked to the organization’s competitiveness or strength in the marketplace. This represents a neoliberal discourse and a focus on managerialism (Ball, 1998).

In the complex sentence, “The goal of the UVic Co-op Program is to produce high-calibre graduates who are better prepared to pursue productive careers” the text provides a definition of high-calibre graduates as those who are *better prepared* to pursue productive
careers. By making this statement there is a link made between high-calibre graduates and those who are better prepared to pursue productive careers. This is ideologically significant because it reflects a neoliberal goal of education as a means to develop human capital (Bell & Stevenson, 2006).

If the sentence was a compound one instead of a complex one, such as ‘the goal of the UVic Co-op Program is to produce high-calibre graduates and those who are better prepared to pursue productive careers,’ it could instead indicate a belief that the definition of being a high-calibre graduate includes more than being better prepared to pursue a productive career. This is important because of the high modality of the definition represented in the sentence. It links to manipulation in that there is an attempt to control the mind and the beliefs of the readers (Van Dijk, 2006). Another variation that included more clauses could have been used such as, “The goal of the UVic Co-op Program is to produce high-calibre graduates who are better prepared to pursue productive careers, engage in society, be critical thinkers, and lead healthy and sustainable lives”. This is an important distinction because it illuminates how the text favours the interests of the powerful groups, in this case employers or industry, and hurts the interests of less powerful groups, whose goal is not described in terms of the labour market.

Further to use of clauses, all the sentences are declarative and the modality of the text is mostly that of absolute truth. This is proved in that most sentences are written with present tense verbs such as ‘is’, ‘enables’, and ‘emphasizes’, rather than using the conditional tense ‘could be’, ‘could enable’ and ‘could emphasize’. There is no indication of doubt about of the facts through words such as ‘typically’ or ‘usually.’ The only conditional sentence “The practical experience gained on these work terms can be an integral part of your education” was likely used in this case because not all students participate in the Co-op Program. In other words, in this case ‘the
practical experience gained can be an integral part of your education’-- IF you participate. This illustrates the narrative persuasive genre of the text as it is trying to persuade student readers to participate by emphasizing how the program produces high-calibre graduates that are better prepared to pursue productive careers (Van Dijk, 2006). It leaves out the fact that some Co-op Program graduates may not be pursuing ‘productive’ careers. Alternatively, it may not work as a persuasive genre to those readers who do not frame their intended career as productive, but rather as enjoyable, for instance.

There are indications of power through the use of the personal pronouns ‘we’ and ‘you’ in this text. The personal pronoun ‘you’ is apparent in the first and fourth paragraphs although the reader is anonymous. The text does not state that the reader is meant to be a student. For instance ‘Co-operative education, or co-op, is an integrated approach to higher education that enables you, as a student, to alternate academic terms with paid, relevant work experience in your chosen field.’ Using the pronoun ‘you’ indicates that the writer knows who the reader is and can also indicate that the speaker/writer knows what is best for the reader and thus has the power, in the sense that knowledge is power.

**Word choice.**

The use of certain vocabulary in this text shows a particular way of describing a good, or quality education program with ideological underpinnings. For example, the second sentence that describes the Co-op Program emphasizes the fact that the program has grown to become the third largest. In doing so it suggests that prestige is important: being large is a positive program attribute and that being the largest is better. This is further supported by the following sentence that describes success as “personalized service, high quality work opportunities and leading-edge technology.” This is ideologically significant because alternate discourses, such as those that
emphasize the benefits of learning may not describe the success of an educational program in those ways. Why not “high quality learning opportunities”?

The definition of a high-calibre graduate in the sentence, “The goal of the UVic Program is to produce high-calibre graduates who are better prepared to pursue productive careers” is important to consider. This definition relates to the graduate’s career; in other words, their place in the labour market, which has neoliberal ideological underpinnings. Importantly framing the benefits of education in this way can alienate people whose goal may not be to participate in the labour market but may be to become more civically engaged, more critical, or better versed in some aspect of the world. In other words, its defining frame limits the relevancy of co-op to those whose aspirations only relate to employment in the labour market. Furthermore, it can reinforce the power relations in our society between those in the labour market and those that aren’t.

The fact that further value is placed on a career that is productive emphasizes the neoliberal principle that a productive labour market is good for society. Other phrases could have been chosen to deemphasize the importance of productivity or place importance on other aspects of being educated. Phrases could have been ‘to pursue enjoyable careers’, ‘to pursue rewarding careers’ or even ‘to engage meaningfully in society.’

The first sentence, “Co-operative education, or co-op, is an integrated approach to higher education that enables you to alternate academic terms with paid, relevant work experience in your chosen field,” is an example that has shows the relational values of text. Relational value (Fairclough, 1989)-- also called interpersonal value (Eggins, 2004)-- means that there is indication of the social relationship between the participants in the sentence; in this case between the readers, who are students, and the writers/speakers, who are arguably the Co-op Program
staff members. The text signals the power that lies with the Co-op Program staff because through their position as employees of the Program they *enable* students to do something. Power relations could be interpreted differently if other words were chosen. For example in the sentence ‘Co-operative education, or co-op, is an integrated approach to higher education, which facilitates opportunities for you to alternate academic terms with paid, relevant work experience in your chosen field’ staff play a facilitating role, not an enabling one, and in the sentence ‘Co-operative education, or co-op, is an integrated approach to higher education in which you can alternate academic terms with paid, relevant work experience in your chosen field’ power lies with the students.

**Powerful metaphors.**

The last word choice example that I will identify due to its ideological significance is in the sentence, “The goal of the UVic Co-op Program is to produce high-calibre graduates who are better prepared to pursue productive careers.” The word ‘produce’ is a word that represents the activities of the UVic Co-op Program as *production*. I understand this word as a metaphor because the UVic Co-op Program does not produce graduates; it provides a formalized situation in which various factors contribute to the professional development of students, among other things. Therefore the use of this metaphor denotes that the Co-op Program is involved in *a mechanistic process of production that includes inputs and outputs*. The inputs in this case are students and the outputs are high-calibre graduates. However, in the natural or social world, things aren’t produced per se, they are grown, developed, changed, born, blossomed, and ‘processed’ in many other ways, described using a plethora of different words and concepts. So if high-calibre graduates are the outputs or the products that are produced, the consumers would be employers of the labour market. Production, as has been noted earlier, is foundational to the
neoliberal perspective, which can also be detected in the discourse of the BC Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development, which also views education as a means of developing human capital.

Another aspect of the production metaphor is the lack of agency that students themselves have in their development and learning. The verb ‘to produce’ is a transitive one meaning that it has a subject (the actor) and an object (the thing acted upon). It is not reflexive verb in that the subject and the object can never be the same person. If students are produced into high-calibre graduates by the co-operative education program then it leaves no action for the students themselves to do; in other words, it leaves students out of the ‘producing.’ One of the issues that co-op staff members deal with is that students are not very engaged in job search and workplace learning; perhaps because they are expecting to be produced into a high-calibre graduates by the Co-op Program. Instead of using language about the opportunities to become more self-directed and proactive thinkers, this text uses language that supports complacent students and the commoditization of graduates. These words reinforce the neoliberal discourse and helps to reinforce issues of power and who has agency.

On the other hand, the notion that students will be produced into ‘high calibre graduates’ may be very appealing, which links with the persuasive genre of this text. This word choice may give students the feeling that it will be easy to become a ‘high-calibre graduate’ and may position the program as very attractive for that reason. Unfortunately, there is a disconnect when students join the program and find out that completing co-op placement requires much effort on their part. For instance, it takes much effort to read through co-op postings and create applications that tailor to the specifications of each co-op posting, while maintaining a strong GPA and a full-time course load. In the Social Sciences Co-op Program many students apply to over 20 postings
before securing a placement. Furthermore, many students are surprised to learn that the co-op term report is considered an important part of the co-op term grade and thus requires timely submission, analysis, and editing. While they do receive support in the forms of feedback, words of encouragement, or advice on future strategies, the staff members do not do the work on behalf of the students. The text therefore ironically promotes an inaccurate, but potentially desirable, understanding of the actual program requirements. It does not elaborate on the agency of the players and the fact that students are crucial in their co-op program success. If they do not actively engage in the Co-op Program, they will not be produced into high-calibre graduates.

Another irony is in the last sentence of this webpage: “The term ‘co-operative education’ emphasizes the relationship between you, the employer and the University of Victoria.” Here the text conveys how co-operative education is meant to involve different people in a shared educational endeavour. The question is what are the power relations between those involved? The word choice may represent a much less equal relationship than one might expect. As long as the text reflects neoliberal ideologies, then the students are not in an equal relationship. On one hand, there is great value in them being inputs for the production of ‘high calibre graduates’ but on the other hand, the benefits for the labour market may outweigh the benefits for the students.

**Welcome to Co-op! Analysis of the ‘Terms and Conditions’ Document**

The second text is the *Terms and Conditions* document, which is a list of rules and regulations that co-op students must adhere to. It is formatted like a contract in that students must sign and date their signature to indicate that they agree to the conditions. With so many rules, it seems like a step in a large bureaucratic process, rather than one that contributes to the education process.
Figure 2: Terms and Conditions

UVic Co-operative Education Program
Terms and Conditions of Participation

The purpose of this agreement is to assure procedural fairness for individuals by articulating a core set of principles governing all Co-op students at UVic. You should familiarize yourself with the general and program-specific Co-op regulations listed in the UVic Undergraduate and/or Graduate calendars. The following terms and conditions are in addition to and/or highlight the regulations listed in the calendar(s), and are designed to comply with the requirements of the BC Freedom of Information and Privacy Act.

A. Once accepted into the Co-op program:
1. I will attend and complete a work term preparation program/course, normally undertaken before my first work term, and as specified by my Co-op program. With permission of my Co-op program, this preparation program may be completed while participating in the placement process for the first time.
2. I understand that prior to each placement process, I am required to provide the Co-op office with an updated résumé and that I will participate in a job search planning meeting, either in-person or via phone/email/Skype, with my Co-op Coordinator.
3. I will sign all work term registration forms when asked to do so by my Co-op program. I understand that these forms will be used to officially register me in my work terms and copies will be kept on my file.
4. I understand that I will be required to use my UVic email account as this is the primary way I will be contacted regarding interviews, offers of work term placements, and important Co-op notices.
5. To maintain my Co-op status I must at all times be registered as either a full-time student in an academic term or on a work term. A leave of absence (i.e., temporary withdrawal) from the Co-op program must be arranged in advance with my Co-op program. To achieve the greatest learning benefit from my Co-op program, I agree to follow the academic/work term schedule as required by my Co-op program, and will seek written approval from my Co-op program if changes are required.
6. I agree to make a commitment to complete all required work terms for my Co-op program. However, I do understand that if I am in an optional (non-mandatory) Co-op program, I am able to withdraw from my Co-op program, but not while on a work term, not after the employer’s offer has been accepted, and/or not after placement has been confirmed for any subsequent work term with the same employer. I must inform my Co-op coordinator, in writing, to request a withdrawal.
7. I understand that to participate and continue in the Co-op program, I must maintain an acceptable academic standing according to the regulations of my program.
8. I understand that I must successfully complete the University English Requirement according to the timeline of my Co-op program. If I cannot complete this requirement I must inform my Co-op Coordinator. This English Requirement does not apply to students enrolled in the Faculty of Law or Graduate studies.
9. I understand that there may be other prerequisites, which must be fulfilled according to the timeline of my Co-op program (students should check program-specific Coop regulations listed in the Calendar).
10. I understand that work term placements cannot be guaranteed, and that the likelihood that I secure a placement is directly related to the effort I apply to my job search process.

B. While looking for a work term:
1. I agree to apply for a wide range of Co-op positions, including those outside Victoria, until I have secured a work term. I understand that participation in the Co-op program may require me to accept positions anywhere in Canada and to pay, where required, the necessary travel expenses to relocate. If I have any restrictions concerning job duties, location, or travel, I will discuss these with my Co-op Coordinator.
2. I understand that the Co-op posting web pages on MyCoop.ca (Mamook) are password protected. Consequently, I agree to not share any information about Co-op postings or employers with any other individual. I understand that if I fail to maintain the security of MyCoop.ca (Mamook), I will be dismissed from the Co-op program.
3. I agree not to solicit positions from established Co-operative Education employers directly on my own behalf.
4. I agree to advise my Co-op Coordinator if I am pursuing my own job development. If I develop my own job I understand that the Co-op program must approve the position, and that to facilitate this approval, I must submit supporting documentation (job description and employer letter of offer) to my Co-op Program before commencing the work term. Failure to do this may result in the work term not being approved and registered.
5. I agree to attend all interviews with employers that have selected me as a candidate, until such time as I have accepted a work term placement. If I have completed an interview, and I no longer feel the opportunity is suitable for me, I will contact my Co-op Coordinator immediately to discuss my reasons. If appropriate, I will be withdrawn from the competition.
6. I will not accept a job offer directly from an employer during an interview, nor directly from an employer at other times, without consulting my Co-op Coordinator.
7. If offered a position via the Co-op office, I agree to accept or decline this position within 24 hours. I understand that I may not decline more than one position obtained through the Co-op program in a term. If I decline a second position, I understand that I am no longer eligible to apply to postings on MyCoop.ca (Mamook) and must find my own work term placement for that term. If I am considering declining a position, I will contact my Co-op program to discuss my reasons.
8. I understand that work terms are paid employment and reflect the employer’s salary scale and the student’s level of training and experience. By accepting a job offer, I am agreeing to the salary as stated by the employer.
9. I understand that the Co-op Office is under no obligation to post Co-op positions or approve self-placements that it believes to be unsuitable.
10. I understand that when I accept a work term, which I have found through the Co-op program (e.g. from a Co-op work term, the Co-op website, staff, or other Co-op resources), I am committing to undertake and complete that work term, usually 16 weeks in duration, and a minimum of 13 weeks.

C. While on a work term:
1. I understand that while on a work term I am representing the University of Victoria and therefore I agree to conduct myself in a professional and ethical manner.

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2. I understand that a Co-op fee is due and payable to Accounting Services by the end of the first month of each work term (January 31st, May 31st, or September 30th).
3. I understand that since work terms are considered to be a full-time course of studies, students may not enroll in courses while on a work term. With the agreement of my coordinator and my employer, and faculty member if required, I may be permitted to take one course (1.5 units).
4. I understand that my Co-op Coordinator will conduct a work site visit, which may be on-site, or via phone/email/Skype, approximately halfway through each work term. Coordinators meet with both the student and the supervisor during the visit, and I am required to complete a mid-term evaluation.

D. After the work term:
1. I understand that I am required to submit a Work Term Report, by the due date as specified by my Co-op program (normally January, May or September). I understand that the report can be made available to other students in my Co-op program and/or to my employer. I also understand that I may be required to produce an Abstract or Executive Summary of the report. This summary, or the full Report, may be provided to my academic department for information and/or grading.
2. I understand that after each work term I may be required to attend a debriefing session, and may be required to give a presentation about my work term experience to students and/or faculty members.
3. I understand that the requirements for a passing grade for a work term include an employer’s satisfactory final evaluation and the satisfactory completion of a work term report, and I understand that my Co-op program may have additional requirements. Failure to meet these requirements may result in a failing grade (N/X or F/X) and a GPA of 0 for that work term, and I understand I will not receive the two academic credits for that work term.

E. Legal and Safety Issues
1. I understand that the Co-op program must know my immigration status in Canada for the purposes of ensuring that I am working legally in Canada and for advising potential employers who may only hire Canadian citizens. For International Students only: I understand that I must apply for and receive an Employment Authorization (Co-op work permit), which will legally entitle me to work in Canada on a registered work term, and I also understand that as an International Student I must apply for and receive a Social Insurance Number in order to work in Canada.
2. I am a: ☐ Canadian Citizen; ☐ Permanent Resident of Canada; ☐ Visa Student.
3. I understand that if I am applying for or receiving financial assistance, I am required to inform the Student Awards and Financial Aid Office of my acceptance into the Co-op Program.
4. I understand that the Criminal Records Review Act requires that anyone in the Provincial Government or working for a provincial or childcare agency who is supervising an employee under the age of 19 must undergo a Criminal Records review check. If I will be under the age of 19 prior to any work term placements, I agree to advise my Co-op Coordinator prior to accepting a placement.
5. I understand that some work term placements may require that I work with infectious microorganisms and/or hazardous materials. Should I accept such a placement, I agree to receive recommended vaccinations and to undertake special safety training sessions, as advised by my Co-op Coordinator.

F. Freedom of Information and Privacy
1. I agree to allow the Co-op program to solicit positions on my behalf. I give my consent to the Co-op program to disclose and release personal information consisting of my resumes, unofficial transcripts, letters of reference, and portfolio to prospective Co-op employers for the purpose of assisting me to secure employment for work terms while I am enrolled in the Co-op program. I give my consent to the Co-op program to discuss my academic records, employment history, references and qualifications with prospective Co-op employers for the purpose of assisting me to secure employment for work terms while I am enrolled in the Co-op program.
2. I understand that I will be asked to provide salary information to the Co-op program for statistical purposes.

I have read the above terms and conditions of participation in the UVic Co-operative Education Program and I agree to abide by them during my participation in the program. I understand that a signed copy of this agreement must be on file in my Co-op Office before I may participate in the Co-op work term placement process. I also understand that the Co-op Program reserves the right to take appropriate action, such as withdrawal from the Co-op program, in the event that I do not adhere to the above terms and conditions, as well as the general and program-specific Co-op regulations listed in the UVic Undergraduate and/or Graduate calendar(s). If I have any questions about this document, or the UVic calendar(s), I will discuss them with my Co-op Coordinator.

Name ___________________________________ Student No. __________________________
UVic email __________________________ Phone __________________________
Signature __________________________ Date __________________________

Completing the following information is voluntary. The information will be used for statistical purposes only or, in the case of a disability, to secure any special assistance that is required or, in the case of minorities, to access (with student permission) positions which will qualify for employment equity funding. The Office of the Director of Co-operative Education uses aggregate statistical information. Information about individuals will not be released without the student’s permission in writing.

I am: ☐ Male ☐ Female
☐ First Nations, Métis or Inuit ancestry
☐ member of a visible minority group

I require special assistance by reason of a disability ☐ yes ☐ no

If "yes", what special assistance is required?:

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Text structure.

The density of text represented here makes one of my key points visually: that it is almost impossible to read. Even its original format on legal-size paper, with an abundance of text and little white space, is equally as challenging to read. The text is legible but the overall visual presentation has a serious, impersonal appearance. I don’t believe that many would read the Terms and Conditions because of the sheer amount of tedious information presented in such an official way.

The terms and conditions contain an introductory paragraph that outlines the purpose of the document, which is “to assure procedural fairness for individuals by articulating a core set of principles governing all Co-op students at UVic.” The thirty-three principles are organized as numbered lists sorted chronologically and are statements. Another paragraph follows the ordered list, which describes the use of the document, “a signed copy of this agreement must be on file in my Co-op Office before I may participate in the Co-op work term placement process.”

This document is of a formal contractual or legalistic genre. It contains a set of laws that co-op students must abide by, it describes the potential penalties for breaking the laws, and it requires students to sign it. When students enter the program, it is used as a way to inform students of the laws of the program, but more importantly is it used as a way to insist upon obedience and conformity throughout the program. As discussed earlier, power is signalled by a person’s control of a social event by means of the genre (Weiss & Wodak, 2003).

This power is reinforced in the practices used by Co-op staff: When I give students this document, I typically ensure they read it by being in the room with them, asking them questions about whether they understood certain points, and highlighting the points that students commonly misunderstand. Furthermore, I have learned from my colleagues that when exercising
my authority over students, I can refer back to the Terms and Conditions in the course of the program when a student contravenes one of the policies. In these instances, I highlight the intolerable behaviour and quote the numbered statement that is contravened by that behaviour. I also remind them that they agreed to the Terms and Conditions by signing it. It is an effective way to exert my power and authority because of the legalistic manner in which I use that document.

Similarly to the previous text, the lack of images is important. This text is very dense and strictly coded by the order of the information and the numbering of the statements. In this way, it essentially dictates the order in which it should be read (Kress & van Leeuwan, 2006). This combined with the legalistic genre and practices of staff puts the student in an insubordinate position where they must abide by a set of rules that they did not create. It illustrates neoliberal discourses in that it highlights the hierarchy of the institution and the power differences where I, as a Coordinator, have social control of the situation and over many students (Perrow 1986).

I relate the overall textual structure to the idea of discoursal manipulation (Van Dijk, 2006). This is a ‘symbolic’ form of manipulation that emerges through practices or interactions. Students must conform to the rules of the Co-op Program and therefore participate in their production into a high calibre graduate. Program staff, texts, and practices continually reinforce discursive themes that value production.

**Sentence structure.**

Clauses in this document are connected in a variety of ways. There are simple, compound, and complex sentences. As a document that contains mostly an ordered list, numbers connect many clauses that do not always relate to each other in a meaningful way. Mostly, the document contains unique statements, connected by numbers and the introductory
paragraph, which ties it together. Because each of the numbered points are not subordinated by each other, this is a long list of equally important rules.

Within each numbered point, the sentences are declarative, since they contain a subject and are statements. Within these sentences, there are no subordinate clauses that qualify the reasons or background behind each statement, only prepositional clauses that indicate the timing of the instructions. This is due to the lack of subordinate conjunctions such as ‘because,’ ‘so that,’ ‘since,’ and ‘whereas.’ With no reasons or background information to justify each rule, it may be hard to understand why the rule exists. They may simply be a way of ensuring consistency in process, which is a feature in bureaucracy (Morgan, 2006). There also is no invitation for debate in the validity of each point. The high degree of modality, therefore, ensures that everyone shares an opinion of what is true and takes the power away from those who may have had another opinion of what is true (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

In the first paragraph, the subject is “you,” which refers to the reader, in this case a co-op student. In this first paragraph, the information giver is the Co-op Program staff and the writer is speaking directly to the receiver of information, a co-op student. However, for the remainder of the document, the subject is “I” so that the reader is the speaker and the writer is essentially taken out of the document. So in the first paragraph “you” refers to the reader and in the text that follows “I” also refers to the reader. This is of particular interest in contemplating the power relations between the writer and the reader as it puts the Co-op Program as having the ability to speak for and with its students. What right does the Co-op Program have to put words in the mouths of students? It may not feel like the education is very co-operative if you are the one who has to sign a list of statements made by you but actually is a product of conditions you did not create. It also is interesting from an education point of view, if students are being told what to
say, how will they develop the skills to speak for themselves? This again illustrates neoliberal discourses as it represents a preoccupation with rules and efficient processes found in bureaucracies (Goodman, 2006).

**Word choice.**

There are forty-one references to work and/or employment when describing co-op placements in this document. The word ‘job’ is also used several times in relation to a co-op placement. Conversely, there are no words that relate to *learning* in co-op terms. Alternate expressions for a ‘work term’ could have been used. Some examples might be ‘co-op term,’ ‘workplace learning term’ or ‘experiential learning term.’ The use of the words ‘work’ and ‘job’ are ideologically significant because they refer to paid activities that occur in the labour market. This shows a direct relationship between co-op learning and learning for/in the labour market. Rarely does one associate activities that are not in the labour market, such as parenting, volunteering, or activism as work. This solidifies a tendency for co-operative education discourse that favours training students for the labour market, rather than training students to think, to engage with society, or to personally grow, for example. In other words, it is engaging in a neoliberal discourse rather than an educational one that focuses on democratic learning.

To elaborate on this point, the document contains phrases that differentiate academic course terms from co-op terms. Within the discourse of this document, one could easily interpret the ‘academic’ course terms as those where learning occurs and the employment ‘work’ terms as those where payment and participation in the labour market occurs. Since both are part of a student’s academic degree program, why would such a distinction exist? Certainly there is an emphasis on professional development and preparation for the labour market in a co-op ‘work’
term, but to frame it only as a job opportunity and not as a learning one, limits the potential of learning through that experience and devalues it within an academic setting as well.

There are numerous inanimate nouns that describe a group of people. The most common is the noun “Co-op Program,” which usually refers to the Coordinator, especially in the Social Sciences Co-op Program: this is because the Coordinator is the main contact for students and the one who enforces policies and procedures. In some cases, it refers to the program, which means the Co-op curriculum, but in many cases, it also refers to a person or a group of people. The reader must interpret themselves whether the phrase refers to a person and which person it refers to. An example of both cases is in the section called A 1: “I will attend and complete a work term preparation program/course, normally undertaken before my first work term, and as specified by my Co-op Program.” In this first sentence, ‘Co-op Program’ refers to the curriculum. In the second sentence, “With permission of my Co-op Program, this preparation program may be completed while participating in the placement process for the first time,” the noun must refer to a person because people can grant permission, while a curriculum cannot. There are fourteen examples of ‘Co-op Program’ referring to a person or group of people, which can be detected by the verbs associated with them. Some examples are “will seek written approval from my Co-op Program,” “I will contact my Co-op Program,” and I understand that the Co-op Program must know my immigration status.” Only a person can provide written approval, be contacted, or know something.

The impact of such inanimate nouns is that it is objectifies staff. By representing the people as things in this phrase, they are ‘backgrounded’, or taken out of the picture. What does that say about the value of their role in co-operative education? Minimizing their existence or the diversity of co-op delivery can be disempowering to staff and affect the ways they are viewed
by others. This links to a bureaucratic discourse in that people in bureaucracies do not matter, the process of production does (Goodman, 1996).

**Powerful metaphors.**

All the linguistic and visual characteristics of this document contribute to confirming a metaphor of production. As bureaucracies, educational institutions are coordinated according to principles of efficiency and productivity (Goodman, 1996). Through extensive, consistent processes, co-operative education may include the exercise of signing the right forms, rather than a learning experience that facilitates contemplating of new theories or perspectives (Ferguson, 1984).

**Students for Sale: Analyses of ‘Your one-stop hiring shop’ Document**

That last document that I present is a flyer for employers. It has a short message that stands out and an image centred in white space on the top half and text with bullet points on the bottom half. The overall layout of the document facilitates reading the information as a result of the structure of the bullet points and imperative sentence structure.
Figure 3: Your one-stop hiring shop

UVic Co-op and Career is your one-stop shop for finding the perfect employee.

Post jobs through the Co-op Program to find students who are:
- seeking co-op jobs related to their area of study and to your industry—UVic co-op students are knowledgeable in more than 45 disciplines
- ready to help with short-term tasks or longer projects—co-op students are available for four-month work terms or longer

Post jobs via our Career Services board to find the perfect candidate for:
- full-time career track positions
- part-time, summer or casual work
- volunteer opportunities and internships

University of Victoria Co-operative Education Program and Career Services
**Text structure.**

This text is in a promotional genre. It is targeted to employers and is used to promote the hiring of UVic students and grads. It depicts the processes of hiring as very easy: there is only ‘one-stop’. It is easy to read and contains words and phrases that stand out.

The layout of the document is of special interest. It is structured along a vertical axis with distinct top and bottom parts. According to Kress & van Leewen (2006), the elements in the top part of a text represent an *ideal*, where as the elements in the bottom part represent as *real*. Idealized images represent the “generalized essence of the information” (p. 187) and are the most salient part of the text. The top part of the picture contains a picture of a shopping bag. It stands out because it is centred in white space, which further emphasizes the salience. The bottom part contains the details that elaborate on how to do your shopping. The tagline “Your one-stop hiring shop” is embedded in a thick horizontal line that serves to distinguish between the top and bottom parts and to emphasize the top part. Hence, the layout illustrates the neoliberal discourse of the marketization occurring in higher education (Fairclough, 1995).

**Sentence structure.**

The first clause is the tag line, “Your one-stop hiring shop,” which is not a true sentence because it is does not have a verb. However, I believe that the subject “UVic Co-op and Career” and the verb ‘to be’ are implied and that clause is connected to the image of the shopping bag. This represents a metaphor for UVic Co-op and Career, as a *store*, where one purchases something and puts it in the shopping bag. While there is nothing seen in the bag, I imagine a bag full of students calling, “pick me, pick me!” The image is a logical connector that represents a relationship between taking on co-op students in co-operative education or hiring graduates and buying goods or services. This represents an economic exchange. The next sentence then
directly relates education to being a process by which it provides the labour market with goods, also known as human capital, “UVic Co-op and Career is your one-stop shop for finding the perfect employee.”

The modality of the clauses in this excerpt denotes absolute knowledge claims as all clauses are either declarative or imperative. There are no words that denote possibilities or partial truth, even though many statements are based on judgements. “UVic Co-op and Career is your one-stop shop for finding the perfect employee,” implies that UVic Co-op and Career knows exactly what the perfect employee is for every organization and in fact can connect organizations to that perfect employee. More realistically, UVic Co-op and Career believes they know what constitutes the perfect employee and hopes they can connect organizations to someone that matches the description. The absence of modalization, as well as the declarative and imperative mood gives the sense that UVic Co-op and Career has complete control of a process where the issues are clear.

Furthermore the consistent use of imperatives and use of first and second person pronouns represents an implicit assumption that the giver of information knows the reader and his or her values. By taking an informal approach to addressing the reader with the pronoun ‘you’ and telling the reader what to do such as “post jobs through the co-op program to find students who are seeking co-op jobs related to their studies and to your industry,” the writer/speaker is taking an authoritative role in determining the advisable actions for the reader. The writer/speaker assumes the reader is an employer who is actively engaged in the labour market and is an eager shopper of the goods being sold.
Word choice.

It is interesting that on a pamphlet that promotes the University of Victoria Co-operative Education Program and Career Services, as well as its students, the words learning, education, or teaching are not present. The reasons for hiring students or grads is not framed within an educational activity; it is framed within an economic one. For example, “Post jobs through the co-op program to find students who are ready to help with short term tasks or longer projects,” is quite different from ‘Post co-op opportunities to support students who are keen to learn in your organization, while applying their knowledge and skills.’ This further exemplifies the neoliberal focus of the document: education serves the needs of the labour market (Bell & Stevenson, 2006).

Powerful metaphors.

My discussion on this text thus far has included the identification of a shopping metaphor. However, it is important to note that it further reinforces the metaphor that co-operative education is a form of production. For the first text, I highlighted the word choice of ‘producing high calibre graduates.’ For the second text, I highlighted the notion of ensuring consistency and productivity through standardized roles. For this text, one that emphasizes the buying and selling of students, the production metaphor positions the UVic Co-op and Career as the place to find the outputs or products of education. In a neoliberal discourse found within the entrepreneurial activities of education, the university is communicating like an “an ordinary business competing to sell their products to consumers” (Fairclough, 1995, p. 141). There are no products to sell if there is no production processes to make them.

In summary, by analyzing the discourse of three documents used in the Social Sciences Co-op Program, I have described relevant elements of the whole text orientation, clause
combination, grammar and vocabulary. This description was accompanied by an interpretation of the social interactions represented by the discourse and occurring at each of the discursive events. I found that the style, grammar and word choice highlighted a neoliberal ideology, including a tendency towards using economic imperatives to explain and interpret education, as well as using a bureaucratic metaphor of a machine to describe and deliver co-operative education. The result is discourse that illuminates students’ powerless role in cooperative education and the preference of labour market benefits of educating students versus student development benefits of workplace learning.

**There are Other Ways: Alternate Discourses**

The discourses chosen in a given discursive event relate to the social context. I highlighted a social context that is dominated by neoliberal discourses. However, I also identified some possible non-neoliberal discourses, particularly educationally focused ones that could be part of this social context. The dominant provincial discourse outlined earlier mostly referred to the role of education as fulfilling a societal need for creating human capital and the need for a competitive workforce, but there were some references to education enriching individual freedom, cultural diversity, social justice, and societal health and wellness. The university also represented some other discourses, such as those focused on people and learning, however they were framed within neoliberal realities such as competition for human capital. The university “sees education, knowledge creation and creative activity as crucial, not only to social and economic progress and competitiveness, but to constructive global citizenship and civic engagement” *(A Vision for the Future: Building on Strength*, p. 9)
Therefore instead of a market mechanism or production process, there are many other metaphors that could have been used to represent and promote co-operative education, as well as student and grad hiring to employers. Fairclough (1989) emphasizes that it is important to consider both what features we find in a specific text as well as what has been left out. “In order to interpret the features which are actually present in a text, it is generally necessary to take account of what other choices might have been made” (p. 110). Metaphors of co-op could have connected to these other discourses. For example, I prefer metaphors of nature and natural processes. Using a garden metaphor and a developmental goal for education, a tag line to promote co-operative education could have been something such as: ‘Let’s pollinate the future’ and an image could have been bees in a garden. Thinking about education as a way to emancipate and empower citizens, a tag line could have been, ‘Together we can create our future’ and the image could have been a group of people in a circle putting their hands together. Considering co-operative education as a means of learning and teaching, action words to represent what happens could have been learning, developing, supporting, exploring, facilitating, and experiencing. Instead of the output of ‘high-calibre graduates’, the outcome of co-operative education could have been engaged citizens, critical thinkers, or life-long learners.
CHAPTER FIVE

Reflections and Discussion

This chapter is where I, as the researcher, reflect on my findings. This includes consideration of my role as the researcher and as a co-op practitioner, as well as consideration about whether those that most benefit from the current situation have an interest in the problem being resolved or not. Is changing the power relations and ideologies embedded within the Social Sciences Co-op Program realistic or desirable to those currently in power and “how can critical analysis of texts and interactions contribute to emancipatory change” (Fairclough, 2001, p. 239)?

Role as Researcher

I am a researcher and a Co-op practitioner. As a Co-op practitioner, I am situated directly within the discourse and issue I have explored. I am just as much part of the problem as I am a researcher analyzing it. Fairclough (1989) stresses “the essential similarity between what the analyst does and what participants do” (p. 141). While my experience and personal feelings with the text that I’ve analysed provide richer insights into the analysis, it also perpetuates bias of the research. Like Oughton (2007) reflected in her own critical discourse analysis of adult numeracy curriculum, “this makes an ‘objective’ analysis impossible” (p. 260).

The bias I bring to the issue has disabled me, at times, to think of different perspectives on the influence of the language we use. In this study, I have looked at the presence and influences of neoliberal discourses in the UVic Social Sciences Co-op Program, but there may be other discourses present and there may be positive influences of neoliberalism that I did not emphasize. For instance during my exploration about language used in Co-op, I thought about
the use of the personal adjective ‘my’, as in ‘my students’ and theorized that it implies a power-over relationship where a coordinator takes ownership and credit over students. I felt that thinking of students as possessions was negative in that it takes the power away from them. However, when I suggested that theory to a student she replied that she did not at all feel the same way. She appreciated the ownership; it didn’t make her feel powerless, it made her feel taken care of.

Discourses, as symbols of social interaction, are always subject to interpretation and ‘reading’ with, against, or some variation. Symbols can mean different things to different people simultaneously (Stone, 1997). Considering the example given about the possession, I though it meant that I was exerting domination, while a student felt like she was protected and cared for. Readings can be dominant in that most people construct more or less the same meaning of a given text because they share and draw from similar ideologies, but they don’t have to.

Discourse functions in communication events in the ways they are interpreted by participants in their context model (Van Dijk, 2006). A person’s MR and experience within the Co-op Program helps determine this interpretation. As Eggins (2004) suggests

The distinctive feature of semiotic systems is that each choice in the system acquires it meanings against the background of other choices which could have been made. This semiotic interpretation of the system of language allows us to consider the appropriacy or inappropriacy of different linguistic choices in relation to their context of use, and to view language as a resource which we use by choosing to make meanings in contexts. (p. 3)

Taking the phrase, “producing students into high-calibre graduates” is interpreted as a positive metaphor if you believe that education is a means by which one can get a ‘good job.’
This would mesh well if you are a recent graduate of co-operative education and have a good job. However, if you are the student who has applied to over 90 co-op postings with no avail, it may be very hard to believe that the Co-op Program changes students into high-calibre graduates.

If you take a Deweyan perspective to education, the metaphor is not so appealing or adequate to describe what happens. Instead of thinking about a production process whereby students are produced into something, perhaps the discourse should reflect a perspective, that students “actively participate, both as cultural and moral agents, in the process of educational transformation involving the whole world, which is a process of social development whose ultimate goal is the construction of a ‘social democracy’” (Striana, 2009, p. 393). This is the perspective I had (and have everyday) when ‘reading’ the texts of the UVic Co-op Program.

**Role as Co-op Practitioner**

The data seems to have exposed a dilemma regarding my role as a Co-op Coordinator. What is my role? Am I a co-producer of high-calibre graduates or is my role different than that? This is a complex issue. As I reflect on my own practise and think about the initial student meetings during which I introduce the Terms and Conditions document. I wonder whether I have become like a shop-floor manager who oversees the students to make sure work gets completed correctly and on schedule (Goodman, 1995). On the other hand, during conversations at trade shows with potential co-op student employers handing out the Your One Stop Hiring Shop brochure, I feel like a sales person selling products to consumers (Fairclough, 1995). (I will come back to the identity of consumers later.) When signing the last grade form for a student about to graduate with a co-op degree, I wonder how has the Co-op Program or I impacted her.
Did I somehow produce her into what she is today or have I rather nurtured ideas, lifted spirits, provided insightful information, reinforced the ideas of patience and perseverance, or done something else? The answer is likely a combination because of the complexity of this issue.

Since the Co-op Program purports to produce high-calibre graduates, one could infer that staff members, such as me, are the producers. This is giving me, as a Co-op Coordinator a lot of credit in the outcome. If the discourse of the Co-op Program was more student-centred, then my role in the education process may not be as salient, official and predictable as one of a producer. This may be a role that some are not willing to give up. What role would staff members have? Would they even have a role?

For me, personally, this is not a barrier; rather it is a catalyst. Often, a colleague of mine and I reflect on the fact that for many students we feel like our role is small in that those students do not need us or the Co-op Program to succeed. Those students are self-directed, confident, and engaged in their own futures, as well as engaged in their community. In fact, those students exhibit the qualities we would like to see in university graduates; they also easily find employment or have secured employment for after graduation. We feel the proudest when associated with those students and are content that we provided the foray for those students to prove themselves or apply those behaviours, rather that producing those students into what they are. What it comes down to is acceptance of a catalyst role, not a producing one. From a Deweyian perspective, the work of co-operative educators should be a “practice of directing and facilitating activities that progressively lead to an organized and reflective use of inner forces and potentialities, focusing on interests and problems emerging from human experience” (Striano, 2009, p. 385). This juxtaposes the role that neoliberal discourses could infer for co-operative
educators to be more like one of a shop-floor manager who over sees the students to make sure work gets completed correctly and on time (Goodman, 1995).

**Who is the Consumer Anyway?**

Looking at another metaphor, if I am the sales person, then who is the consumer? On one hand the discourses of the Co-op Program indicated a metaphor that represented me as a salesperson selling co-op students and high-calibre graduates to employers. But on the other hand, the discourses indicated a strategy to persuade students into pursuing co-operative education. Either interpretations of the discourse can be problematic.

Considering the labour market and organizations as a consumer is problematic because it objectifies students. Students are not commodities to be produced and then sold. I believe that if the discourse represents education as having a role in producing human capital (Bell & Stevenson, 2006) it objectifies them. If education is reduced to a metaphor of a routinized and mechanized process, it has the potential to erode the human spirit (Morgan, 2006).

When students are symbolically reduced to being an input into a big production, it may limit their engagement into the process. However, if students are not engaged, it may limit the potential for them to get produced into high-calibre graduates, which would then effect the amount of human capital that is sold. This indicates the value that students have in the process and provides a possible perspective on how educational institutions and governments attract more students.

The environmental context showed that students are also targeted as consumers of the education process, which is also problematic. The provincial government seems to be adamant about providing more choice and higher quality programs to students. In the entrepreneurial
pursuit to compete against each other for the best students, universities spend vast amounts of money to attract academic superstars (Whiteley, Aguiar & Marten, 2008). There is so much focus on business principals, little is done to develop knowledge or implement programs related to learning. Indeed, framing students as buyers could lead to forgetting that they are also learners.

**Ideas Pervade**

As stated in the introductory chapter, discourses “shape and constrain the scope for individual agency [and] provide a parameter within which notions of truth and knowledge are formed” (Bell & Stevenson, p.18). I think about the discussion with my colleague who called students widgets and know that she cares very much about students’ well-being and uses metaphors of production because that is how she conceptualizes the education process. Metaphors imply “a way of thinking and a way of seeing that pervade how we understand our world generally” (Morgan, 2006, p. 4) but at the same time they become “a way of not seeing” (p. 5).

When I look back at the books on my shelf, I notice professional development resources related to selling and networking but no resources on adult work learning theory. I think about our program evaluation measures that relate to counting placements or job development actions but not related to learning. I think about our communication materials such as those that I analyzed and saw a large component of words and ideas related to production, to work (in the labour market) and to buying and selling, with much less on words and ideas related to learning. The neoliberal discourses found in the communication materials were also found in the
provincial government, university and co-operative education and work-place learning environments.

When economic imperatives permeate through all social structures, it is hard to diverge from that and hard to imagine anything else. In the case of this study, if a government makes decisions based on economic imperatives, institutions that vie for funding must prove their existence from a market-driven discourse. Programs within those institutions then must prove their existence from the same discourse. Failure to do so could result in extinction because it can be impossible to justify programs and funding for those programs without using that discourse. It becomes a matter of survival to use a neoliberal discourse that focuses on economic imperatives.

**Ironic Effects**

Seeing the Co-op Program through a market-driven and bureaucratic discourse may mean not being able to see the Co-op Program through an education or learning discourse. As neoliberal discourses dominate over learning and teaching discourses, an interesting effect has ensued. The more the Co-op Program discourse aligns with neoliberal discourses, the less likely it is aligned with learning discourses. As an education program, we consider ourselves as an important part of the learning experiences of UVic students and are frustrated at the university community when we are considered an add-on to the UVic education experience, rather than an integral part of the learning experience. However the language we use positions us far from an academic experience. On the terms and conditions, one can interpret a clear distinction between learning and working. Co-op, according to the text on that document, consists only of the latter. Perhaps the very language that we, as the Co-op Program, use inhibits the Program from being represented as a learning experience.
Different Way of Looking at it

New possibilities for change could include, programs justified by a variety of factors, not just neoliberal ones. In the case of the Co-op Program discourse, it could include a description of co-op and its benefits using different words than those that related to economic or market principles. Looking at the UVic strategic plan, (http://web.uvic.ca/strategicplan/pdf/strategicplan.pdf), there is reference to other imperatives, such as civic engagement and contribution to the sustainable social and cultural development of the region and country. Perhaps co-operative education can be a way to orally pass down professional and industrial wisdom, which would contribute to cultural development. Perhaps co-operative education can be a conduit for discussion and reflection of different professions, practises, and imperatives, to facilitate civic engagement. Critical discourse analysis, such as the one I have conducted can be useful to highlight the dominating ideology in the discourses. Alternative discourses are available and it is up to communicators to consider those when communicating about co-operative education and interpreting communication about co-operative education.

Seeing education through a new lens will include referring to it with a new discourse. Metaphors that I noted in the discourse are that of a machine and that of a marketplace. Why not a metaphor of a garden? Instead of a shopping bag that refers to hiring students and grads, I advocate for an image of a flower with a bee pollinating it or of a bustling garden with several bees, birds, the sun, dew on the leaves, herds of sheep grazing, and people harvesting crops. What would it be like if metaphors for growth and collaboration were dominant instead of metaphors for production and sales? Phrases like “producing high-calibre graduates,” and “your one-stop shop” would be replaced with phrases such as ‘nurturing critical thinking and engaged
citizens’ and ‘It’s our garden to grow.’ This would appeal to those students who have not found the success in terms of co-op placements and to those who have taken initiative in their own learning. It would appeal to me because I do not produce anything; I provide support, encouragement, and advice.

If we had new words to live by, we could further economic imperatives without meaning to do so. Apart from a bureaucratic discourse in the form of our structures, processes, and text, a discourse of empowerment could emerge. This could be a different discourse that highlights equal power status, self-initiative, and collaboration. If citizens felt empowered to contribute in different ways and still feel like their contribution is valued, it may lead to a vibrant, dynamic society that fosters growth, harmony, and wealth in different forms, including financial.

As an example, changing the bureaucratic discourse of the Social Sciences Co-op Program to a discourse of empowerment could provide students with an opportunity to develop critical thinking, engage in a democratic process, and take ownership over their own success in co-operative education. I provide an example of how the Terms and Conditions document could be designed in the next chapter. That example illustrates how the document could promote greater equality of power between participants, direct acknowledgement of who is responsible for what aspect of cooperative education, and shows trust in the students as opposed to ultimately assuming they would fail. This would reflect an organic process of learning and growing, as opposed to a rational, logical process that is predominantly present in mechanisms and bureaucracy, not in nature.
CHAPTER SIX

Conclusions and Ways Forward

In this last chapter, I will consider what I have learned and contemplate the applicability of the findings. I also made some suggestions for other studies that would further explore some of the issues identified by this study. Lastly, I summarized what was done and found during this study.

Is Change Possible?

Students may enjoy being taken care of. That would not be that surprising; don’t we all want to be cared for by someone? There is a growing discussion at the university among colleagues about how we can relate to and create educational programming to this generation of students. While this isn’t a study that delves into the cultural properties of today’s students, I will explain what colleagues are saying about this generation.

Colleagues believe that these students have an inflated sense of entitlement and a lower than needed hardworking ethos. Many attribute that to the belief that these students were brought up by a generation in which both parents typically worked out of the house and signed-up their children to a plethora of extra-curricular activities. These children would have lacked free playtime so one could say that they were ‘programmed’ for programming. Another factor of this theory is that many times parents made up for their lack of affection and company with material goods. The children are said to have gotten used to having accessories and getting what they wanted easily.

If today’s students truly have these traits, then they may pose the greatest challenge to a new discourse and the emancipation of themselves. It is from the perspective of entitlement that
they read texts. It would take critical analysis, self-initiative, and aspiration for something better to effect change. Without that, students limit their possibilities of future by limiting their actions and imagination of today. However, I take an optimistic view and that when we create space for discussion and the co-creation of new knowledge, then a future of diverse possibilities can ensue.

**Redefining the Issue**

So perhaps it is an issue of how we see through kaleidoscope lenses rather than an issue about how do we avoid the neoliberal lens. How can we become engaged citizens, who are excited to be different yet work collaboratively and start from there instead of tying ourselves up with prescribed ways to become? I invite us, and by us, I mean you, the reader, and me, the writer, not to focus on a narrow or a specific issue for deliberation, but on broad and diverse issues. Using a metaphor for distance and travel, maybe the solution is not the destination but a stop along the way. I wrote in my introduction, “we, as an educational program, and the students are missing out on a huge opportunity if ‘good jobs’ are the only goal...why would the goal of an education program not be learning?” That precisely mirrors the larger point: if we focus merely on economic imperatives, there may be other imperatives lost by the wayside. Perhaps, we should focus on greater outcomes with economic benefits being a stop along the way.

I’ve thought about the recent economic recession that hit North America. An industry that was greatly affected was the auto industry. When the auto manufacturers closed down factories due to a loss of sales, the workers were out of employment. They could not find other employment and unemployment rates soared. This may have been related to the style of education and learning they have had that was bound by neoliberal and bureaucratic discourse. They had learned to do things, not to think. In fact, in assembly lines and fixed tasks, there is
very little need to think, so why bother learning to? Yet, if those workers had been critical thinkers perhaps they would have created new earning possibilities for themselves in industries we do not know can exist. But they did not do so; they waited until the auto-industry strengthened.

Change might be hard considering we have grown up in and accustomed to bureaucracy. Within our society and institutions, there are fairly clear understandings of social positions and those in more power positions would like to remain so (Ferguson, 1984). As a Co-op Coordinator, it could be easy to communicate within a bureaucratic discourse because it situates me in a position of power by being higher in the hierarchy and also by being the designated expert. Words explicate the fact that I have the authority to decide when and how to apply the rules, as well as determine how the program is implemented; structures and processes confirm this authority. However, my MR does not support this idea. I personally think that students have much knowledge and should be leaders in their own development. In fact, I believe that I have much to learn from students, despite being senior to them. For me, changing the bureaucratic structure represented in our relations and processes in the Co-op Program would not be hard.

What Now?

Further exploration of the adoption of a new discourse and the effects would be a worthwhile study in the field of co-operative education. Longitudinal and participatory studies involving students and other program stakeholders could delve into an analysis about whether changing discourse can affect behaviour and outcomes. Policy analysis and development could identify the gaps and opportunities for new policies and procedures. Focusing on education,
studies could explore effective structures, relationships, and processes that would facilitate student development.

Before new studies are undertaken, there is still a role for all of us – you, me, and others. We can consider the findings of this study to be conscious of the words we use, the structures we create, and the way we justify our existence. As a Co-op Coordinator, this study has already given me new perspectives and I choose my words carefully when coordinating the program. For example, I use a student-centred approach such as the text on the Geography department’s webpage for students,

At UVic Geography, learning extends beyond the classroom. Through the Co-operative Education Program (co-op) and Career Services, you can develop skills for a successful and fulfilling career. You can explore career options through events and services such as career fairs, company information sessions, one-on-one meetings with career educators, and more!

as well as the webpage for employers,

Co-operative education (Co-op) is an innovative learning strategy that integrates practical experience with academic studies. Students, the university, and employers 'co-operate' in the process of educating the leaders of tomorrow. Employers like you are valued co-educators who provide challenging positions that strengthen co-op students' professional competence.

By choosing words that are more student-centred I hope to remind students that they are in charge of their own development and they can be the benefactors of that development. I also hope to remind employers that they are in a position to help students develop, rather than only in a position to reap benefits from student development practices.
Critical reflection is a matter not of challenging conventions, for instance, but of engaging with the processes that sustain such conventions and simultaneously providing for the possibility of their transformation. Such engagement, in which subjects themselves are reconstructed, becomes less a matter of being for or against certain practices and more a matter of creating them anew, of participating in constitutive practices. (Price, 1999, p. 593)

It is only after we embrace discourses of empowerment that we can expect emancipatory change in the dominant ideologies of our times. Without a new discourse to live by, we are constrained by a future that is imaginable. Perhaps the time has come to open up to new possibilities and to be the change we want to see.

This presents further exploration in the field of co-operative education that this study does not delve into. What are emancipatory educational discourses that could be accessed? Can they be applied in co-operative education? What will it take in order for them to be fully understood and lived by?

While I did not aim to produce UVic Co-op and Career curriculum through this study, it is useful to provide a tangible example of how we can reframe the co-op learning experience. The terms and conditions is a document that I have thought a lot about. I have imagined how it could be written with the student’s learning experience in mind, rather than with obedience and conformity in mind. For instance, it could have been written as a list of rules that students must adhere to with the use of the third person or the word ‘student’ as the subject. This would not put students in a manipulated position to sign statements that are written as though the students themselves had written them. Alternatively, the terms and conditions could be co-created after a workshop so that the student understands the background and writes each rule in their own words.
to cover the same issue. On the other hand, since the program is supposed to be a co-operative relationship between students, employers and the University of Victoria, there could be rules that govern the behaviour of each party. However, because it is a document between students and the university, perhaps rules that govern co-op program staff and students would suffice.

To provide a consideration of an alternate way of framing the rules and relationship between the student and Co-op Program differently, I created an example of how this alternate framing may actualize, which is in Figure 4. I thought that a concrete example could better illustrate how the tone and power relations could be different with other linguistic and stylistic features such as font, length, and format. The main differences between the alternate terms and conditions and the actual ones are the choice of pronoun, the articulations of both students’ and co-op staff members’ responsibilities, the length, the lack of redundancy between the document and other disciplinary administrative texts (the Academic Calendar), and the invitation for discussion.
Figure 4: Alternate terms and conditions document

**SOCIAL SCIENCES CO-OP PROGRAM**

**STUDENT/STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES**

This document outlines the principles governing UVic Co-op students and staff to ensure procedural fairness for co-op participants (students, staff, and employers), maximum learning outcomes, and compliance to the Canadian Association of Cooperative Education accreditation guidelines. These governing principles compliment regulations listed in the Cooperative Education sections of the University of Victoria Academic Calendar. Students who choose not to meet expectations can be withdrawn from the Program. Staff members who choose not to meet expectations can be reported and can lose students who choose to work with an alternate member.

**Expectations for Co-op Students**

1. Students read this document and show agreement by signing it.
2. Students read and understand the Cooperative Education sections of the University of Victoria Academic Calendar.
3. Students refer to the Social Sciences Student Handbook as an educational resource both when searching for co-op placements, while participating in one, and upon reflection after workplace learning experiences.
4. If students change their co-op plans, have questions, need help in their Co-op Program, or have specific goals, they can and should speak to their Co-op Coordinator or other staff member.
5. Co-op students intend to complete the required co-op placement terms by actively participating in the co-op placement search process, as well as being open to placements outside Victoria or in positions indirectly related to career goals because placements are not guaranteed.
6. While there is flexibility due to individual needs, students understand that to get the most learning benefit out of the Co-op Program, it is better to schedule workplace-based terms between course-based ones. Based on this premise, students are not permitted to complete co-op terms after finished coursework.
7. To maintain Co-op status, students must be registered as full-time students. A leave of absence from the university and the Co-op program must be communicated in advance to the student’s Co-op Coordinator.
8. If a student would like to develop his or her own co-op position, he or she must obtain the Co-op Coordinator’s approval of the position. This means submitting supporting documentation (job description and employer letter of offer) no later than the end of the first month of the co-op term, otherwise the placement may not be registered.
9. If offered a co-op position, students have 24 hours to decide whether to accept. (Why do you think that is?)
10. Students may not decline more than one position per term otherwise they will lose eligibility to participate in the co-op placement process for that term. (Why do you think that is?)
11. Co-op students represent the University while on co-op placements and therefore conduct themselves in a professional and ethical manner, according to local workplace culture. (Ask your coordinator if unsure what this means)

12. Students accept that most co-op terms are paid based on the organization's salary scale. Salary level is typically based on student's years of education and amount of relevant work experience.

13. Co-op postings and other resources on MyCoop.ca are password protected. Consequently, students do not share secure information about Co-op resources with non-Co-op students.

Expectations for SS Co-op Staff

SS Co-op staff members ...

1. Provide students with resources to success. This includes a Student Handbook, The Work Term Preparation program, access to one-on-one meetings, Mycoop.ca, and more.

2. Make policy, curriculum and student support decisions based on the goal to provide a sound educational program; student learning is the most important guiding principle.

3. Develop learning opportunities in the form of co-op positions and will offer a variety of such opportunities each term.

4. Help students to develop co-op placements that are unique to their interests by providing a telephone, writing supporting documents, and communicating with potential employers and generally matching the effort put in by the student.

5. Will not post co-op positions or approve self-placements that they believe are unsuitable.

6. Will be available to answer student questions or concerns by email, phone, or in person during work hours; when on holiday or on co-op site visits, will arrange for back-up co-op staff to be available.

7. Will represent students to facilitate workplace learning, fairness and safety, when issues or conflicts arise with employment relationships or otherwise.

8. Will discuss and release personal information consisting of students' academic record (transcripts) and employment history (résumés and references) to prospective Co-op employers for the purpose of securing co-op and career placements only.

Additional Expectations:


Student Signature ________________ Coordinator Signature ________________
Conclusion

In conclusion, this study began with my feeling of discontent and led to a critical discourse analysis of the Social Sciences Co-op Program. Because of the unease I felt relating to our relationships and processes, I undertook a literature review and critically looked at three documents that has different purposes and target audiences. I then identified the discursive environments within which the Co-op Program, and thus the discourses, are contextualized. Lastly, I shared my reflections of opportunities for change.

A neoliberal discourse with a metaphor of a marketplace was most obvious discourse that I found. Not only do the words within the Co-op documents support this metaphor but the image of a shopping bag concretized it. The discourses of the provincial government, the university and the Canadian Association of Cooperative Education were also neoliberal with a concentration on economic imperatives as the purpose of and measurement of quality in education. This has effects on our views of the benefactors of education and the respect we have for the participants. If graduates are merely a commodity that are for sale in the labour market, then training out values learning. Instead of being educators, co-op staff members become shop keepers.

A secondary discourse that I feel is directly linked to a neoliberal discourse and found within the discursive environments and texts in the Social Sciences Co-op Program, is bureaucratic discourse. This discourse conjures up an image of mechanistic modes of production and confines the experiences of co-operative education into exercises with predetermined outcomes. There is no room for creativity, personality, or critical thinking within bureaucracy. Since the university strives to develop critical thinkers that will engage in and contribute to society, then a bureaucratic discourse may not be the best one to contribute to that goal.
My reflection explored the roles the participants have in cooperative education and the likelihood that the participants will have the courage, the audacity, and the motivation to move past a known discourse. I commented on the probability that participants would move out of their comfort zone. I also explored a possible new discourse of empowerment.

Lastly, I presented a call for action. If co-op practitioners, students and employers have the courage and the motivation to consider new words to live by, a new and unexpected future can ensue. We may be able to live in harmony, collaborate for mutual benefit, and respect each other with all our differences.
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