

**Career-Life Exploration in Secondary Schools in BC: An Analysis of the Career Education  
Documents for Grades 10, 11 and 12**

by

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B.A., Urmia University, 2012

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## Abstract

Excellent career education that guides young people to align their talents and competencies with their life-path, positively influences job satisfaction, individual's mental wellness, resilience against stress, and overall life satisfaction, which in turn, affects the contributions that those individuals may make to society. A key component in helping young people forge a meaningful life-path is the direction and guidance that they receive in secondary school via the career education curriculum. In this study, I used critical discourse analysis to examine the British Columbia (B.C.) Ministry of Education's Career-Life Education (CLE) curriculum for grades 10 and 11, and the Career-Life Connection (CLC) curriculum for grade 12, and additional supplementary documents that were available. While research and reports about high school career education was found, after an extensive review of literature, no published academic research directly linked to the provincial curriculum was evident. Therefore, the aim of my research was to uncover the nature of the B.C. Ministry of Education curriculum by exposing the pedagogical and theoretical frameworks underpinning it. In addition, I sought to query the intention of the career education curriculum and to identify the opportunities, strategies, and activities used to discover *all* students' skills, interests, and strengths. I also examined if and how the curriculum discovered and responded to the needs of culturally, socially, and linguistically diverse students. The findings suggest that the curriculum is robust and coherent; however, there is a lack of cohesiveness and in-depth discussion of practical implications and applications of this curriculum in the classroom, school, and community. In addition, findings showed that while learning activities, strategies, and opportunities are clearly articulated in the curriculum, there is insufficient emphasis on an exploration of students' unique talents. The findings also show a gap

in addressing the need for differentiated support for learners of socially, culturally, and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

This study contributes to the field of research on career guidance and exploration of life-path for young people in that it is the first study of the B.C. career education curriculum, and it points to the merits and shortcomings of this curriculum for exploring one's life-path.

*Keywords:* career education, curriculum analysis, policy analysis, critical discourse analysis

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## **Chapter 1**

### **My Journey**

As an international graduate student from Iran, currently living in Victoria, B.C., I am a part of visible minority. Coming from a very different social, political, cultural, and linguistic background influences the way I perceive and interact with the world, investigate topics, and respond to dilemmas and challenges. Prior to my arrival in Canada in 2021, I worked for 10 years with diverse students from significantly different backgrounds in Turkey and Iran. During this time, I observed many students who struggled to find their way in the world or determine their early life-path. In my view, part of this problem was due to a lack of responsiveness by educators, but also to several social-cultural factors in the home and community environment. In the past three years, I have worked as a research assistant and teaching assistant at the university, and as an educational assistant in the school system. In this most recent role, I have been working with diverse students in secondary school who find school challenging both due to their learning needs related to their [dis]abilities and/or related to English language challenges. All these experiences got me thinking about how exploration of a life-path is so important at this critical crossroad between adolescence and adulthood. It is both an exciting and vulnerable time for learners in our school systems.

A typical example, among the students I worked with, was that a Canadian secondary student required to follow her parents' advice on higher education studies (contrary to what she wanted), because in her culture, she had a very limited voice, and her parents believed the opinions of their children would not bring them a prosperous future. There was no critical discussion or guidance at the school level that might have better informed the family and student.

In another context in Turkey, immigrant families were very often not familiar with higher education opportunities in their new country and did not receive sufficient guidance or counselling from educators so that they could see the range of choices available to their adolescents. Challenges also often arose among students from lower socio-economic and educational backgrounds who may be unfamiliar with their future options. This is not to suggest that so-called, 'regular' students don't also struggle in finding their way. A common problematic theme in these scenarios is adoption of non-differentiated support or one-size-fits-all approach to guiding and advising students. These experiences initially developed my interest in this area of inquiry and pointed to the significance and power of getting appropriate, adequate, and differentiated support in life path exploration and choices throughout the school years but particularly in high school.

Grades 10, 11, and 12 are critically important grades for making decisions related to post-secondary education which affects the overall life-path of young people. In my career as an educator at an independent school in B.C., which enrolls many students from international backgrounds, I routinely interact with students who are either struggling to find their future career path or are directed to pursue their academic career in limited ways that are inconsistent with their strengths, skills, and interests. For example, some students are advised to enter two-year college programs when university programs or trade programs might be a better fit for them. Other students go directly into the workforce which can sometimes, but not always, limit them in their career growth potential. In my experience, students do not receive differentiated support according to their unique backgrounds and are often left feeling insecure and uninformed about their options and the implications of their decisions at this critical stage in their lives. Students

struggle to have a picture of themselves in the future. Without some vision, it is difficult to set goals and explore a life-path in a meaningful and effective way.

Throughout my journey, I have also met adults who did not find meaning or satisfaction in their careers, despite working in that career for many years. Although I consider myself a privileged person who did not go through these same challenges, I have always been empathetic and curious about these types of challenges and wondered what could be done about them. Moving to Canada and learning more about B.C. education system, I found that Career Education is an important area in the K-12 schooling. I decided to analyze B.C. secondary career education curriculum, and curriculum supplementary documents to answer my questions of how these discourses, policies, and suggested practices embedded in these documents are guiding students to find their life path.

I recognize and try to be aware of my own biases in taking up research on this topic. My interpretation of the documents, influenced by experiences and world view might have created a bias. I have observed the practices of the secondary career education courses that I have participated in while working at secondary schools in B.C. Also, I have studied, had significant, meaningful relationships with my international university community as we share stories of challenges regarding transitions to Canada and to graduate school. These international relationships, coupled with my work with vulnerable, but often resilient and promising students in the B.C. school system, makes me sensitive to their acculturation process and their plight as newly immigrated people. This can be a benefit and a challenge: a benefit in the sense that I can relate to the needs of the end users of the curriculum-vulnerable students at a crossroad. This may be a challenge because of confirmation bias. I may look for affirmation of what I already

believe about the topic. To help reduce this risk, I was careful to keep this reality in mind as I analyzed the documents and to challenge my findings by looking for counter evidence.

### **Significance of the Problem**

The quality of career education planning impacts students' well-being and future job satisfaction, which is connected to mental wellness and ultimately affects every aspect of life and subsequently the larger society (Extremera et al., 2020; Qiu et al., 2021). Islam et al. (2020) report that if appropriate school counseling/guidance is not provided at an early level of education, students can end up making career choices based on common trends or move toward random perceived options that may not be suited to their talents, realities, and aspirations. Some students who are well-suited to explore post-secondary education options might be misguided toward immediate job entry by families, and occasionally by teachers rather than seeking higher levels of education. There is a tendency to choose two-year programs over four-year programs with the goal of entering the workplace earlier (Winingsih et al., 2020). This may be the right path for certain students but without differentiated guidance, there are more risks that students are going to take a less fulfilling or even completely dissatisfying study and work path.

Excellent career education can positively impact an individual's well-being and job satisfaction diminishing conditions that may lead to mental illness, anxiety, stress, and depression. Such solid and sensitive career education can contribute significantly to society as a whole (Extremera et al., 2020; Qiu et al., 2021). Canada is a popular immigration destination (450 different ethnicities live in Canada), and B.C. is one of the favorable destinations for immigrants. B.C. is the home to about 30% of the population of immigrants in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2022a; Statistics Canada, 2022b). Considering students' diversity while designing

curriculum and planning lessons along with focusing on teaching about diversity is of importance to increase the quality of education in B.C. and enhancing Canadian society.

Several factors and people can impact students' career decision-making at the secondary level, including parental influence, peer influence, career trends, income, and students' interests.

School curriculum is regarded as one of the most significant factors impacting career decisions (Kazi & Akhlaq, 2017). Teachers' and parents' support may not only ease the transition from grade 12 to post-secondary education or career, but also can increase the level of overall life satisfaction (Blau et al., 2019).

Even though youths' career choices might be changeable as they approach adulthood, choices made in schools inevitably impact their future career options (Falco & Steen, 2018). Poor career education can negatively impact individuals' well-being and job satisfaction which can sometimes lead to pronounced anxiety, stress, and depression resulting in a great loss to the whole society (Extremera et al., 2020; Qiu et al., 2021). In my thesis, I will extensively review the literature to examine whether the secondary career curriculum delivers on the promise of robustly guiding students along a meaningful life-path through the career education course curriculum (CLE and CLC). I will identify which aspects of the BC secondary career education curriculum provide teachers with implicit and explicit ways for teachers to explore students' needs, talents, aspirations, and potential.

To provide the best guidance either in career education or the counseling process educators and influential others must avoid a uniform population mindset and rather gain knowledge of students' needs, strengths, and aspirations (Lee, 2001). It is crucial to introduce students to a multitude of possibilities to help them find their life-path in equitable ways (Lee, 2001).

## **Significance of the Problem for Students of Socio-culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds**

Canada consists of a population from more than 450 ethnicities and a variety of backgrounds (Statistics Canada, 2022a) and therefore has diverse educational needs. Discovering non-dominant students' needs and addressing them in the curriculum could make a significant difference in the outcome of secondary education, which ultimately leads to a healthier and more just society (BCME, 2008a).

There are more than 20 diverse ethnicities in B.C. (Statistics Canada, 2022a). Practicing inclusion of such students' needs to begin early in elementary school (Rutland & Killen, 2015). Socially and culturally diverse students benefit from an education that examines diverse voices and cultures (Coady et al., 2017; Juvonen, 2019; Verkuyten, 2008).

Notably, the first language of 27.57 % of B.C. population is a language other than English or French (Statistics Canada, 2022c). Students learning English language skills benefit not only from being instructed in the official language, but also benefit significantly when their own linguistic and cultural knowledge is valued and there is an interest in discovering their strengths and interests (Oliveira & Athanases, 2019). In this respect, the more teachers have knowledge of diverse students' needs, the more inclusive classrooms can become (Wilett et al., 2017).

In 2020, 281 million people (3.60% of the world population) are migrants (McAuliffe & Triandafyllidou, 2021). Canada has welcomed 8.5M international migrants based on 2022 report (McAuliffe & Triandafyllidou, 2021). Many of these immigrants and other traditionally marginalized children and youth are enrolled in B.C. schools with the goal of having a better

future for B.C. and Canada by offering the best education through accessibility and inclusion of all students.

“Achievement is driven by intellectual ability as well as by the self-regulation, positive attitudes, motivation, and conscientiousness that are required to complete educational milestones” and inadequate levels of social functioning are increasingly recognized as central to many public health problems (Jones et al., 2015, p. 2283). Students from diverse backgrounds or socio-culturally, and/or linguistically non-dominant backgrounds often have different needs than the majority. 28.3% of B.C.’s population are immigrants or non-permanent residents from many different ethnicities or ethnical backgrounds (Statistics Canada, 2022b).

Finding out diverse students’ needs and designing the curriculum considering those needs is both vital for their academic success and aids them in discovering their talents, potential, and aspirations (Lee, 2001). Career education as a course aiming to guide students in their transition from secondary school to higher education or their future career is one of the courses in grades 10, 11, and 12 (BCME, 2019) which could benefit from those considerations to have better outcomes.

As discussed in the section below, I analyze the B.C. curriculum as it pertains to career planning with a particular focus on understanding and identifying the opportunities and constraints of the career curriculum. Furthermore, I analyze the curriculum for evidence that it addresses the needs of *all* students including those who have been historically marginalized especially students of diverse socio-cultural, and linguistically diverse backgrounds. To understand the opportunities and constraints, I will first focus on how the needs, interests, and aspirations of all students are discovered and developed in the B.C. secondary career education curriculum. During this inquiry my research questions are:

- 1a. What is the nature and the specific components of the B.C. career education curriculum? How is it organized? 1b. What pedagogical framework(s) undergird(s) the B.C. curriculum?
2. What are the goals of the curriculum? What specific opportunities, strategies and activities are described to fulfill the goals of the curriculum?
3. In what ways do such opportunities, strategies, activities rely on and emphasize the identification and development of skills, interests, and strengths in *all* students?
4. What supports or strategies are specified to meet the needs of socially, culturally, and linguistically diverse students?

### **Context: Understanding the Structure and Intentions of the BC Curriculum**

In this study, I analyze B.C. secondary career education curriculum (grades 10 and 11, Career-Life Education (CLE) and grade 12, Career Life Connection (CLC)) (BCME, 2018a; BCME, 2018b). Also, two curriculum supplementary materials, Grad Planner 2018/19 Graduation Program (BCME, n.d.b) and *Career Education 10-12 Guide (Overview, Delivery Examples, and Capstone)* (BCME, 2019) are analyzed. Besides, the B.C. Ministry of Education policy across K-12 grades, *Making Space Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice Throughout the K-12 Curriculum* documents (BCME, 2008), are analyzed.

From Kindergarten to graduation, the British Columbia Ministry of Education (BCME) career education curriculum aims to articulate for teachers “many opportunities to explore and develop [with their students], personal interests, strengths, and competencies leading to meaningful career-life possibilities” (BCME, 2016). In B.C. career education is a subject offered in an integrated fashion in the early years and then more explicitly at the secondary level (BCME, 2022b). This school subject intends to lead students through a meaningful journey of

exploring their careers in an ambitious and goal-oriented manner. The B.C. curriculum focuses on Core Competencies and Big Ideas, with the goal aimed at helping students pursue a meaningful and rewarding life path after graduation (BCME, 2022a). It is critical to understand the backbone of the B.C. career education curriculum to fully understand the context, the strengths, and the areas needing attention.

The B.C. curriculum is structured in three ways which are referred to as Know/Understand/Do (KUD) in every K-12 school subject: 1) *Knowing* is about the Content Learning Standards which includes consideration of topics appropriate to meet these learning standards across the grade levels; 2) *Understanding* is about what is known as the Big Ideas, which are generalizations and principles of a school subject exploring what students will understand in a course, and finally; 3) *Doing* (Curricular Competencies and Learning Standards), which are skills, strategies, and processes of learning and exploring what students will be able to do (experiential learning) while studying a particular school subject (BCME, n.d. a). The Know-Understand-Do model is designed based on current learning theories; particularly, a social constructivist view of learning (Vygotsky, 1978). By following this model, B.C. curriculum focuses on: “1) being flexible to better enable teachers to innovate; 2) focusing on higher-order learning; 3) addressing Core Competencies; 4) integrating Aboriginal worldview and knowledge, and 5) respecting the unique nature of disciplines while supporting cross-curricular learning” (BCME, n.d. a p. 2).

The B.C. curriculum is structured around the core competencies (CC) which serve as a backdrop in every subject area. The CC are: (1) communication (effectively using forms, strategies, and technologies to express their ideas and sustain relationships); (2) thinking (includes critical, reflective, and creative aspects); (3) and personal and social (awareness &

responsivity, personal and cultural identity and social awareness and responsibility) (BCME, 2022b). A focus on the CC is believed to enrich the quality of the learning as “students are encouraged to highlight their strengths, accomplishments, and growth in areas of learning” (BCME, 2019, p. 4). The aim of the CC is to internalize “lifelong learning,” and deepen engagement in learning. CC are expected to form the foundation of learning throughout instruction in BC K-12 education (BCME, 2022b) in all subject areas. Below is a discussion of the career education curriculum area.

Career education is intended to educate citizens who can identify and set meaningful goals, have purposeful career-life developments, recognize and harness opportunities, and “re-evaluate and revise their plans” to fit their upcoming goals (BCME, 2022c). Career education courses in grades 10, 11, and 12 intend to equip students with knowledge of personal development, connections to community, and life as well as career plans (BCME, 2018a; BCME, 2018b).

In Career-Life Education (grades 10 and 11 career education course) Big Ideas focus on “career-life choices (choices are made in a cycle of planning, reflecting, adapting, and deciding), career-life decisions (considering internal and external factors including local and global trends), cultivating networks (to support and broaden career-life awareness and options), finding balance (balance between personal and work life promotes well-being), and lifelong learning (it fosters career-life opportunities)” (BCME, 2018a p. 1). These Big Ideas are expected to be fulfilled throughout the academic year following “Learning Standards”, which is divided into two main categories “Curricular Competencies” and “Content” (BCME, 2018a, p. 1).

In Career-Life Connections (grade 12 career education course) there are five Big Ideas as basis of the course: “career-life development (it includes the ongoing cycle of exploring,

planning, reflecting, adapting, and deciding), career-life decisions (considering internal and external factors including local and global trends), engaging in networks (to guide and broaden career-life awareness and options), well-being (supporting well-being by improving a sense of purpose and career-life balance), career-life opportunities (lifelong learning and active citizenship foster career-life opportunities for people and communities)” (BCME, 2018b, p. 1). The same pattern of practicing Big Ideas in “Curricular Competencies” and “Content” of the course is highlighted in Career-Life Connections course as well as Career-Life Education (BCME, 2018b).

### **Characteristics of Curricula That Meet Students’ Needs**

Findings by Hughes et al., (2016) suggest that career education can improve academic achievement. The authors also suggest that to have a better outcome, especially for youth from low socio-economic groups or immigrants, as well as those with special needs or from disadvantaged ethnic groups, requires personalized and targeted career education/guidance. Three components could be addressed in career education plans to develop curriculum’s effectiveness: (1) self-efficacy (to emphasize lifelong learning and to graduate students who are able to set new career goals when needed in their future), (2) outcome expectations (students’ engagement in school can lead to educational and social outcomes which would stretch to their future careers beyond formal schooling), and (3) personal goals (through planning, students could have long-term goals that they might strive toward their future careers) (Plasman, 2018).

Bronk and Finch (2010) affirm that youth likely have different kinds of purposes in their lives two of which are: (1) youth with self-oriented purposes (goals which aim to satisfy an individual) and (2) youth with other-oriented purposes (goals which aim to serve the

community). The authors suggest that youth with both kinds of purposes have a higher level of life satisfaction. Self and other-oriented goals also can develop emotional maturity which can also impact their position in their society and community (Blau et al., 2019). Heyman et al. (2022) assert that youth in different grades have different priorities while deciding on their career. For instance, as the school grade increases students value their future income less and value serving others besides their own interests and career aspirations more. They also think about their future life path more seriously (Heyman et al., 2022).

Strength-based learning starts by identifying and developing students' strengths, which leads to adopting a solution-focused approach as the standard approach to resolving challenges (Roffey & Quinlan, 2021). Strength-based education can be used to guide students in expanding their strengths and having a meaningful purpose and exploring their life path; a strength-based approach can empower individuals and ultimately positively impact the school, the community, and the society (Lopez & Louis, 2009). Quinlan et al. (2019) posit that the strength-based approach to education can be best practiced by teachers who have participated in strength-based programs and are more familiar with this approach. Teachers who participate in such professional development would be more capable of spotting students' strengths and efficiently increasing students' engagement in school activities (Quinlan et al., 2019). Moreover, practicing strength-based learning approach in instruction can affect youths' mental well-being directly (Quinlan et al., 2019).

Merriam-Webster dictionary (n.d. b) defined talent as "a marked natural ability that needs to be developed" and introduces aptitude as one of the synonyms for this word. Talent-based education improves students' competencies and it "results in happiness, an energetic attitude, critical-thinking skills, creativity, innovative thinking," and the energy to continue the

improvement of all skills (Yohana et al., 2020, p. 442). Winingsih et al. (2020) describe that talent-based education improves students' character. Also, educational policies, educational activities, teachers' guidance, and parental guidance can directly impact talent discovery and provide students with a talent-based education (Winingsih et al., 2020).

Yohana et al. (2020) argue that talent development impacts students' competencies, self-awareness, quality of work, and problem-solving ability; on the contrary, careers which are not aligned with one's talents and competencies can result in being passive and less creative, additionally, it decreases the desire for self-development. Students' talents can be developed through activities in both formal and non-formal education (Yohana et al., 2020). In formal education, students' talents can be identified by mentoring and counseling, and they can be gained by contributing to the curriculum (Yohana et al., 2020).

Among the individual factors impacting adolescents' career choices besides "Skills, competencies, and abilities", interest is another factor youth consider while planning their future life-path (Islam et al., 2020, p. 194). Fachrunnisa et al. (2022, p. 144) state that "[t]alent is the totality of a person's attributes. The authors also posit that talent includes intelligence, skills, abilities, knowledge, intrinsic gift, behavior, attitude assessment, character, and encouragement", which can ultimately guide individuals to discover their interests (p. 144). Discovering students' talents and skills as well as having a talent-based and strength-based approach can impact a person's cognitive engagement, in addition to strengthening their ability to find their future life-path (Fachrunnisa et al., 2022; Bandura et al., 2001).

Sharing the decision-making process with the school community is essential for schools so that students will learn collaboration and be given voice. Additionally, it creates a caring learning environment for all students. Furthermore, multiple culturally sensitive techniques must

be used in assessment so that students with diverse sociocultural and linguistic backgrounds would feel comfortable and have opportunities to equally exhibit their learning (Bankers et al., 2001). Educators need to discover community-oriented needs (all communities including marginalized communities in contrast with community as a whole) and democratize systems by addressing needs (Zipin, 2020).

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

In this chapter, I outline my theoretical framework for understanding my inquiry and discuss how each of the six theorists each influenced my inquiry. Following this examination of major theories, I further elaborate on the significance of career education and set the context for investigating my research questions. I explore justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) as it concerns students of diverse and traditionally marginalized backgrounds. Finally, I address the make-up of schools in British Columbia and discuss characteristics of curricula that have been shown to support diverse students.

### Confessional Tales

To help me and my readers make sense of both how I am relating to the literature and how I am approaching my research topic, I use an adaptation of the *confessional tale's* methodology in this chapter. Briefly, the *confessional tales* approach allows me to connect theory and practice by sharing anecdotes that relate to the theory under discussion. In this chapter, I connect theories to my experience and observations while working as an educator for more than a decade with the goal of better understanding the pedagogical and theoretical frameworks reviewed in this chapter.

Confessional tales have historically been used by ethnographers, as stories are used by everyone in different forms to make sense of the world. A method of storytelling in academic research, the confessional tale is a tool for researchers to connect academic research to real life (Gullion, 2016). Confessional narrative/tales were first used by Rousseau, in his book

*Confessions* in 1782 (Herman et al., 2005). This type of ethnography is not only used in education, but also is known to be popular among sociologists and anthropologists (Gullio, 2106). For instance, Ganesh (2014) used confessional tales in the article titled *Unraveling the Confessional Tale: Passion and Dispassion in Fieldwork*. The author used confessional tales as the method to recentre the issue of researcher subjectivity as a way to increase empathetic understanding in the readers.

In another study, Saldana (2018), *Writing Qualitatively: The Selected Works of Johnny Saldana*, used confessional tales to tell the story of an adolescent who dreams of becoming a professional actor, by interviewing the student and two high school theater teachers. The author used ethnographic performance text (confessional tales in the form of theater script) to enhance the reader's understanding of the participants' lives and maximize the emotional engagement of the audience.

The anecdotes I have written also reveal my motivation for doing this study and each of them has touched my heart and soul. These stories are included in my thesis to provide the reader with a deeper understanding of theories and further humanize this research. Pseudonyms are used in all confessional tales.

### **Making Sense of My Conceptual Framework**

Six major theories have influenced my thinking and analysis of the data. These foundational theories are: (1) career theory (Parsons, 1909), (2) social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978), (3) marginal man theory (Ezra Park, 1928), (4) pastoral power (Foucault, 1982), (5) oppression and marginalization theory (Freire, 1970), and the theory of oppression and social justice (Young, 2011). Borrowing and adapting a confessional tales' model for making sense of

research, I narrate short tales from my 12-year career as a teacher for the purpose of connecting theory to life and to illustrate my developing understanding about the inquiry.

### **Career Theory**

The early 1900s was the time when thinkers started considering careers as an important factor in one's life and began to develop innovative theories on vocational education/guidance. Frank Parsons (1909) was one such innovator who argued that a career should be chosen in accordance with the person's "aptitudes, abilities, ambitions, resources, and limitations" to make the person successful (p. 3). According to Parsons two factors are important in choosing a career: (1) to know the requirements and the pros and cons of having the job, and the opportunities the career will bring to the individual and society, and (2) having reasons for the choice of career based on important factors for the individual.

Youth need to self-investigate who they are, their aspirations, and talents (getting support as well from their teachers, family, and friends) suggests Parsons (1909), and specific 'meetings' are needed in which young people are explicitly guided in their career path. The guide (mentor, teacher, significant other) asks the individual questions to perceive and connect the person's interests, aptitudes, and ambitions. Also, close observation of the individual is needed so timely guidance can be provided (Bassingthwaite, 2021). Even though Parson's work was done in the 1930s, it is still used as a counseling method in career counseling (James & Gilliland, 1989). In the tales below I share a brief anecdote of my observations of Masool and Emma to exemplify the challenges of choosing a career.

*Masool is one of my friends. She studied at university for 4 years and worked for more than 10 years in jobs that she never felt were right for her. When she turned 30, after years of*

*exploring and failing she found a graduate program where she fit. In the 20 years I've known Masool, she never received any career counseling. She was not aware of her talents and aspirations throughout the years which might have been the reason for all of the confusion and dissatisfaction during all those years.*

*Emma lives in B.C. She is in grade 11 and has no idea of a suitable possible career path. She is doing all she is asked by teachers in high school, passes all her courses, and gets marks that can get her into higher education. When it's the time to choose courses, she does not know what courses she might need to focus on as she does not know what she wants to study at the post-secondary level or in her future career. Thinking about life after graduation is overwhelming for her and she hesitates to get an appointment to meet the counselor. Sadly, she did not reach out for further guidance and continues to drift.*

### **Social Constructivism: Current Understandings of How Learning Occurs**

Vygotsky (1896-1934), a Russian psychologist received prominent recognition in both psychology and education for his work on the relationship between education and social-mental development (Semyonovich, 2018). His ideas and theories about learning became known as social constructivism, and he challenged the psychological literature of his time, such as Piaget's Cognitive Development theory, the works of Kohler on practical intelligence (Vygotsky et al., 1978).

In his book *Mind in Society*, Vygotsky suggests that learning and development do not necessarily advance linearly, and at times development out of the school can be twice the learning that happens at schools (Vygotsky et al., 1978). Vygotsky also discusses that in the process of growth in learning, people tend to imitate what they see in their environment and

suggests that imitation is a highly effective way of learning, which emphasizes that one's environment is impactful in shaping one's mind and ideas (Vygotsky et al., 1978). He then posits that all learning involves social interactions with what he calls more knowledgeable others (MKO). Society is a vital and integral part of one's life and learning grow through collaboration with others and social relationships (Lock & Strong, 2010).

Most importantly, according to social constructivism, one's understanding of the world is shaped not only through observation of the world, but also, through interactions with people, through culture, and through language used for interaction with others (Akpan et al., 2020). Application of social constructivism theory in education positions the student as the central element in learning and the teacher's role as that of guiding students by encouraging collaboration and discussion (Akpan et al., 2020). For instance, an Inquiry-based approach uses a cooperative model of learning, resulting in an abundance of interactions (Kapur & Ghose, 2018). Social constructivism acknowledges that students build their own learning and challenges the traditional receptacle view of knowledge building (Kapur & Ghose, 2018). In social constructivism, the focus shifts from the teacher, who is teaching, to the students, who are learning (Kapur & Ghose, 2018).

In the tale below, Ehuang suggests the role that family and culture play in one's life and learning.

*Ehuang was a student in B.C., and she comes from a culture where parents decide what future is the best for their child (in relation to both academics and career). Ehuang was an amazingly bright student in math and science. Her dream was to study science (possibly biology) at the university, but her parents decided that accounting or economics would bring her a better future. Having no voice, she was forced to start studying accounting at the university.*

*Unfortunately, her teachers (especially her career education teacher) and counsellors were not aware that her parents need to be guided and she ended up following the path prescribed by her family.*

### **Pastoral Power Theory: Understanding Influence and Power Dynamics**

To fully understand learning, career, and life path guidance requires a discussion of power dynamics because students (especially traditionally marginalized students) are often situated as powerless in educational systems. One of the major philosophers discussing the notion and kinds of power in society is Foucault (1975; 1982) who introduced the notion of sovereign power as the phenomenon historically known as power and that could be violent (such as politicians' or monarchs' power), which is often used to control populations (Foucault, 1982). According to Foucault, power is intentional but non-subjective (we are free to make choices although some factors might lead us to make certain choices). Power is the assemblage of force relations in society (McHoul & Grace, 2015), and power relationships involve inequalities, division, and imbalance of other social relationships (Foucault & Sheridan, 1995).

In *The Subject and Power* (1982) Foucault defines the exercise of power as a way in which certain actions lay the foundation for other possible actions. The author also discusses that the new form of power is not directly leading power, but it is "pastoral power", which is used to lead people to "salvation", and potentially could be exercised by any person in government, society, and family. The pastoral power focuses on the development of peoples' knowledge on both a global and individual scale (Foucault, 1982). The pastoral power makes the under-control persons act in the authority's desired way indirectly. In the student-educator context, pastoral

power gives the students the idea that the only way to success is by obeying what they are told to be the best for them by educators.

In this same work Foucault focuses on how human beings have become subjects in our society (Foucault, 1982). While Foucault did not write on educational institutions in particular, the power imbalance within education is vastly influential. (Ball, 2012). Ball also discusses how, based on Foucault's theories, schools are responsible for acting based on policies set up by governments and schools are the primary system of living (the first system students enter) and therefore extremely important and formative. Ball (2012) further argues that according to Foucault, schools are like asylums; schools try to reshape people to fit an intended shape as determined by the educational institution. The author also posits that the learner and educator's relationship tend to be a "savoir and domain" relationship (the controller and the controlled), in which the teacher has direct control over the students and imposes their known truth and ethics on the students. This idea about education represents how the power dynamics of traditional education have worked and how little students' needs and aspirations are factored into the educational process.

Foucault points out that teachers position themselves as 'shepherds' in the education systems as in one who watches over a good education, the health of the children, and their abilities, thus imposing pastoral power over students (Davidson et al., 2007, p. 143). In my inquiry, I am interested in considering how pastoral power may continue to be used to shape/reshape diverse students to *fit into* the system.

In the anecdote below, Gang personifies pastoral power:

*Gang is a student with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) living in B.C. and from a culturally, and linguistically marginalized group. He is very ambitious and with the support he*

*gets, he uses the maximum of his abilities to satisfy the requirements of every assignment given by each teacher. He wants to go to college after graduation. He does not have educated parents and is not guided at school to find out a suitable path as educators working with him do not believe in his ability to study at the college level. He has been convinced by teachers that history can be a good choice for him before being given any voice to choose.*

### **Understanding Oppression and Marginalization**

Robert Ezra Park was an American sociologist whose focus was on social psychology and was the first to identify marginalization. In *Human Migration and The Marginal Man* (1928) Park observed a changing American society and the pushing to the sides of people of non-dominant ethnicities and cultures. According to Park, being ‘marginal’ or marginalized means one who is living and sharing the cultural life and traditions of two peoples; the marginalized person is not willing to break his traditions from his past but is not accepted in the new society in which the person seeks to find a place, because of societal prejudices through a process of acculturation and consolidation.

Park’s theory of marginalization was later improved by Weisberger (1992) to better fit the society of the time. Weisberger (1992) argues that Park’s theory only describes marginality as a single social position. Weisberger (1992) suggests that marginality in modern times is ambivalent and far deeper than Park’s explanation. Weisberger poignantly describes the “double ambivalence” that the marginalized person is living: “This person is ambivalent toward his or her own culture, wants to return but cannot, wants to leave but cannot do that either; and is ambivalent toward the new culture, wants to assimilate but cannot, and wants to reject it but cannot” (Weisberger, 1992, p. 429).

Park first introduced the concepts of acculturation and marginalization to sociology, and it has been researched and worked on since by different sociologists as well as philosophers. For example, Paulo Freire (1970), argues that marginalized groups are also dehumanized and oppressed as they are led to the belief that their voices and perspectives are irrelevant, and Young (2011) argues that marginalization is one of the five faces of oppression. Based on Park's theory, although acculturation is an inevitable process in diverse societies, marginalization makes marginalized persons live with a dual identity throughout one's life.

Below, I share an anecdote of MirBacha who is being marginalized in society and has been living with a dual identity.

*MirBacha was a grade 12 student from a marginalized group in Turkey and at times was exposed to racist behavior. He had immigrated to Turkey due to war in his home country. He was a very bright student whom others would barely interact with because of his nationality. He was loved and valued by teachers but throughout the years no effort was put towards familiarizing other students with MirBacha's culture or letting him be heard. MirBacha was living with two identities, as a member of a society which had many biases against his culture; I speculate that he had to wear a mask to hide his real self on a daily basis.*

Marginalization and oppression are a dominating theme in Paulo Freire's work. Freire was a Brazilian educator whose pedagogical theories not only influenced education but also society (Diaz, n.d.). Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) was written based on the author's observations and lived experiences. Freire discusses that oppressors can dehumanize the oppressed. The oppressed can have a bond with the oppressor and a "fear of freedom" can form due to this bond (Freire, 1970/ 2005, p. 46). The author discusses that in this relationship, the oppressed discover that they cannot live with freedom, and that they fear the "authentic

existence” (p. 48). The oppressors only value their own way of being, and they believe that they can transform anything into their way of living. Freire (1970) also discusses that self-depreciation is a characteristic of the oppressed caused by the internalization of the idea the oppressors have of them. Additionally, due to the oppression, the oppressed resist or lose their self-confidence (Freire, 1970).

Freire (1970) also describes the “banking concept of education” in which the flow of knowledge is one way from the educator to the students, mirroring an oppressive society (p.72). In the banking concept of education, “a person is merely *in* the world, not *with* the world or with others; the individual is spectator, not re-creator” (p. 75). On the other hand, Freire (1970/2005) suggests that to humanize education and to change this praxis, humanizing the oppressed and believing in their ability to reason should be considered and the correct method to achieve this goal is through dialogue. In dialogic education, love is the foundation of dialogue (accompanied by faith in humankind) and knowledge flow is circular.

The notion of marginalization and oppression could be widely observed in modern diverse societies including North America. Marginalization and oppression are important concepts to consider in discussing inclusion and social injustice in education.

In the anecdote below, Fang typifies oppression in action.

*Fang is a grade 9 newcomer who migrated to Canada without her family. Fang is pulling herself out of her own culture to adapt to Canadian society. Connecting to others is very difficult for her. Even her cousin, who studies in the same school and the same grade, does not connect with her, seemingly because she does not want to lose her circle of friends who are all from the dominant culture. Fang is afraid of being her authentic self as she might get rejected by the community. She is also afraid of getting free from oppression which makes her feel safe. Fang*

*asked me to help her, I gave her some tips and shared her concerns with teachers, but everyone believes that Fang simply needs time to get accepted by the community, and not much has been done by teachers to support her.*

### **Theory of Oppression and Social Justice**

Iris Marion Young was a political scientist, educator, and philosopher. Her major writings include *Throwing Like a Girl: And Other Essays in Feminist Philosophy and Social Theory*, *Interesting Voices: Dilemmas of Gender, Political Philosophy, and Policy*, and *Inclusion and Democracy* (Young, Iris Marion 1949-2006, n.d.). In this book, Young clarifies meanings and concepts, describes social relations, and defends ideas and principles on social justice using critical theory as a tool to project possible social norms unrealized in society.

In *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (1990), Young defines domination as “structural and systemic phenomena which exclude people from participating in determining their actions or the conditions of their actions” (p. 31); the very opposite of encouraging people to participate in determining their actions and conditions of their actions. The author describes that the oppression will not be ended as long as a privileged group exist in a society (as the privileged benefit from oppression). To end oppression, a systemic process which enables all people to develop their capacities and express their needs, thoughts, and feelings must exist (Young & Allen, 2011).

Young posits that in a modern oppressive society, tyrannical power coerces people which is not the only reason for their suffering, but also that people suffer due to the everyday practices of a well-intended liberal society. Young (2011) identifies five faces of oppression: exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence. The author believes that marginalization is the most dangerous form of oppression as marginalization in modern society

excludes the marginalized from being useful participants in social life. The author also describes cultural imperialism as a form of oppression in which the dominant group imposes on the oppressed by demanding that other group(s) act under the dominant group's 'norms' (Young & Allen, 2011). Young (2011) posits that cultural imperialism both makes the non-dominant group invisible, and the group remains unvalued in society. Non-dominant groups which are identified as deviant, are culturally different from the dominant group, because *Otherness* creates experiences which are not shared with the dominant group, and this causes social segregation and makes non-dominant groups occupy specific positions in the social division of labor (Young & Allen, 2011).

Tiao makes me think of students dealing with cultural imperialism:

*One of the major behaviors I have witnessed from people living in culturally imperialistic societies is becoming a people pleaser (teacher pleaser). Students who are from a different culture or speak another language must keep other members of the community (especially teachers) happy. Tiao is one of those students. To be accepted by the community and to fit in the 'norms', he is very careful with every move he makes. In his culture, obeying and respecting is a value. Tiao makes sure that he moves carefully between the lines of culturally accepted norms of his new society. He behaves and lives just like a member of the dominant culture in order to be well accepted by everyone in the community, thereby letting go of a fundamental part of himself.*

In summary, in the theoretical framework of this chapter, Vygotsky's theory of social constructivist learning emphasizes that learning occurs in a social context; we learn through not only mental constructions but through socially co-constructing with others. Parsons' theory gives a broad perspective of how important career education is to one's career decision-making process. Furthermore, the possible power imbalance in educational systems and pastoral power

over students discussed in Foucault's works gives a better understanding of power dynamics in education. Marginalization, oppression, and cultural imperialism were discussed through the works of Park, Freire, and Young respectively. Having established the pedagogical and theoretical frameworks that form the context for understanding career education, I move next to discussing the importance and rationale for career education.

### **Rationale for Career Education**

Here, I draw on literature which identifies the importance of career education courses in schools, especially in secondary schools and for adolescents. Career education is a global concern: the necessity of preparing youth to find their life path, serve their community, and be happy are the reasons for the career guidance structures in 50 countries (OECD, 2021b). Career advice and career guidance (in any form, such as dedicating a counselor or teacher or a course at schools) to familiarize students with the possible choices for finding their future life-path can improve students' self-awareness and self-esteem, which can lead to good career choices often contributing significantly to life satisfaction (OECD, 2021b).

Vocational education in the European Union, which is like Career Education in Canada, is strongly emphasized by organizations such as European Training Foundation (ETF) which actively aims to help member countries, consisting of European Union and Central Asian countries, transition and develop their human capital through education and training (Career Guidance, n.d.). This organization provides support in lifelong career guidance (to support individuals with their choices and training at any age and point in their lives), career education ("learning activities ... to develop career management skills"), and career development support

(for formal economy workers, informal economy workers, and self-employed) (Career Guidance, n.d.).

In secondary school, the more students explore their possible future careers, the better they do at school (OECD, 2022). Youth not only need to have practical experiences, but also the more learners can relate education to their future (which potentially can be reached through career education), the better they do both academically and, in their future (OECD, 2022). Career education is not only important in adolescents' lives but also in childhood as young learners show and develop their individual interests, identities, academic success, and educational outcomes, although, the development of learners' awareness of the role that their unique selves play in determining their life-path happens at later stages of life (Oliveira et al., 2015). These authors also emphasize that children's future academic interests and career development would benefit from the formative interplay between emotional self-regulation and cognition.

Hoff et al. (2022) investigate if adolescents' vocational interests predict their career success. For this study, the researchers collected data on two groups. The first group was made up of people aged 16 to 29 (n=485). Group two was made up of 1,290 students (17 years and older). The researchers measured different aspects of their study, such as interest in fitness, math, and English, as well as job satisfaction, career satisfaction, degree attainment, occupational prestige, and income. As the findings showed that adolescents' interests directly impact their future, their interests enable them to have a more successful educational future and be more satisfied with their future jobs. One limitation of this study is that the researchers did not study youth while working in their job of choice to measure their satisfaction over the long term.

Educational and guidance theories used in career education play an important role in youth self-concept, they can discover areas that they are good at and strive to be the kind of person they

want to be through career education courses (OECD, 2021a). Shen (2021) suggests that career education is vital in youth career decisions as it enables them to make meaningful decisions as they develop their knowledge, skills, and attitudes in relation to careers and possible futures. Shen (2021) defines exemplary career education as a program that assists students to explore their interests, abilities, and goals resulting in better alignment with their education as well as their career aspirations. Career education is vitally important in secondary school because it plays a pivotal role in influencing students' post-secondary decisions and achievements (Hughes et al., 2016).

Khattab (2015) investigates how the combination of aspirations, expectations, and school achievement can influence students' future. For this purpose, the author collected data from a National Pupil database from 647 different schools (15,770 students), first for ages 13-14 and then for ages 15-16. In addition, more data were collected regarding students' college applications. This study shows that having a clear and realistic goal, in addition to having an idea of the kind of work you want to do in the future requires the investment of greater effort by students and educators and that this effort positively impacts students' future success.

A career education course is significant as it can help students understand the connection between educational and occupational goals, clarify valued outcomes, set accessible educational goals, and understand the relationship between current educational efforts and the achievement of educational and career goals (Hughes et al., 2016). These well-assessed goals not only affect students' education positively, but also give them an accurate perspective of their future occupational and life-path. Plasman (2018) investigates if career education/plans in secondary schools can help students connect schooling to their lives. The author derived their data from the U.S. Department of Education (which holds the data on 23,000 students), the first set of data

focused on students in grade 9 and subsequently students in grade 11. Also, surveys were done by educators and parents. Plasman (2018) used a baseline model to analyze data and found that career education/planning keeps real world and schooling connected and can make education more meaningful for students, which results in more purposeful higher education and life after school.

In other research, Falco and Steen (2018) used an integrative review methodology, during which authors review the literature, find the gaps, bridge between areas of work, and generate new research questions to investigate how school-based career development activities in secondary education can prepare students for college and future careers. The authors find that career education activities positively affect the academic success of students in both secondary and post-secondary levels, which in turn results in students staying at school for a longer period. Moreover, better career decisions can be reached by school-based career development activities which can prepare students for setting goals and leading them to self-efficacy, life satisfaction, and happiness (Falco & Steen, 2018).

Career education can also increase students' self-efficacy. Plasman (2018) defines self-efficacy as "the individual's personal belief regarding the ability to succeed at a given task" (p. 220). Increasing self-efficacy in schooling is directly related to the student's engagement in education. Also, self-efficacy is closely related to setting and reaching personal goals through a sustained action plan. It is particularly important because of the positive correlation with occupational and academic interests and is influential in goal identification (Plasman, 2018).

Self-efficacy theorist, Bandura (1977) states that self-efficacy directly influences the choice of activities as the person expects eventual success as the result of the action, also, self-efficacy can increase coping effort. Bandura also posits that efficacy positively impacts the amount of

effort people make to succeed as well as their residency in the face of hardships. In another study, Choi et al. (2012, p. 444) confirm that self-efficacy shows immediate influences, such as social support and can also “lead to generation of interests, goals, and career development performance.” They posit that not only personal potentialities can be determinative in career development, but also external components including peer support, career identity, vocational outcome, and career indecision can have a big impact on decision-making self-efficacy. Moreover, a person’s future ability to balance “work-family” relations (since each person has multiple life roles) can bring life satisfaction and career development, which is also a benefit gained through self-efficacy development (Ran & Cinamon, 2022, p. 2). Although career might not be the only valuable aspect of their future lives, career variables can positively impact adolescents’ development and can lead to a bright future in which they are satisfied with their lives and can make meaningful contributions to society (Ran & Cinamon, 2022).

Regarding the importance of schools and career education and decision-making, Verhoeven et al. (2019) assert that school plays a significant role in adolescents’ identity development from multiple perspectives, including: sociological, psychological, and socio-cultural. Social support is one of the factors impacting adolescents’ life satisfaction and schools are the main community/society for students (Kong & You, 2013). Youth communities are also considered as one of the main factors impacting adolescents’ initial career decision-making as students tend to choose careers that both match their interests and are trendy in society (Islam et al., 2020). By interviewing students and counselors, the authors found that factors mainly affecting students’ career plans are interests, family choices, general trends, and money, furthermore, they conclude that adolescents can benefit from career planning and counseling both as an individual and social (Islam et al., 2020).

Identity formation, which is constructed in part in career education courses, requires a positive relationship with school and education; for instance, instructional strategies can influence how youth and educators co-construct youth identities and academic engagement (Kaplan & Flum, 2012). Education (especially at the high school level) can also have a major effect on students' collaborative exploration, purpose, and work goals (Kaplan & Flum, 2012). Students' interaction with teachers through teaching strategies and teachers' expectations as well as facilitated interactions with peers has a significant impact on their identity development as well as the decision-making process (Ligorio, 2010; Owusu et al., 2021; Verhoven et al., 2019). Identity development also leads youth to internal dialogues that can result in discovering their interests, values, and exploring their life path (Ligorio, 2010).

Su (2002) describes career development as four progressive facets: career feeling, career belief, career exploration, and career planning. The last two stages—career exploration and career planning—begin to develop in mid-adolescence (Mittendorff et al., 2010; Nazl, 2013), which makes the adolescent years so critical to their eventual meaningful life path. Furthermore, starting career education/development at an early age can assist students in gaining a clearer understanding of their interests and priorities; consequently, it provides them with the ability and confidence to follow their interests after grade 12 (Islam et al., 2020).

Listening and communicating with students and co-engaging in educational decision-making improves students' social skills (Cassidy et al., 2018) which can eventually be a practice of life decision-making that leads to finding their life path. They also argue that although students are aware of the importance of setting goals, they are challenged with preparing and planning to accomplish their goals. Goal setting and planning are more crucial and challenging for students in higher grades, grades 11 and 12, which could be greatly assisted through counseling. Career

education in B.C. context is an initiative in the process of decision making starting from an early age (Heymann et al., 2022).

The literature reviewed in this section shows that career education or guidance is important as it is one of the main ways to aid students to have a clearer perspective of their future career options, which results in the improvement of the academic performance of students. Furthermore, providing students with personalized, suitable career education/guidance increases students' self-esteem, self-efficacy, self-regulation, and self-awareness, all of which can add the overall wellness and happiness. Additionally, the significance of career education cannot be overstated because of its determining effects on the lives of young people and their future contributions to society. All the discussions on the significance of career education imply that educators must find meaningful and authentic ways to know their students well and develop a learning community with many opportunities to show their unique talents and interests. The provision of an effective and compassion-filled career and life-planning program affects individuals' lives over the lifespan.

### **Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI): Understanding the Make-up of B.C.**

#### **Schools**

Schools are communities which can shape students' lives and are key in "maintaining a free and democratic society" (Banks et al., 2001, p.197). In more recent years, institutions including schools have particularly focused on social justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) with the intention of leveling the opportunities for *all* learners. Below, I discuss the definitions and understandings of JEDI by drawing on the literature published from 2001-2023.

Diversity is defined as “the condition of having or being composed of differing elements, especially the inclusion of people of different races, cultures, etc. in a group or organization” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.a). Canadian Center for Diversity and Inclusion (2022) states that “diversity and inclusion are about capturing the uniqueness of the individual; creating an environment that values and respects individuals for their talents, skills, and abilities to the benefit of the collective.” Based on 2022 statistics, the number of visible minorities across B.C. is 1,689,490, making B.C. one of the most diverse provinces in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2022c).

Students are diverse in race, social background, cultural background, and gender so their abilities and needs vary. In a diverse, pluralistic society student from different racial, cultural, and language groups need to be provided with equitable opportunities by schools to interact socially in a situation with minimalized fear or anxiety (Bankers et al., 2001). Striving for social justice in schools can help marginalized students know more about their identity and fully consider and understand their identity within the dominant culture (Zablonski, 2021).

Young (1990) argues that not only distributive justice, which focuses on the distribution of things, income, and jobs, should be considered in discussing social justice, but also, relational justice, which focuses on aspects of life in relation to the function of rules and relations, among racially, ethnically, socially, and culturally diverse individuals and groups should be considered. Gay (2012) posits that to have informed, skilled, and social change agents, students must understand the complexity of societal, individual, and institutional reform. To support teachers in teaching social justice, six elements of social justice curriculum design are needed, which are “self-love and knowledge, respect for others, issue of social injustice, social movement and social change, awareness raising, and social action” (p. 10). These elements need to be supported

by functional and democratic literacy (Cho, 2017). The author also argues that by enacting JEDI in teaching, personal literacy increases (the ability to explore one's talents and interests).

*All* students' knowledge and experiences need to be considered in relation to the curriculum (Zipin, 2020). To create schooling for social justice, educators need to recognize power differences within marginalized communities (Zipin, 2020). Despite all the improvements and changes in multicultural North American societies, many individuals who do not fit into the dominant/majority norms still feel that they are not accepted and included and even that they do matter or belong (Fabes et al., 2018).

To strengthen and make a just society, schools need to follow two principles for student learning: 1) equitable learning opportunities such as safe learning environments, rigor in curriculum, providing equitable learning resources, and access to extracurricular activities; 2) the curriculum must educate students in understanding that knowledge is socially constructed in a societal context which reflects the social, political, and economic climate of the time (Banks et al., 2001). Furthermore, schools need to educate students about justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion so that they can navigate the world ethically and contribute to society in meaningful ways (Banks et al., 2001; Spitzman & Balconi, 2019). Also, to have a just and inclusive education, the notion of social justice not only should be taught to in-service and pre-service teachers, but also needs to be a basis for designing all aspects of the curriculum (Spitzman & Balconi, 2019).

### **Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students**

The number of immigrants who have chosen B.C. as their home has grown by 28% from 55,300 (2017/2018) to 70,788 (2021-2022) (Statistics Canada, 2022d). B.C. is the most

ethnically diverse province in Canada and 30% of British Columbians are immigrants. Embedded in B.C. *Multiculturalism Act* is the requirement to respect one another's differences (King's Printer, 2023). Youth who are living in multicultural societies need more support from schools and peers as many adults—parents, mentors, and/or teachers—might not have a complete and current understanding of youth (Fabes et al., 2018). Adults (parents, mentors, or teachers) might not have grown up in diverse societies or they might not have experienced the same level of discrimination and prejudice that children are experiencing today in diverse societies and therefore they may underestimate what life is like for minority students (Fabes et al., 2018).

Schools are considered to have a huge impact on socially inclusive society and social exclusion can be a detriment to social functioning, academic performance, and academic success (Hymel & Katz, 2019). One way of beginning to address learner differences is through multicultural education. It can help create a school which promotes positive attention to cultural diversity, deals with negative interaction between children and youth from different groups, and promotes respect for others from diverse cultures (Verkuyten, 2008). Formal knowledge gained in schools and life-based knowledge can interact and complement each other in curriculum. Working with culturally diverse students based on the belief that 'the same knowledge is best for all', is socially unjust (Zipin, 2020, p. 111). Multicultural contexts in classrooms can help to eliminate ethnic exclusion and to establish a positive inclusion environment. Additionally, integrating multicultural education (as an approach used in schools to challenge discrimination and social exclusion) into formal education decreases negative attitudes by improving knowledge and understanding of other groups (Rutland & Killen, 2015).

Multicultural education started in the 1960s as a response and act to civil rights movements (Cho, 2017). The *Multicultural Act* of B.C. (King's Printer, 2023), upon which the diversity in B.C. schools' policy is built, respects and recognizes cultural diversity as a part of society and integrates this act into education (BCME, 2008a). The overlap between multicultural education and teaching for social justice is indisputable and education for social justice is situated alongside multicultural education (Cho, 2017). Teachers need to know and connect with students' cultures to strengthen their identity and to foster a powerful discourse in society (Spitzman & Balconi, 2019). Moreover, the curriculum, to build a participatory democratic society, must accentuate students' diversity and lead them to interact with their diverse peers (to learn and teach about their diversity) (Zipin, 2020).

In *Deepening Social Justice Teaching*, Sleeter (2015) describes four dimensions of social justice teaching which overlap with multicultural education. These involve: (1) familiarizing marginalized families and communities living under socially unjust and inequitable life conditions with inequities and their rights, (2) working closely with individual students, families, and communities from marginalized backgrounds, (3) building the high academic expectations of students on the foundation of (culture, language, experience, and identity) diverse resources students bring, and (4) creating and teaching an inclusive curriculum that prepares youth to understand and analyze inequality, injustice, and power imbalance that themselves or their community face.

In addition to socio-cultural diversity, many students in B.C. are linguistically diverse as well. In 2021, 3,382,455 speak English and French as their mother tongue while 1,379,145 people speak non-official languages as their mother tongue out of the total population of 5,000,879 (Statistics Canada, 2022c). Linguistic marginalization is common in English-speaking

countries. People may face linguistic racism (which is an unjust behavior towards a person based on how one speaks a certain language) and ethnic bullying (which involves denigrating one's heritage language and excluding them from mainstream peers) (Dovchin, 2020). Through an ethnographic study, in which 30 ethnically diverse students were interviewed, Dovchin (2020) found that there was a large degree of marginalization and advocated for educators to address these behaviors to inform the larger society. Dovchin (2020) also posits that students might face self-marginalization, self-vindication, loss of social belonging, and social withdraw because of linguistic racism and ethnic bullying.

Adolescence is the time of searching for identity and the increasing challenges to their sense of belonging (Rodríguez, 2018). One way to assist bilingual students in building community is to involve them in collaboration, and co-construction of understanding with their peers. Rodríguez (2018) also suggests that linguistically diverse students' cultures be used as a tool to enable them to build upon their prior knowledge (Oliviera & Athanases, 2017). Additionally, teachers need freedom, autonomy, space, time, and support to make decisions to best guide students. Foremost, teachers need to know their students well and collect enough data on students regarding their needs, talents, and aspirations to serve them best (Willett et al., 2017, p. 50).

To optimize opportunities for linguistically diverse students, educators need: (1) to be aware of students' heterogenicity and thereby respond to their needs individually, 2) recognize and value students' diversity as both language and cultural resources that can lead to further learning, 3) ensure all students have equitable access to school resources, 4) develop strong links connecting, school, home, and community, 5) hold high expectations of ELLs based on their familiarity with students' strengths, and 6) take authentic assessment and tasks into account by

considering first and other language literacy development of ELL students while planning and instructing (Coady, 2017).

Spitzman & Balconi (2019), in their document analysis of lesson plans of 50 teachers who teach ELLs, found that language proficiency needs to be supported and ELL students need to get the support they need as lack of knowledge restricts students from classroom participation. They also showed that, it is necessary to include students' backgrounds and expertise in a classroom to give learners a chance to explore their multi-layer identities and build up a positive social identity. Furthermore, besides learning about linguistics and culture, learning about power structures can support ELLs and create safe learning spaces.

In conclusion, having a deep understanding of diversity gives educators a better perspective on students and improves the system by having a more equitable and socially just education. To have a better understanding of diversity educators and influential adults need to identify marginalized students and acknowledge their needs as necessary not optional. Also, following on JEDI serves students and communities well.

### **Characteristics of Curricula That Meet Students' Needs**

In this last section of chapter 2, I examine characteristics of curricula that meet students' needs, as well as teaching methods such as talent-based and strength-based approaches to education. Examining such characteristics serves to pragmatically address what needs to occur for traditionally marginalized students to realize their full potential.

Hughes et al. (2016) in reviewing 96 studies found that career education can improve academic achievement. The authors also suggest that to have a better outcome, especially for youth from low socio-economic groups or immigrants, as well as those with special needs or

from disadvantaged ethnic groups, personalized and targeted career education/guidance must be considered. In a Canadian study, Heyman et al. (2022) collected data from 500 students in grades 7, 9, and 12 students in Nova Scotia using surveys focused on awareness, intentions, perceptions, and attitudes toward careers in the region (mainly marine industry and skilled trade and technology). Their findings indicated that youth in different grades have different priorities when deciding their future career of interest. Findings showed that as students advance through the grades, they value their future income less, and begin to value serving others beside developing their own interests and career aspirations.

Also of note is Bronk's (2011) focus on the importance of purpose which he describes as "an enduring, personally meaningful commitment to what one hopes to accomplish or work toward in life" (p.32) and the exploration and commitment to a purpose should be explored at the same time as educators and adult influencers explore student identity. The author interviewed youth of 12-22 years of age three times (one interview every two and half years), in this way ascertained that having a purposeful commitment and identity development are reciprocal. In other words, having purpose leads to identity development and identity development reinforces commitment to purpose. This interdependence between identity and purpose motivates students (Bronk, 2011). Bronk and Finch (2010) collected three surveys on: purpose, life satisfaction, and five personality dimensions (openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism) from 144 adolescents half of whom were in grade 7 or 8, while the other half were students from grades 10 or 11. They concluded that youth likely have different kinds of purposes in their lives two of which are: (1) youth with self-oriented purposes (goals which aim to satisfy an individual) and (2) youth with other-oriented purposes (goals which aim to serve the

community). Unsurprisingly, the authors suggest that youth with both kinds of purposes have a higher level of life satisfaction.

In further research, Blau et al. (2019) studied 193 adolescents using a youth purpose survey, meaning in life questionnaire, child and adolescent social support questionnaire and life satisfaction questionnaire. The authors found that youth have four types of goals: self-oriented, other-oriented, both self and other-oriented, and neither. Youth with only self-oriented goals tend to have a more ambitious life, while youth with other-oriented goals had unsatisfactory social support prior to setting up their goals and had a lower level of life satisfaction. Additionally, adolescents received greater support from parents and teachers who had higher levels of life satisfaction themselves. The authors then discuss that identifying both self and other-oriented goals can improve one's well-being, social support, and develop emotional maturity which can also impact their position in society and community (Blau et al., 2019).

Plasman (2018) followed 32,000 students from 944 schools across the U.S. in grades 9 and 10. The author also collected data through surveys from parents, math and science teachers, school administrators, and counselors to measure students' career plans and their connection to school engagement. Those who followed a career plan were more likely to complete a four-year program in higher education. Moreover, clear career plans help students connect later in life to their education. Plasman (2018) discusses that three components could be addressed in career education plans to develop curriculum's effectiveness: (1) self-efficacy (to emphasize lifelong learning and to graduate students who are able to set new career goals when needed in their future), (2) outcome expectations (students' engagement in school can lead to educational and social outcomes which would stretch to their future careers beyond formal schooling), and (3)

personal goals (through plans students could have long-term goals that they would achieve in their future careers) (Plasman, 2018).

Two types of education can be practiced in career education curricula to meet students' needs best: strength-based and talent-based education. Strength-based learning starts by identifying and developing students' strengths, which leads to adopting a solution-focused approach to resolving challenges (Roffey & Quinlan, 2021). Strength-based education can be used to guide students in expanding their strengths and having a meaningful purpose and exploring their life path; a strength-based approach can empower individuals and ultimately positively impact the school, the community, and the society (Lopez & Louis, 2009).

Quinlan et al. (2019) in a quantitative study collected data from 193 students who are 8–12 years old and 10 teachers in 6 schools who were going through several strength-based teaching interventions by facilitators. Seven of the teachers participated in the intervention and three in the control group. The authors conclude that improvement in teachers' strength spotting positively impacts students' outcomes. Teachers who participated in such professional development were more capable of spotting students' strengths and efficiently increasing students' engagement in school activities. Moreover, practicing strength-based learning approach can affect youths' mental well-being directly by positively affecting the students' need satisfaction (Quinlan et al., 2019).

Yohana et al. (2020) using questionnaire, interview, and discussions, collected data on secondary students from eight schools to explore the factors impacting students' talent development. They argued that talent development impacts students' competencies, self-awareness, work quality, and problem-solving ability. They found that careers which were not aligned with one's talents and competencies resulted in being passive and less creative,

additionally, it decreases the desire for self-development. Talent-based education improves students' competencies and it "results in happiness, an energetic attitude, critical-thinking skills, creativity, innovative thinking," and the energy to continue the improvement of all skills (Yohana et al., 2020, p. 442). In formal education, students' talents can be identified by mentoring and counseling, and they can be gained by contributing to the curriculum (Yohana et al., 2020).

Winingsih et al. (2020) conducted studies on 24 senior high school students and 480 teachers (using a questionnaire), interviewed principals, and conducted discussion groups with education officials, counselors, and parents. This study asserted that talent-based education improves students' character by gradually establishing values and creative ways of thinking and behaving. Also, educational policies, educational activities, teachers' guidance, and parental participation can directly impact talent discovery and provide students with a talent-based education (Winingsih et al., 2020). Furthermore, they found that having effective talent-based learning, it must be aligned with one's cultural values.

Fachruninnisa et al. (2022, p. 144) state that "[t]alent is the totality of a person's attributes. The authors also posit that talent includes intelligence, skills, abilities, knowledge, intrinsic gift, behavior, attitude assessment, character, and encouragement", which can ultimately guide individuals to discover their interests (p. 144).

Zipin (2020, p. 113) argues that curriculum must be considered as "active work with/on knowledge ... not knowledge-as-content", thus, curriculum that brings students into education as active participants gives them the opportunity to teach and learn from each other, enables them to have a deeper understanding of challenges, makes them participatory democratic beings who would be hopeful citizens in looking toward their own future, families, and their community.

Sharing the decision-making process with the school community is essential for schools so that students will learn collaboration and be given voice. Additionally, it creates a caring learning environment for all students. Furthermore, multiple culturally sensitive techniques must be used in assessment so that students with diverse sociocultural and linguistic backgrounds would feel comfortable and have opportunities to equally exhibit their learning (Bankers et al., 2001). Educators need to discover community-oriented needs (all communities including marginalized communities in contrast with community as a whole) and democratize systems by addressing needs (Zipin, 2020).

In conclusion, to have a career education curriculum that would truly serve *all* students' needs means some important factors must be considered in curriculum design and course application. According to the literature reviewed above, career plans have a significant impact on students' life path exploration. Goal setting and having both self-oriented and other-oriented goals while making decisions about future careers are beneficial for youth. Most importantly, strength-based education and talent-based education, lead to better life-path outcomes for students and community involvement is essential to tie students' missions and societal needs together.

## Chapter 3

### Methodology

In the first section of this chapter, I briefly outline my data sources and then I discuss the ways in which my professional background and experiences influenced my stance as a researcher. Once the source of data and my positionality are clarified, I situate myself and my study within the qualitative and interpretive paradigm, followed by a description of my epistemological and ontological beliefs and finally, a discussion of my key methodology, critical discourse analysis (which shaped my design, analysis and writing of this thesis) and the role of confessional tales to amplify meaning in my literature review.

#### Data Sources

For this thesis grades 10, 11 Career-Life education (CLE), and grade 12 Career Life Connections (CLC) course curricula (BCME, 2018a; BCME, 2018b) were the texts selected to analyze as they are the comprehensive documents that are intended to guide career and personal planning. In addition, my data source also consisted of two curriculum supplementary documents *Grad Planner 2018/19 Graduation Program* (BCME, n.d. b) and *Career Education 10-12 Guide (Overview, Delivery Examples, and Capstone)* (CEG) (BCME, 2019). A final text: *Making Space Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice Throughout the K-12 Curriculum* (MS) (BCME, 2008a) was also analyzed since this is the B.C. policy document overviewing diversity, equity, inclusion, and decolonization and one of my research questions focused on career curriculum in relation to students of culturally, socially, and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

## **Researcher Stance**

I have been an educator for more than a decade. Throughout my journey, I have met adults who were not satisfied with their careers, despite doing their careers for many years. Similarly, I have worked with secondary students who were challenged in finding their life path and were struggling to have a vision of themselves in the future. I began to question how the school system could better support learners in finding a meaningful career and life-path. As I worked in a secondary school in B.C., I encountered the Career Education Curriculum which is offered from K-12. I found that Career Education is a K-12 course. I decided to analyze B.C. Ministry of Education secondary career education curriculum, and curriculum supplementary documents to answer my questions of how these discourses are guiding students to find their life path. So, it is through this lens of encountering students who were struggling to find their way in the world at this critical juncture of their lives, that I took up the inquiry. Underlying this interest was a strong belief that talents and passions should drive career decisions believing that there should be joy in work and living. Of course, there were students in my classes who were having positive experiences with this curriculum, but I was drawn (due to experience) to those who were finding the exploration of a career path challenging.

As an international student currently living in B.C., I am a part of the visible minority, and I come from a different social, cultural, and linguistic background. Also, I have been working with students in secondary school who also come from diverse backgrounds. Both these professional experiences with students and how I personally experience life as a minority person have an impact on how I interpret the data. My history (experiences and the people I have met or

stories I have heard) shaped my truth and led me and motivated me to conduct this research (Huttunen & Kakkori, 2020; Kerry & Armour, 2000). I was drawn to my research questions with a particular view or at least suspicion that students of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds were struggling to connect to this curriculum. A challenge of conducting qualitative research is the risk that I will look for trends in the data to affirm my own assumptions about the phenomenon; in this case the (in)adequacy of the career curriculum to address all students' needs.

For this reason, I tried to be careful in my analysis that this potential bias did not interfere with my analysis. I did this 'bias prevention' in two ways: (1) I followed the guidelines of previous established scholars on how to analyze using critical discourse analysis; (2) I did many readings of the texts, and as I saw patterns and themes emerge, I sought instances of counter evidence.

There also might be some biases due to my observations of the practices of the secondary career education courses that I participated in while working at my secondary school in B.C. In addition, during my graduate degree, I have interacted with many international students who had newly immigrated to B.C. and so had both lived and observed the process of acculturation that we went through as we tried to succeed as graduate students in a foreign context (both graduate school and the larger society). In summary, I seek to exhibit a balanced interpretation while at the same time recognizing and acknowledging the impact of my own experience, knowledge, and values (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

## **Qualitative and Interpretive Paradigm**

My study is situated in a social constructivist framework (Vygotsky, 1978). I ascribe to a relativist ontology in which reality is subjective, individually constructed, and different from person to person because individuals construct meaning in different ways including when they interact/interpret written discourse. In interpreting text, I rely on Louise Rosenblatt's (1988) transactional theory which posits that both the reader and the text play important roles in the meaning making. Meaning is produced by the ongoing transaction between the reader and the text, which draws on the meaning potential of the text and the reader's experiential basket to make sense of the written discourse.

In this research, two methods of qualitative research have been used: 1) Confessional Narrative/Tales, which are observations and experiences in the real world that have been inspiring for this thesis, and 2) Critical Discourse Analysis, through which the author analyzes the secondary career education curricula, curriculum supplementary materials, and social justice policy to get an overview of the curriculum designers/writers' beliefs, ideas and ideologies and determine the coherence, cohesion and robustness of the curriculum.

## **Epistemological and Ontological Beliefs**

Knowledge is contextual and an individual's knowledge is tightly connected to its source. For an individual to grasp knowledge, it must be studied and uncovered (Dillet, 2017). The curriculum serves in part, as the educational knowledge for teachers, serving as a main guideline through which teachers and students' interactions are guided. As a result, the curriculum shapes the knowledge students receive.

I believe that humans are socialized beings and individuals define themselves in a social context as well as in relation to the environment around them. The reality of people is directly affected by communication (both written and spoken) (Farrelly, 2019; Regmi, 2017). This research aims to investigate the career education curriculum. Also, I study the curriculum as a discourse, which leads teachers' teaching and ultimately shapes youth educational environment as well as their reality. The future of B.C. society will be built by today's youth, based on the reality they are introduced to today.

### **Confessional Tales**

Usage of confessional tales in academia and as a research method started in mid 1980s as a part of the larger stream of revisiting ethnography and qualitative research (May, 2002). In this revisit, using confessional tales (tales of the self) enables the researcher to create a multilayered text that interweaves personal experiences/journey with the research content, however, researchers tend to keep these kinds of texts separate from the data of the research (May, 2002). This method is widely used by the writers to reveal their point of view, and in this way, the reader may connect more with the content of the research (Sparks, 2002; Gullio, 2016).

Confessional tales also can be used to recognize the impact of different factors such as beliefs, experiences, and background knowledge on the research process and/or outcomes (Fortune & Mair, 2011). Sparks (2002, p. 59) states that "a confessional tale draws on personal experience with explicit intention of exploring methodological issues as encountered in the research process." Confessional tales can be used to serve three different purposes: (1) to make the qualitative research acceptable as a scientific method of research, (2) to confess to an observation for raising awareness and empathy in the reader, mainly used when there is

something interesting to confess, and (3) to reflect and shed light on the researcher's hardship and process involved in the fieldwork (Van Maanen, 1988).

In addition to using confessional tales to deeply connect with the reader and enhance their understanding/empathy (as discussed in Chapter 2), confessional tales are often used as a method to narrate the process of the research focusing and/or reflecting on the research process (Sparkes, 2002; May, 2002). For example, in the article *Inclusive Classrooms: A Confessional Tale on a Metissage*, Culver and Hopper (2023) use confessional tales to reflect on the research process, take the readers behind the scenes of the fieldwork and reveals the dilemmas, tensions, insights, methodological issues, and reflections of the writers in a diary-like format.

In writing the confessional tales of this research, I aimed to narrate my observations and conversations I had with people. In writing these tales, I aimed to stay honest and let *the reader* get to their own conclusion.

### **Critical Discourse Analysis**

The qualitative paradigm is concerned with individual's subjective experiences but also extends to the examination of the content of both language and text forms of discourse (Given, 2008). Critical discourse analysis (CDA) lies within the qualitative paradigm as it uses an analytical approach for critically describing, interpreting, and explaining the ways in which language is used purposefully, often to put forth a particular agenda. This discourse may privilege the voices of some over others (Mullet, 2018). CDA consists of many different readings of the same texts while focusing on the identification of the common discourse patterns and themes (Given, 2008).

CDA encompasses a variety of methods that depend on research goals and theoretical perspectives. In the case of my inquiry, my goal was to make sense of the career curriculum for secondary school by uncovering its aims, pedagogical underpinnings and tentatively inferring its usefulness for educators and by extension their students.

Critical Discourse analysis has been used to study educational policy as an analytic and methodological tool to understand and critique the contextual factors of policy and influence policy formation, policy enactment, and policymakers (Anderson & Holloway, 2020). Discourse, they claim, is not neutral and is rather motivated by politics, power relations, and ideologies.

One of the main characteristics of CDA is that all discourses are historical, therefore, the understanding of each discourse depends on having knowledge of their context (Wodak & Meyer, 2001). For my inquiry, this meant knowing the foundations on which the curriculum was built and, also determining whether it was in harmony with the evidence-based discourse of present day. In examining the written discourse of the career curriculum and supplementary documents I was able to discover the theoretical and pedagogical frameworks that underpin the curriculum. Through this methodology, I was able to understand the degree of internal coherence and cohesion and relate the texts to the research literature.

As I sought to understand the beliefs and ideologies in the texts under scrutiny, I relied on work by Yang et al. (2022) who defined discourse as a textual and symbolic representation of both beliefs and ideologies. Yang et al. (2022) in their study, extracted keywords/themes from five policy documents and analyzed them to understand the relations and meanings among keywords and themes, thereby naming them. Subsequently the authors compared and summarized the similar key words and themes between different texts and compared them to find the differences and similarities.

CDA uses a hermeneutic process, which is a method used to understand and produce meaning relations (Wodak & Meyer, 2001). The hermeneutic circle, which is a circular process of analyzing the discourse during which theory, text, and interpretations are in a repeatable loop. It requires multiple re-visiting of the texts. Importantly, CDA relies on the whole context's meaning to grasp the meaning of one part (Wodak & Meyer, 2001). As I read different parts of the curriculum I was guided by Wodak's and Meyer's analytical framework which consisted of seven steps: (1) "select the discourse" [career curriculum documents and pertaining material]), (2) "locate and prepare data sources" [assemble and organize the parts of the texts that form the data set], (3) "explore the background of each text" [consider how the text reveals the theoretical background on which it is premised], (4) "code texts and identify overarching themes" [in the career documents] (5) "analyze the external relations in the texts" [consider how the text relates to the global context of the whole curriculum], (6) "analyze the internal relations" [look for internal coherence and cohesion among texts] and (7) "interpret the data"[using the guiding questions] (Mullet, 2018, p. 122).

Mooney Simmie and Edling (2019) also used CDA in their study, *Teachers' Democratic Assignment: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Teacher Education Policies in Ireland and Sweden*, to explore changing notions of teachers' autonomy. The authors analyzed two Swedish documents, which were the basis of teacher education reforms in 2001 and 2010. Also, two Irish policy documents (one policy document on secondary teacher education and one teaching council's policy) were analyzed. In this research study, similarities, differences, and arguments between documents were identified to better understand social processes and structures (Mooney Simmie & Edling, 2019). In my study, the conceptual structures of the curriculum were made visible as I developed codes and then themes as I compared and contrasted texts.

My analysis followed Wodak and Meyer's (2001) steps in CDA as described above. I went through six rounds of analysis (Table 1). To analyze the curriculum Big Ideas were the basis of creating the connection between Content and Curricular Competencies.

To answer each question, themes were identified, and the data were categorized under each theme from each document including, curricula and curriculum supplementary documents. To create the category, descriptions and explanations of each theme were studied and interpreted. Also, examples of the findings, in the form of quotes, figures, etc., were included under each finding. To answer the second question themes were: (1) skills, (2) interests, and (3) strengths. Regarding the fourth question of this research, the Making Space policy document was my data source. The first chapter of the MS booklet, introduction, and context, which included an overview of social justice in B.C. schools in all grade levels. Then, the fourth chapter's (Grades 8 to 10) and fifth Chapter's (Grades 11 and 12) Health and Career Education sections were analyzed looking for evidence addressing the fourth question, which focuses on social diversity, cultural diversity, and linguistic diversity.

The table below documents the actions taken in each round of analysis.

**Table 1**

<b>Rounds of analysis</b>	<b>Actions taken while analyzing</b>
Round 1	Reading through the documents to familiarize with the content and taking notes in relation to my research questions.
Round 2	Reviewing the documents and writing questions and comments. Finding repeated words and phrases looking for patterns related to research questions which involved evidence of emphasizing themes.
Round 3	Color coding and highlighted key phrases from Content and Curricular Competencies that pertained to Big Ideas of curricula.  Matching Curricular Competencies or patterns in relation to Content and Big Ideas and having a deeper understanding of the curricula.
Round 4	Categorizing themes.
Round 5	Finding similarities and differences as well as details of information provided for each theme to prepare for data interpretation.
Round 6	Interpreting the data and writing findings.

## **Conclusion**

In this third chapter of this thesis, I aimed to shed light on the methodology and methods of the research and describes the work of other researchers who influenced me in how to proceed in my analysis. In summary, I used critical discourse analysis, in which I conducted a thematic examination to critique and evaluate the curricula, curriculum supplementary documents, and

social justice policy document. This analysis aimed to discover insights into the curriculum and assess the coherence and cohesiveness in the textual discourse in relation to the research questions.

The main aim of this research was not *only* to identify the nature of the curriculum, its inherent strengths, and constraints but also to discuss the implications of the findings which may be helpful in contributing in a small way to improving the quality of career education provided to B.C. youth.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Findings**

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter, I present an overview of the six key findings of the study. This overview is followed by a detailed discussion of the findings organized by the research questions. The six key findings are: (1) The curriculum is robust and coherent but difficult to grasp due to lack of cohesiveness between documents and lack of practical examples 2) The pedagogical frameworks on which the B.C. secondary career education curriculum is based, are aligned with current educational research and discourses such as social constructivism, inquiry based learning and reflexive pedagogy. (3) Many strategies, opportunities, activities are discussed within the curriculum for deeper learning, self-exploration, and for discovering students' life-path. Such learning strategies, opportunities and activities are meant to be achieved under a mentoring model which culminates in a capstone project; however, the curriculum does not address teacher capacity to serve in this role given the student-teacher ratio. (4) All documents refer to the importance of the identification of students' skills, interests, and strengths, but few resources or explicit guidelines are provided to achieve this goal. (5) The K-12 social justice document briefly addresses the reality of diversity within B.C. society and encourages teachers to raise both students' and their family's awareness regarding diversity and social justice. An underlying assumption in the documents is that teachers across B.C. are already engaged in social justice practices in their classrooms. While this may be the case, the documents do not offer a rationale or evidence for this happening. (6) The research literature emphasizes discovering and considering socially, linguistically, and culturally diverse student's needs and responding to them

yet, the curriculum is largely silent on the importance of doing so. I discuss my findings below under each of my research questions:

**1a: What is the nature and the specific components of the B.C. career education curriculum? How is it organized?**

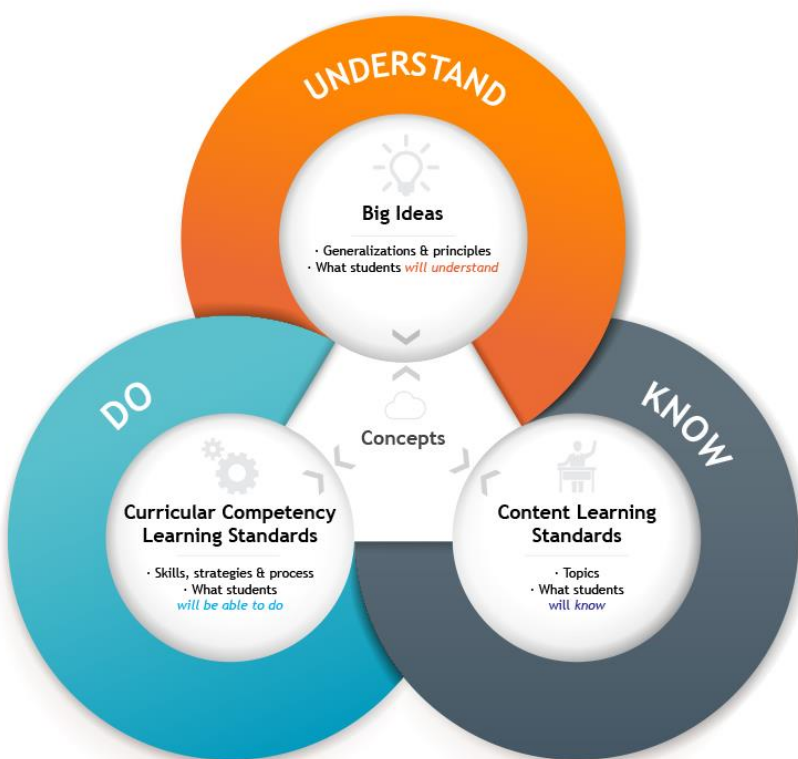
Career education is a K-12 course in B.C. The B.C. curriculum was last redesigned in 2010 and the following top goals of the CEC were articulated as follows: 1) “recognize the need to be adaptable, resilient, and flexible in order to meet the ever-changing opportunities and challenges of today’s world, and 2) understand how ongoing purposeful career-life development contributes to the success and well-being of individuals, communities, and society” (BCME, 2022c). Further goals include: “1) communicate and interact collaboratively with others, valuing the diversity of people, perspectives, worldviews, ideas, and opportunities and 2) explore a range of experiences, roles, and opportunities in personal, educational, and workplace contexts to advance their personal career-life journeys” (BCME, 2022c). I will use these top goals to examine the curriculum documents for internal coherence. To understand this curriculum and analyze CLE and CLC curriculum, understanding the structure of the curriculum is necessary. Core Competencies and Know-Understand-Do model, which every K-12 school subject is structured around will be described to answer this question.

The B.C. curriculum is structured in a three-concept framework: Know/Understand/Do (KUD) (Figure 1) in every K-12 school subject: 1) *Knowing* is about the Content Learning Standards which includes consideration of topics appropriate to meet these learning standards across the grade levels; 2) *Understanding* is about the BIG IDEAS (Big Ideas), which are generalizations and principles of a school subject exploring what students will understand in a

course; and 3) *Doing* (Curricular Competencies and Learning Standards), which are skills, strategies, and processes of learning and exploring what students will be able to do (experiential learning) while studying a particular school subject (BCME, n.d. a).

**Figure 1**

(BCME, n.d. a)



The Know-Understand-Do model is designed based on modern learning theories and teachers' advice on learning. By following this model, B.C. curriculum focuses on: “1) being flexible to better enable teachers to innovate; 2) focusing on higher-order learning; 3) addressing Core Competencies; 4) integrating Aboriginal worldview and knowledge; and 5) respecting the unique nature of disciplines while supporting cross-curricular learning” (BCME, n.d. a p. 2).

The B.C. curriculum is structured around the core competencies (CC) (Figure 2), which serve as a backdrop in every subject area. The CC are: (1) communication (effectively using forms, strategies, and technologies to express their ideas and sustain relationships); (2) thinking (includes critical, reflective, and creative aspects); and (3) personal and social (awareness & responsibility, personal and cultural identity and social awareness and responsibility) (BCME, 2022b). A focus on the CC is believed to enrich the quality of the learning as “students are encouraged to highlight their strengths, accomplishments, and growth in areas of learning” (BCME, 2019, p. 4). The aim of the CC is to internalize lifelong learning and deepen engagement in learning. CC are expected to form the foundation of learning throughout instruction in B.C. K-12 education (BCME, 2022b) in all subject areas and directly aid students’ advancement as educated citizens. Furthermore, CCs include sub-competencies, which are interrelated and interdependent, within them and each consists of six profiles (BCME, 2022b). Profiles are descriptions of sub-competencies, which reflect interrelated aspects of sub-competencies. Profiles are focused on students not only grade level, but also lifelong growth. Students are expected to enrich every profile along their educational journey (BCME, 2022b).

**Figure 2**

(BCME, 2022a)



Career education is intended to educated citizens who can identify and set meaningful goals, have purposeful career-life developments, recognize, and harness opportunities, and re-evaluate and revise their plans to fit their upcoming goals (BCME, 2022c). Career education courses in grades 10, 11, and 12 intend to equip students with knowledge of personal development, connections to community, and life as well as career plans (BCME, 2018a; BCME, 2018b).

In Career-Life Education (CLE) (grades 10 and 11 career education course) the ‘Big Ideas’ are: (1) career-life choices (choices are made in a cycle of planning, reflecting, adapting, and deciding), (2) career-life decisions (considering internal and external factors including local and global trends), (3) cultivating networks (to support and broaden career-life awareness and options), (4) finding balance (balance between personal and work life promotes well-being), and

(5) lifelong learning (it fosters career-life opportunities)” (BCME, 2018a p. 1). These Big Ideas are expected to be fulfilled throughout the academic year following prescribed the learning standards, which are divided into two main categories “Curricular Competencies” and “Content” (BCME, 2018a, p. 1).

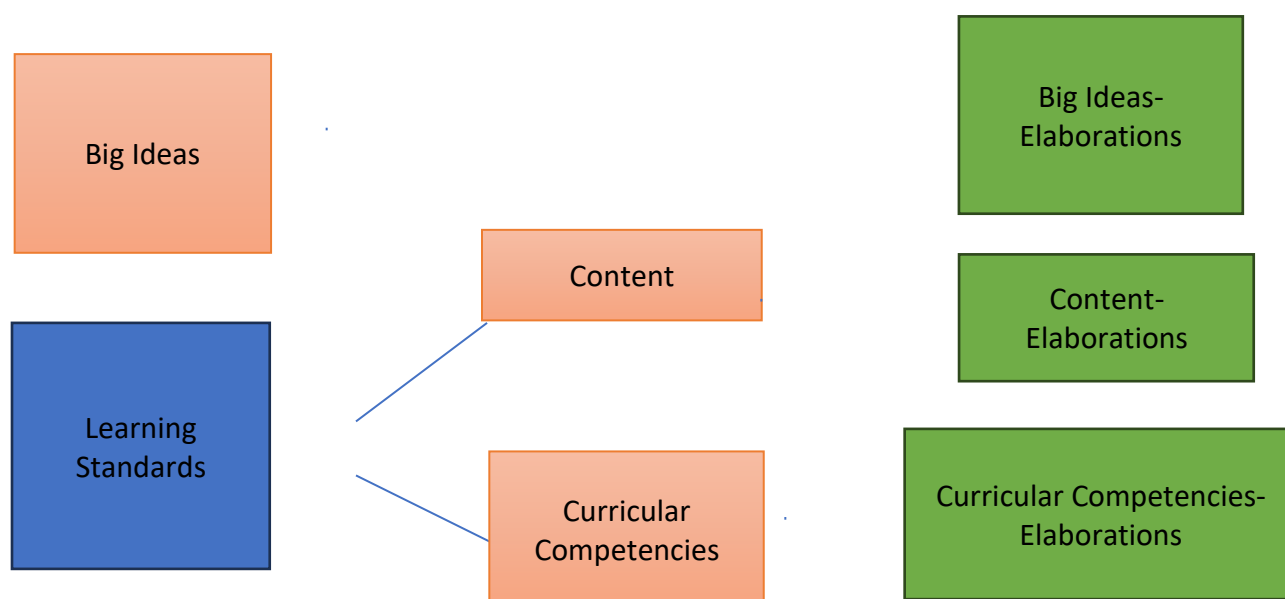
In Career-Life Connections (CLC) (grade 12 career education course) there are five Big Ideas that form the basis of the course: “career-life development (it includes ongoing cycles of exploring, planning, reflecting, adapting, and deciding), career-life decisions (considering internal and external factors including local and global trends), engaging in networks (to guide and broaden career-life awareness and options), well-being (supporting well-being by improving a sense of purpose and career-life balance), career-life opportunities (lifelong learning and active citizenship foster career-life opportunities for people and communities)” (BCME, 2018b, p. 1). The table below demonstrates B.C. career education curriculum in grades 10 and 11 (CLE) and grade 12 (CLC) Big Ideas.

<b>CLE Big Ideas</b>	<b>CLC Big Ideas</b>
career-life choices	career-life development
career-life decisions	career-life decisions
cultivating networks	engaging in networks
finding balance	well-being
lifelong learning	career-life opportunities

The same pattern of practicing Big Ideas in “Curricular Competencies” and “Content” of the course is highlighted in Career-Life Connections course as well as Career-Life Education (BCME, 2018a; BCME, 2018b). In both CLE and CLC curricula “Content” is divided into three

sections, “personal career-life development, connections with community, and career-life planning”, that students are expected to know by the end of these courses (BCME, 2018a, p. 1-2; BCME, 2018b, p. 1-2). Also, both CLE and CLC divide “Curricular Competencies” into four sections, which are “examine, interact, experience, and initiate”, that students are expected to be able to do by the end of these courses (BCME, 2018a, p. 1-2; BCME, 2018b, p. 1-2).

Furthermore, B.C. CEC includes an elaboration section on each of the Big Ideas, Content, and Curricular Competencies to provide teachers with further information. Elaborations on each section of the curriculum (Big Ideas, Curricular Competency, and Content) consist of inquiry-based questions, websites to explore a topic deeper, links to B.C. other policy documents, and elaborates further on definitions of terms used in each part of the curriculum. The figure below demonstrates CEC structure.



**1b: What pedagogical framework(s) undergird(s) the B.C. curriculum?**

The B.C. curriculum is based on three pedagogical frameworks: (1) social constructivist pedagogy, (2) inquiry-based learning, and (3) reflexive pedagogy. Below I describe these pedagogies and offer examples and quotes from the curriculum from the following documents: Career-Life Education (CLE) and Career Life Connection (CLC) curricula.

**1b. Pedagogical Framework 1: Social Constructivist Pedagogy**

There are four distinct representations of the social constructivist pedagogy in the B.C. curriculum which are: (1) viewing learning as a way of making personal meaning; (2) focusing on experiential learning; (3) learning through social interaction, engagement, and dialogue; (4) learning through collaboration and building on pre-existing knowledge. Prior to my discussion of these four representations and their connections to the curriculum documents, I offer a brief overview of social constructivist pedagogy (see Chapter 2 for more detailed elaboration). Social constructivist pedagogy started with the work of Vygotsky who first suggested that learning and development is a social process, by which learning occurs in social contexts and through reciprocal collaboration (Churchil et al., 2016; Vygotsky et al., 1978). Learning most effectively happens through social interactions and in relation to the context for understanding (Lock & Strong, 2010). It is an active process in which learning is viewed as an opportunity for every person to build their own perception and thoughts to create their own meaningful interpretation of the world (Zajda, 2018).

In a social constructivist approach to education, the teacher creates a collaborative, problem-solving environment for students to be active participants in their own learning. Social constructivism allows learners to explore their world in relation to others and make sense of their

explorations by acknowledging, challenging, and validating what they already know (Kapur & Ghose, 2018). Such an approach allows both teachers and students to construct learning actively, critically, and creatively. There are four representations of the social constructivist pedagogy in the B.C. curriculum. Foremost, students are encouraged to view learning as an opportunity to create meaningful knowledge, which can be seen in Big Ideas of both CLE and CLC curricula. For instance, career life choices are steps that are realistic and easy to grasp for students in grades 10, 11, and 12. Also, while they give a clear perspective of the steps of making choices, students can be creative in applying given steps in their journey. For instance, CLC curriculum states that “Career-life development includes ongoing cycles of exploring, planning, reflecting, adapting, and deciding.” (BCME, 2018b).

Secondly, social constructivist pedagogy is meaning making through experience. In Grad Planner 2018/19 the section entitled “Career Programs” familiarizes students with ways that they can work as an intern and connect their studies to the real world of work and contribution which allows them to gain credit toward their graduation (BCME, n.d., p. 12). Also, career programs are described as Industry Training Programs (Youth Work Trades Program, Youth Train in Trades Program, and Youth Explore Trades Sampler), Career Preparation Programs (Elective Work Experience courses), and Cooperative Education Programs (BCME, n.d.). This meaning-making through experience can introduce several careers to students and helps them make more realistic decisions.

The third critical aspect of social constructivist pedagogy is an emphasis on meaningful engagement and dialogue. Both internship opportunities for grade 10 students (BCME, n.d.b) and CLC mentorship instruction in curricular competencies that instruct to “Collaborate with a mentor to inform career-life development and exploration” as well as “Engage with personal,

education, and employment networks to cultivate post-graduation resources and social capita” (BCME, 2018b) are following this perspective.

The fourth dimension of social constructivist pedagogy evident in the curriculum documents is an emphasis on collaboration and building on pre-existing knowledge. CLC curriculum builds on prior knowledge that was gained in CLE course in previous years. For example, while in CLE curriculum, the cycle of decision-making has four steps “planning, reflecting, adapting, and deciding” in CLC curriculum five steps are included in this cycle “exploring, planning, reflecting, adapting, and deciding” (BCME, 2018a, p.1; BCME, 2018b, p.1). One of the criteria to deepen students’ knowledge and practical skills in the community in CLC curriculum is to connect the Capstone project (a project for grade 12 students upon graduation through which they reflect on their learning journey and demonstrate the knowledge, competencies, and passions that they can offer to the world) (BCME, 2019). One of the core competencies is collaboration, which expects students to reflect on their interaction with their support groups which encourages them to expand their social relations (BCME, n.d.a).

### **1b. Pedagogical Framework 2: Inquiry-Based Learning**

Another pedagogical framework that B.C. curriculum is built upon is inquiry-based learning. John Dewey (1938) first suggested that learning should be driven bound by inquiry based on learners’ curiosity (Zimmerman & Weible, 2017). According to Dewey, learning happens best as we apply our knowledge and new understandings. Such an approach to learning emphasizes questions, problems, and puzzles that are highly relevant for learners (Feldt & Petersen, 2021). In such an approach, students learn to ask questions, conduct research, collect, and analyze data particularly through hands-on and learner-centered teaching strategies

(Zimmerman & Weible, 2017). Inquiry-based learning involves guiding students to make sense of data and gathering useful and applicable knowledge (Zimmerman & Weible, 2017).

In B.C. CEC, Big Ideas' elaboration consists of inquiry-based guiding questions. Three guiding questions for each Big Idea are provided to teachers to guide them in having inquiry-based conversations with students both in CLC and CLE curricula. For example, CLE curriculum (BCME, 2018a, p. 5) includes these questions to support inquiry-based learning: “(1) In what ways can our networks of family, peers, and community members help us develop confidence and initiative in career-life development? (2) What communication and collaboration strategies can we use to broaden our networks? (3) In what ways can we positively represent ourselves digitally in the global networks?” Also, examples of reciprocal relationships are provided to teachers to aid their understanding of the targeted theme, “**reciprocal relationships**: with family, peers, and community members” (BCME, 2018a p. 5).

### **1b. Pedagogical Framework 3: Reflexive Pedagogy**

Another underpinning of the B.C. CEC is reflexive pedagogy, an approach to education that empowers the students to participate in their education by as they make sense of their own conflicts and situations (Rothman, 2014). Steier (1991) posits that there are two types of reflexivity for students: (1) the short cycle, wherein the student is reflecting on their learning/life while facing a conflict, and (2) the long cycle, when the student can slow down and study their self-cycle. In the second type of reflexivity, self-awareness becomes a tool for gaining deep insight into life and learning (Rothman, 2014).

Similarly, the reflexive process applies to teachers through three modes of reflexivity in their teaching: (1) reflecting on the relationship between the teacher and the subject matter, (2)

reflecting and acknowledging that the teaching refers to the student, and (3) reflecting on teaching as an active participation with students concerning what it means to know (Hoveid & Hoveid, 2019)

In B.C. CEC students are encouraged to make connections to different aspects of their future career, life, and different factors impacting them, which are possible through reflection. For instance, in Curricular Competencies students are instructed to “Explore and reflect on career-life roles, personal growth, and initial planning for preferred career-life pathways” (BCME, 2018a). Also, in CLC curriculum students are instructed to “Demonstrate and reflect on inclusive, respectful, and safe interactions in multiple career-life contexts” (BCME, 2018b).

B.C. K-12 curriculum is built on a Know-Understand-Do model (see earlier in this chapter) and revolves around Core Competencies. Due to the flexibility of the curricula, teachers must be reflexive in their teaching and highly familiar with current approaches to teaching. They must try current methods and reflect on student responses and learning outcomes. This reflexivity might result in some minor or major (over a period of time) changes in their teaching activities and educational worldviews.

## **2. What are the goals of the curriculum? What specific opportunities, strategies and activities are described to fulfill the goals of the curriculum?**

The B.C. curriculum was last redesigned in 2010 and the following top goals of the career education curriculum were articulated as follows: 1) “recognize the need to be adaptable, resilient, and flexible in order to meet the ever-changing opportunities and challenges of today’s world, and 2) understand how ongoing purposeful career-life development contributes to the success and well-being of individuals, communities, and society” (BCME, 2022c). Further goals

include: “1) communicate and interact collaboratively with others, valuing the diversity of people, perspectives, worldviews, ideas, and opportunities and 2) explore a range of experiences, roles, and opportunities in personal, educational, and workplace contexts to advance their personal career-life journeys” (BCME, 2022c). I will use these top goals to help in examining the curriculum for internal coherence.

The B.C. secondary career education curriculum and supplementary material (career education guide (CEG)) suggest four strategies and activities to support students in navigating their career and life path with the goal of improving a sense of purpose, mentorship, reflecting on learning journey and inquiry-based learning, and career life exploration are designed and elaborated on in both CEG and curricula.

### **Strategies and Activities to Support Students: 1. Improving Sense of Purpose**

Developing a sense of purpose in students can lead to the exploration of post-graduation possibilities which ultimately moves along a lifelong path to knowing who they are and what they want to do in the future, to contribute to society and experience meaning in their work (BCME, 2019). CEG defines an educated citizen as a person who can adapt their choices of career and life based on the ever-changing world and realizes that career choices are not lifetime choices, rather they often change over the course of their lives (BCME, 2019). Purposeful career-life development is the key to navigating these changing/multiple possibilities in CEG (BCME, 2019).

In CLC and CLE curricula, purpose is also a focal point emphasizing that developing a sense of purpose can improve the career-life balance which while also supporting a person's well-being (BCME, 2018a). Moreover, in both curricula, there is an emphasis on mentorship

conversations around students' needs, interests, and goals that can foster purposeful career-life development (BCME, 2018a; BCME, 2018b).

### **Strategies & Activities to Support Students: 2. Mentorship**

Mentors' roles are crucial in guiding students in finding their life paths. CEG (BCME, 2019) explains that developing life and career goals can be fulfilled by building community connections, participating in observational and factual learning, and reflecting on learning, and self-assessment of core competencies. The role of mentor, which is fulfilled by the career education teacher, is described as the person who plays a key part in this development (BCME, 2019). Figure 3 below is a summary of the mentors' role and responsibilities in working with students.

**Figure 3**

(BCME, 2019, p. 3)



In both CLE and CLC curricula, in the elaboration of curricular competencies, a mentor is defined as “... helping students with career-life development, including exposure to possibilities, planning, decision making, and finding emerging opportunities” (BCME, 2018a, p. 4; BCME, 2018b, p. 4). Under curricular competencies, in a section entitled: Interact, students are guided to collaborate with a mentor with a view to exploring career-life possibilities (BCME, 2018a; BCME, 2018b).

Content of both curricula also includes a sub-category “[c]areer- life development (in CLE curriculum) and “[p]ersonal career life development” (in CLC curriculum), both curricula list “mentorship opportunities” under this sub-category (BCME, 2018a, p. 1; BCME, 2018b, p. 1). Furthermore, both curricula explain that mentors and mentees are required to have ongoing conversations which “... focus on student needs, interests, and goals...” (BCME, 2018a, p. 5; BCME, 2018b, p. 5). In the Big Ideas, in grades 12 CLC curriculum (BCME, 2018b) students are asked to reflect on the role of mentors in their career-life development and goal setting.

### **Strategies & Activities to Support Students: 3. Reflecting on the Learning Journey and Inquiry-based Learning.**

To reflect on learning experiences in secondary years CEG (BCME, 2019) means that students gather information on their in-school and out-of-school learning journey and regularly self-assess based on the core competencies. Students are also encouraged to have self-awareness of “... their strengths, accomplishments, and growth in areas of learning and in experiences that are personally meaningful” (BCME, 2019, p. 4).

Inquiry-based learning is regarded as deep learning in CEG (BCME, 2019), which enables students to engage with meaningful questions that are open-ended and empower their career-life exploration. In both CLE and CLC curricula, big ideas are further elaborated on by sharing three samples of inquiry-based learning questions that can be used by teachers as a guideline to design their own inquiry-based instruction that hopefully leads to deeper learning and collaborative discussions (BCME, 2018a; BCME, 2018b).

Capstone projects, which is a graduation requirement for grade 12 students in B.C., is an activity designed to reflect and share their learning journey. This project includes three main

components that students are expected to follow while completing their projects. First, they need to reflect on both their in-school and out-of-school learning, based on development in the core competencies, and their development along with their possible next steps. Second, they need to critically analyze and connect to post-graduation plans. Thirdly, they are required to present their learning journey and post-graduation plans to relevant audiences which potentially can include their educational supporters such as teachers and school administrators (BCME, 2019). CEG (BCME, 2019, p. 16) describes “self-assessment of the core competencies”, which can be guided with the support of the mentor, as a tool for students to recognize where they are in their learning journey and their growth in areas meaningful to them. Additionally, they need to reflect on how this self-knowledge can aid them in their post-graduation journey. Also, “critical analysis of the learning journey” is students’ reflection on their “... learning milestones, struggles, dilemmas, uncertainties, and breakthroughs...” to develop their self-awareness and self-knowledge (BCME, 2019, p. 17). To further elaborate on the steps that need to be taken in capstone projects, example scenarios are provided to teachers in CEG (BCME, 2019) and connections of the scenarios to the curriculum are explained.

#### **Strategies & Activities to Support Students: 4. Career Life Exploration**

Career life exploration is one of the big ideas emphasized in both CLE and CLC curricula, with the goal of expanding students’ exposure to future possibilities (BCME, 2018a; BCME, 2018b; BCME, 2019). CEG emphasizes that career-life exploration must be based on students’ interests and can take the form of: “(1) prior or current paid or unpaid work experience, (2) Volunteerism or community service, (3) Work Experience 12A/B, (4) Youth Work in Trades 11/12, (5) Leadership or service learning, (6) Fieldwork, entrepreneurship, and projects focused

on an area of deep interest” (BCME, 2019, p. 101). This document also emphasizes that explorations need to be student-led, rather than teacher-driven. Teachers/mentors are also expected to guide students in prior learning in specific areas that connect them better to their exploration of choice, prepare them for post-graduation life, and connect the exploration to their interests and goals.

To make students aware of the range of work possibilities and roles the CEG highlights paid/unpaid work, volunteer work, or community service, CEG (BCME, 2019) designating responsibilities for both students and educators/schools. Student activities/responsibilities include, approaching possible employers and negotiating with them as well as tracking working hours, and ensuring that they are WorkSafe BC certified. They also need to complete the career-life exploration agreement form with WorkSafe BC, and Worksite Safety Checklist.

Educator/school/district responsibilities in the CEG (BCME, 2019) document are explained as: (1) assisting students in finding a desired work environment, and (2) ensuring that the employer is registered in WorkSafe BC. Educators are also responsible for overseeing that the criteria under the career-life exploration agreement are met within the work environment, providing in-school safety orientations, ensuring that required forms are filled and completed by students, and monitoring students during placement.

All documents analyzed have elaborated on the activities, opportunities, and strategies to fulfill the goals of the curriculum at the secondary level. A sense of purpose, mentorship, reflecting on the learning journey, engaging in inquiry-based learning, and career life exploration are highlighted.

### **3. In what ways do such opportunities, strategies, activities rely on and emphasize the identification and development of skills, interests, and strengths in *all* students?**

#### **3a. Skills**

In relation to skills exploration, CLE addresses employability skills in the Content of the course curriculum and instructs teachers to familiarize students with “competencies of educated citizen, employability skills, essential skills, leadership, and collaboration skills” (BCME, 2018a, p.1). To elaborate on the Content of CLE curriculum, it refers teachers to two websites. The first website is on ‘employability skills’ and is called The Conference Board of Canada. The link to the employability skills page is dead, but the homepage of this website mainly focuses on the Canadian economy and provides reports, facts, and statistics about all provinces. The website on ‘essential skills’ is the Government of Canada’s website on assessment and training (*Skills for Success-assessment and Training Tools*). These websites contain links to other websites and applications that teachers can use to access students’ employability skills, such as numeracy, creativity, innovation, etc. (BCME, 2018a, p. 5). Another part of the CLE curriculum that touches on skills is the inquiry-based question of the Big Idea’s elaboration in career-life decisions, asking “How do self-awareness and knowledge of skills, talents, and challenges contribute to career-life choices?” (BCME, 2018a, p.3).

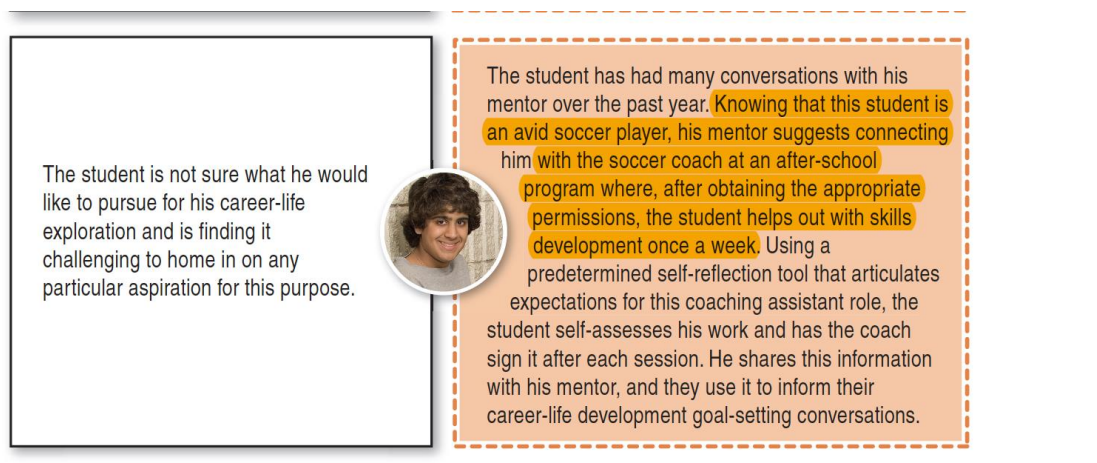
CLC curriculum touches on skills both in Content and Curricular Competencies. In the Content of this curriculum under the title of “Connections with Community”, the curriculum instructs teachers to discuss “[s]ocial capital and transferable skills, including intercultural, leadership, and collaboration skills” (BCME, 2018b, p. 1). Also, in the Curricular Competencies,

students are expected to examine and “[a]ccess personal transferable skills, and identity strengths and those skills that require further refinement” (BCME, 2018b, p. 1).

*Career Education 10-12 Guide (Overview, Delivery Examples, and Capstone)* (CEG) (BCME, 2019) notes that in CLC career-life exploration enables students to further clarify their goals and transferrable skills, although the path to take to achieve transferable skills is not elaborated on in this document. This document also contains examples of career-life exploration and reflection on career-life exploration. Figure 4 below is derived from the reflection part of CEG document. In CEG skills are included in the descriptive reflection of this scenario, for example, the mentor’s awareness of the student’s skills (soccer) resulted in better guidance and skill development.

#### Figure 4

(BCME, 2019, p. 8)



CEG also specified that the Capstone process aims for deeper learning opportunities by enabling students to further develop their skills which are transferable to post-graduation options. Furthermore, this document states that “[i]n order to navigate the design, creation, and development of the capstone, students can draw on their skills, dispositions, processes, and

strategies as resources for reflection” (BCME, 2019, p. 24). Additionally, it encourages students to reflect on their skills and how to apply them to proffer their plans for post-graduation.

Skills identification, development, and alignment of skills with future goals are addressed in all three documents analyzed in this section. CLE curriculum focuses on employability skills and self-awareness of skills to guide students in the process of decision-making and career choices. CLC curriculum focuses on transferable skills as well as skills further in connection with intrapersonal contexts, such as leadership skills and collaboration skills. CEG focuses on reflection on skills to clarify future goals and in the Capstone project students are expected to reflect on developing their skills to be aligned with their future goals. Also, mentors’ role and guidance skills identification and development are addressed in all documents studied.

### **3b. Interests**

Interest exploration is addressed both in CLE and CLC curricula. In both curricula, interest is categorized as one of the internal factors influencing one’s career decisions introducing mentors as one of the external factors that can influence, and guide career-life decisions based on the individual’s interests. Both curricula define it as “[o]ngoing conversations focused on student needs, interests, and goals foster purposeful career-life development” (BCME, 2018a p. 5; BCME, 2018b, p.5).

In CLE curriculum Big Ideas Elaboration addresses interests in inquiry-based questions in two categories: 1) “[c]areer-life decisions”, which asks “[i]n light of local and global trends, in what ways can we use our strengths, interests, and competencies to position ourselves for success?” and 2) “[l]ifelong learning”, which asks “[a]s lifelong learners, how can we tap into our strengths, interests, and competencies when exploring potential career-life opportunities?”

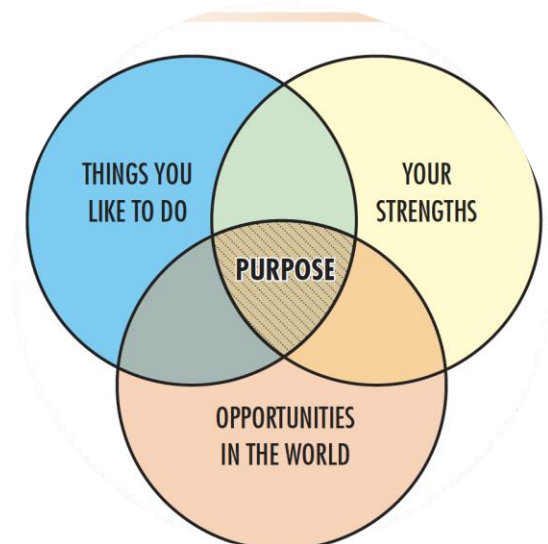
(BCME, 2018a, p. 3). Also, according to this curriculum, student interest must be determined as one of the factors, along with passions and goals, that impacts students' supportive community identification (BCME, 2018a).

In CLC's Content to deepen students' "personal career-life development" self-advocacy strategies are included. To elaborate further on these strategies, the curriculum defines self-advocacy strategies as the ability "to communicate personal strengths, preferences, views, values, and interests with confidence" (BCME, 2018b), although no further instructions are provided on ways of communication in this document. Another section that instructs teachers to consider student's interests are "career-life exploration", which is a sub-category of Curricular Competencies, and states that "... based on student needs and interests, it [career-life exploration] can include service learning, volunteerism, employment, fieldwork projects, entrepreneurship, and passion projects" (BCME, 2018b, p. 4). Additionally, while exploring "post-graduation resources", students' interests along with other factors such as, their needs and goals must be determined (BCME, 2018b, p. 4). CLC curriculum in elaboration on Big Ideas also indicates that interest helps people make meaningful contributions to the world and capitalizing on it can impact students' well-being (BCME, 2018b).

Figure 5 demonstrates CEG's definition of lifelong learners, as people who continuously build on their self-awareness about their interests as educated citizens. Also, in this document, personal interests are regarded as one of the main factors impacting students' career-life development and one of the elements which gives students a sense of purpose (BCME, 2019).

**Figure 5**

(BCME, 2019, p. 2)



In CEG in a similar fashion to CLE and CLC curricula, the mentor's role is described as communicating with students regarding their interests while exploring career-life opportunities. Below in Figure 6 examples of career-life exploration and reflection on career-life exploration are included.

**Figure 6**

(BCME, 2019, p. 10)

EXAMPLES OF CAREER-LIFE EXPLORATIONS	REFLECTING ON CAREER-LIFE EXPLORATION
<p>The student has spent the past two summers working as a camp counsellor at a child and youth camp. Through his summer job experiences, he has discovered that he is keenly interested in investigating post-graduation options working with children and youth.</p>	<p>The student approaches his mentor to explain how he sees his summer work experience as satisfying the career-life exploration component. The mentor agrees with his rationale, and both draw from the student's recollections to reflect on and pinpoint what aspects of working with children and youth most align with his post-graduation interests and strengths. After exploring many options, he decides to research the benefits of summer camps for disadvantaged children and youth. With his mentor's support, he uses the findings to petition both the PAC and the school's leadership committee to channel raised funds towards the summer camp registration costs for children and youth from their community who would otherwise be unable to attend.</p>

Providing students with opportunities to contemplate education, work, and life-related contexts to enable goal setting in relation to their interests is pivotal to showing them possible future steps (BCME, 2019). Guiding questions for teachers are for example, “How will students be supported in an ongoing exploration of ways to align their ... interests with career-life possibilities...?” (BCME, 2019, p. 11). Another section of CEG that emphasizes student interest refers to the purpose of Capstone project to lead students to demonstrate their competencies, knowledge, and passion to find how they can serve their society. Additionally, CEG specifies that the capstone form can vary depending on the student’s interests (BCME, 2019). To serve capstone’s purpose best, teachers are instructed to consider student’s interests while assessing capstone projects.

Supporting student interest in both CLE and CLC curricula can be highly impactful on one’s career decision-making. In the CLE curriculum, identifying and nurturing interests is more likely to lead to student success in commencing a career path. Also, students’ interests must be considered while finding a support group in grades 10 and 11. According to CLC curriculum, considering interests is vital to exploring both career opportunities and post-graduation resources. Furthermore, one’s knowledge of their interests can lead one to identify their method of contributing to the world. CEG considers interest as one of the factors to be considered in goal setting.

According to the three documents analyzed, student interest is a factor that can give students purpose in their studies. Also, students’ learning goals must be set based on their interests. The Capstone project as a high school graduation requirement is meant to be heavily guided and evaluated according to the student’s interests.

### 3c. Strengths

CLE curriculum (BCME, 2018a), in the Interact section of the Curricular Competencies, instructs teachers to communicate with students to highlight their strengths along with their accomplishments, abilities, and talents. Also, two of the Big Ideas' elaboration questions touch upon strengths. To make career-life decisions, questions, such as “[i]n light of local and global trends, in what ways can we use our strengths, interests, and competencies to position ourselves for success?” indicated that one’s awareness of their strengths can lead them to success (BCME, 2018a, p. 3). Another question on this curriculum specifying strength is under the lifelong learning category and asks how students as lifelong learners can perceive their strengths, interests, and competencies while delving into career-life possibilities.

Strengths have been addressed in all three parts (Big Ideas, Content, and Curricular Competencies) of CLC curriculum (BCME, 2018b): 1) Curricular Competencies expect students to be able to examine and access their personal transferable skills and identify strengths and skills for further improvement. Also, in Elaborations of Curricular Competencies, it is mentioned that to make career-life choices students must consider their strengths along with their passions, preferences, and education or work possibilities, 2) Big Ideas' Elaborations include a question on strengths under the well-being category, “How do we capitalize our strengths and interests to help us make meaningful contributions in the world?” (BCME, 2018b, p. 3), and 3) Elaborations on Content of the curriculum include strengths in both self-advocacy strategies (teachers must communicate personal strengths, views, values, and interests with students) and reflection (to explore strengths and areas of growth while reflecting).

CEG (BCME, 2019) posits that today’s graduates must be educated citizens and educated citizens are described as individuals able to build on their self-awareness about

strengths besides interests. CEG also indicates that students must learn to recognize their strengths to have purposeful career-life development. Also, strength is known to be one of the factors giving people purpose accompanied by interests and opportunities in the world (Figure 4).


To reflect on Core Competencies “[s]tudents are encouraged to highlight their strengths, accomplishments, and growth in areas of learning and in experience that are personally meaningful” (BCME, 2019, p. 4). In the career education delivery mode of this document, after a description of career education course goals and B.C. secondary school goal, reflexive questions regarding the course delivery are included one of which addresses strengths, “how will students be supported in an ongoing exploration of ways to align their strengths and interests with career-life possibilities in educational, work-related, and personal life contexts in school, out of school, and after graduation?” (BCME, 2019, p. 11).

Students are also encouraged to integrate their strengths as well as their interests in their capstone projects to showcase them, further develop them, and ultimately guide them in their new learning and future possibilities (BCME, 2019). To reach that aim, students are encouraged to select the capstone development process that aligns with their strengths. Besides, teachers are encouraged to complement students’ strengths by giving constructive feedback on capstone projects once viewed. Figure 7. is an example of a capstone project highlighting a student’s strength in CEG.

**Figure 7**

(BCME, 2019, p. 20)

**Example 2:** Students hoping to pursue a particular field of study at a post-secondary institution may choose a capstone representation and showcase format that highlights their passion and strengths in that field. For example, students may choose to demonstrate their disciplinary learning and research competence through a field study approach and science display format. In consultation with experts from a post-secondary institution, teachers and students could co-create criteria, including evidence of higher-order thinking, disciplinary knowledge, and research procedures and ethics. These criteria could be used by teachers to assess the capstone representation and inform feedback from post-secondary experts who attend an exhibition of student displays.



All three documents, emphasize the significance of recognizing students' strengths. CLC curriculum advises that strengths must be considered in career choices and recognition of strengths is crucial for one's future development and well-being. CEG suggests that purposeful educated citizen is the one who is conscious of their strengths and students must consider their strengths in their capstone projects as a means to discovering future possibilities.

#### **4. What supports or strategies are specified to meet the needs of socially, culturally, and linguistically diverse students?**

*Diversity in BC Schools: A Framework* (BCME, 2008b) is the backdrop of the curriculum. This document is written to aid schools in meeting the obligation of promoting human rights and honoring diversity, preventing discrimination, harassment, and violence, and responding to them under Canadian and provincial acts. This document addresses diversity by mentioning that visible and less visible diversity must be acknowledged, and diversity must be understood, respected, and accepted to lead into the inclusion.

Diversity in BC schools (BCME, 2008b) also emphasize that schools need to “make sure that the diversity of people is acknowledged and valued [based on] (Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, 1982; and the BC Multiculturalism Act , 1993)” and “[f]air and equitable treatment should be secured for all people [based on] (BC Human Rights Code , 1997; Employment Equity Act , 1996)” (BCME, 2008b, p. 7). This document also describes three goals for social justice: (1) assuring that the socioeconomic background of individuals is not a barrier for participating in society and achieving benefits, (2) acknowledging the complexity of social issues and the need for collaboration for resolving these issues, and (3) engaging traditional marginalized peoples in participation or the sharing of power. The document also include that the social justice goals are set based on Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom as well as The School act. *Diversity in BC Schools: A Framework* (BCME, 2008b) has not been fully analyzed in this thesis as the B.C. curriculum is not focused on in this document and it only mentions the structure of the former curriculum.

*Making Space: Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice Throughout the K-12 Curriculum* (MS) (BCME, 2008a) focuses on: (1) raising awareness and understanding of diversity within Canadian society, (2) support to achieve social justice for all people, and (3) minimize systematic and attitudinal barriers of traditionally marginalized groups in B.C. This document is designed for classroom teachers, “based on the assumption that teachers most effectively promote among students a healthy respect and support for social diversity...” while they are teaching about diversity and social justice as well as encouraging teachers to be models of respect and inclusion for students (BCME, 2008a, p. 5).

In this document teachers are reminded that they are responsible for welcoming diversity, testing their assumptions about students’ emotional needs, supporting students’ personal identity

development, and explicitly referencing diversity. In the section on considering diversity for teaching, it is specified that two kinds of diversity must be considered by the teachers: 1) visible diversity, such as race, ethnicity, sex, age, and physical ability, and 2) less visible diversity, such as culture, ancestry, language, religion belief, sexual orientation, socioeconomic background, and mental ability (BCME, 2008a). The Making Space (MS) document describes the importance of classroom practices that provide students with a “positive learning experience, inclusion, respect, and safety for all learners” (BCME, 2008a, p. 10).

Making Space also includes two self-assessment forms for teachers to refer to while improving their practices. The first self-assessment form lists indicators and asks teachers to choose the frequency of their consideration of these indicators in their practices (by choosing always, sometimes, seldom, and never). Twenty indicators listed in this self-assessment, focus on diversity, inclusion, and social justice. Statements of this self-assessment list different ways in which students could be different, although it does not view diversity in depth (Figure 8).

Figure 8

(BCME, 2008a, p.7)

**Self-Assessment: How I Address Diversity and Social Justice  
in my Teaching Practice**

Indicator	Always	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
1) I recognize and think about the visible and less visible diversity that exists within my class(es) and community—specifically in relation to race, ethnicity, sex, age, mental and physical ability, culture, ancestry, language, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, gender identity, and socioeconomic background.				
2) I avoid making assumptions related to the diversity of students in my classroom (e.g., I recognize that not all students may know about their cultural background(s), I am sensitive to diverse family structures when conducting activities related to Mother’s Day and Father’s Day).				
3) I consider diversity when selecting resources to plan my instructional program.				
4) I seek out and try to use new resources to address social justice with my students.				
5) My classroom posters, displays, etc. embrace positive and affirming messages that promote respect for diversity and inspire action to counter injustice or abuse of rights.				
6) The guest speakers and visitors that form part of my instruction reflect the diversity within the local community.				
7) I support various national and international initiatives that promote diversity and social justice (e.g., International Women’s Day, International Day to Eliminate Racism, National Aboriginal Day, International Day of Disabled Persons, International Human Rights Day), and promote the activities planned within the school and district during that week.*				
8) I deliberately tailor instruction to respond to the diversity among my students.				
9) I ensure that provisions to address issues related to the promotion of diversity and social justice are included in my ongoing instruction and are not seen as separate entities.				

Another resource provided to teachers is Social Responsibility Standard Continuum, which's demonstration for grades 8-10 and 11-12 is in Figure 9. (BCME, 2008a, p. 15).

According to this continuum, both families and educators are expected to develop students in four areas of focus: 1) contributing both to school and larger society, sharing responsibility in both environments and contributing both to small groups and larger classes, 2) solving problems in a peaceful manner, managing conflict while considering others' views, and using effective problem-solving steps, 3) valuing diversity and human rights, treating others ethically, respectfully, and fairly and recognizing and defending human rights, and 4) practicing democratic rights and responsibility, acting considering others' rights and working for community, and nations' future. Besides, MS specifies that the document explaining performance standard is available both at schools and online (the link to the webpage is provided, but dead).

**Figure 9**

(BCME, 2008a, p. 15)

8-10	11-12
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>usually kind and friendly</li> <li>takes some responsibility for the school or community and contributes willingly to class and group activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>kind, friendly, and inclusive</li> <li>works actively to improve the school or community; often volunteers for extra responsibilities and shows leadership skills</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>in conflict situations, usually manages anger appropriately, listens respectfully, presents logical arguments, and can paraphrase opposing views</li> <li>can clarify problems or issues, generate strategies, weigh consequences, and evaluate actions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>in conflict situations, shows empathy and a sense of ethics, presents soundly reasoned arguments, and considers divergent views</li> <li>can clarify problems or issues, generate and analyze strategies, create an effective plan, and use evidence to evaluate actions</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>respectful and fair; increasingly willing to speak up or take action to support diversity and defend human rights</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>respectful and ethical; speaks out and takes action to support diversity and defend human rights, even when that may not be a popular stance</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>shows a sense of responsibility and community-mindedness; increasingly interested in taking action to improve the world</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>shows a strong sense of community-mindedness and accountability; can describe and work toward an ideal future for the world</li> </ul>

MS also provides a detailed explanation and connection to social justice issues across the curriculum embedding equity teaching practices and content in every area of the curriculum. To assist teachers, sample lesson plans on social justice integration in the various curricular areas

are provided. This document was written in 2008 and B.C. curriculum was revised in 2010-2019, all samples and references to the curriculum are connected to the old curriculum.

Making Space document is silent on social, cultural, and linguistic diversity and the information, tools, and techniques that might be helpful to teachers.

The Content section of CLE curriculum guides teachers to connect with the community, considering different worldviews, having diverse perspectives, and inclusive practices. In the elaborations of the Content of inclusive practices, teachers are instructed to acknowledge “the value of diversity (e.g., First Nations, Metis and Inuit worldviews, gender, race, sexual orientation, diverse abilities, religious beliefs, anti-sexist and anti-racist practices)” as well as reconciliation for all individuals (BCME, 2018a, p. 5). In addition, diverse perspective is described as “attitudes of people according to their gender, race, sexual orientation, diverse abilities” (BCME, 2018a, p. 5). Different worldviews are also defined in elaboration on the Content section of this curriculum as life or world philosophies that underpin identity and their interaction with the world, for example, “First Peoples, new immigrants, refugee, rural, urban, colonial, geocentric” are listed (BCME, 2018a, p. 5).

## Chapter 5

### **Summary, Implications of Findings, Limitations and Recommendations**

In this chapter, I summarize and discuss the implications of the key findings, followed by the limitations of my study. I conclude with recommendations for researchers, policy makers, curriculum designers.

#### **Summary & Implications of Key Findings**

Based on my analysis, I conclude that the BC curriculum documents outline and advocate for relevant, experiential, student focused teaching and learning. The documents are consistent with the pedagogical, conceptual, and theoretical frameworks embedded in current research and discourses. However, the documents are dense and verbose and lack a cohesive telling of what needs to be done and how to do it. This lack of cohesiveness makes it challenging to readily grasp what the curriculum consists of as well as, the tone and thrust of the curriculum. It does not appear readily accessible for novice teachers or even experienced teachers, due to the volume of information and conceptual understandings required to know how to proceed in helping students find their way. Below, I discuss the implication of each finding under the relevant question.

#### **1. What is the nature and the specific components of the B.C. career education curriculum? How is it organized? What pedagogical frameworks undergird the curriculum documents?**

**Finding One:** *The curriculum is robust and coherent but difficult to grasp due to lack of cohesiveness and discussion of practical application.*

The career education curriculum (CEC) for K-12 is designed on a model entitled: “Know-Understand-Do”. This curriculum consists of Content Learning Standards under the “Know” category. Big Ideas under the “Understand” category, Curricular Competencies under the “Do” category. The Know-Understand-Do model is situated in relation to the Core Competencies in the B.C. curriculum. Core competencies include these three areas: (1) personal and social, (2) communicative, and (3) cognitive. There is coherence between all three parts of the CLE and CLC curriculum and all three parts of the core competencies. The B.C. curriculum is largely based on three pedagogical frameworks: social constructivist pedagogy, inquiry-based learning, and reflexive pedagogy. The influence of each of these frameworks is evident in curriculum documents. Overall, the career education curriculum is a robust and progressive set of documents aligned with current educational discourses and research on teaching and learning.

The curriculum is a shift from a prescribed and more linear way of curriculum design to a fluid and spherical design intended to be open and free so that teachers decide on resources and ways of teaching based their professional judgment of the big ideas identified in the curriculum. They are encouraged to be creative and use a variety of resources (i.e., textbooks, websites, educational videos, social media, etc.).

I conducted many readings of the curriculum to connect them and make sense of the three parts (Big Ideas, Content, and Curricular Competencies). There is no explicit connection or guidance on how to navigate between different sub-categories of these parts of the curriculum since the curriculum has not been designed linearly. An implication of this finding is that teachers might not have sufficient time or background knowledge to analyze the curriculum in a reasonable, timely way which may make it difficult to achieve curricular goals. Also, new-to-service teachers might not have enough experience to be creative in lesson planning or to fully

benefit from the freedom provided to them by the curriculum design. For some teachers, the non-linear expression and style of the curriculum may be less accessible. A clearer connection between all three components of the curriculum could facilitate a better understanding, which could improve the quality of planning and delivery of lessons.

## **2. What are the goals of the curriculum? What specific opportunities, strategies and activities are described to fulfill the goals of the curriculum?**

**Finding Two:** *The goals focus on the importance of being flexible and understanding the value of career planning. Learning activities, strategies and opportunities are clearly articulated in the curriculum. Mentorship is a significant vehicle to realize the goals.*

The B.C. curriculum was last redesigned in 2010 and the articulated goals are: 1) “recognize the need to be adaptable, resilient, and flexible; 2) understand how ongoing purposeful career-life development contributes to the success and well-being of individuals, communities, and society; 3) communicate and interact collaboratively with others, valuing the diversity of people, perspectives, worldviews, ideas, and opportunities; and 4) explore a range of experiences, roles, and opportunities in personal, educational, and workplace contexts to advance their personal career-life journeys”

Many learning activities, strategies and opportunities are well articulated within the curriculum with an emphasis on the themes of deeper learning, self-exploration, and finding a life-path. Consistent with Parson’s foundational work in Career Theory (1909) the curriculum values self-exploration and finding one’s aptitudes, abilities, and desires.

The literature indicates the significance of cultivating purpose and setting goals for students/adolescents (Blau et al., 2019; Bronk, 2011; Bronk & Finch, 2010; Plasman, 2018).

Improving a sense of purpose in students is one of the strategies to reach the goals of the curriculum and adapt those goals to ever-changing possibilities. Also, the curriculum maintains that developing a sense of purpose can lead students to improve career-life balance and well-being in future. Volunteering and/or working as an intern is an opportunity for students to experience the real working world and which may positively impact their career choices.

There is no doubt that mentors play a significant role in career education curricula in secondary school as well as during transition to postgraduate life. The classroom teacher is intended to be the mentor for every student in their classes. Mentor, Their responsibilities are explained clearly in both curricula and more explicitly in the curriculum supplementary material (CEG) (for the list of mentor's responsibilities see Chapter 4, Figure 3.). Additionally, the documents suggest that the mentorship must be personalized for each student. Career education teachers are identified as the main mentors. Given that secondary teachers in BC usually interact with more than 100 students a week, it may be problematic to cast teachers in this role without appropriate support and tangible resources which appear to be lacking. The document is short on how teachers would potentially manage this workload, but they provide guidelines on what to attend to while engaged in mentoring.

**3. In what ways do such opportunities, strategies, activities rely on and emphasize the identification and development of skills, interests, and strengths in *all* students?**

**Finding 3:** *Insufficient emphasis is placed on exploring students' talents which essentially ignores the predominant evidence-based recommendation to use a talent-based approach.*

Skills, interests, and strengths (SIS) serve as one of the key guiding themes in the secondary career education curriculum. Students can explore, reflect on, and revisit their SIS

through activities, reflections, and lectures designed by teachers based on the Big Ideas, Content, and Curricular Competencies of the curriculum. Students are best guided in finding their life path by considering their interests, talents, and skills (Cassidy et al., 2018; Fachrunnisa et al., 2002; Heyman et al., 2022; Shen, 2021; Spitzman & Balconi, 2019; Zipin 2022). It is at this juncture that the curriculum loses its cohesiveness. There are insufficient explicit links to identifying and developing the talents of the students.

The importance of student skills identification occurs in several parts of the curricula (Content, Big Ideas, and Curricular Competencies). For example, the CLE curriculum focuses on employability, leadership, and collaboration skills, the CLC curriculum focuses on intercultural understanding, leadership, and transferable skills.

Elaborations on each part of the curriculum mainly consist of the definition of terms used in the curriculum and some examples. The number of extra resources that have been shared with teachers to discover students' SIS is limited. Limited resources might not make lesson planning easy and efficient for some teachers (especially less experienced teachers). Curriculum supplementary material (CEG) at some parts is also limited to repeating the elaborations found in the curriculum and does not include extra materials for SIS identification. Some extra resources and lesson plans are available for teachers through the WorkBC website (Province of British Columbia, 2023). WorkBC is an employment service provided by the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction in B.C. Teachers were not referred to WorkBC resources and materials. While these WorkBC resources and materials are beyond the scope of this study, they may be an excellent source for lesson planning. Strength-based education is suggested by the literature to positively affect career education (Lopez & Louis, 2009; Quinlan et al., 2019; Roffey & Quinlan, 2021).

Additionally, discovery of students' talents and educating them based on their talents can impact students' cognitive engagement as well as their ability to find their future life and/or career path (Fachrunnisa et al., 2022; Winingsih et al., 2020; Yohana et al., 2020). Talent is briefly mentioned yet a talent-based approach to education is not considered. Since making use of talent-based education would be in accordance with the B.C. career, the curriculum missed a key opportunity to benefit students in this way.

#### **4. What supports or strategies are specified to meet the needs of socially, culturally, and linguistically diverse students?**

**Finding Four:** *The social justice policy superficially addresses diversity within BC society without advocating differentiated support for learners of socially, culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.*

The curriculum is essentially silent on meeting the needs of students from diverse backgrounds. In the document *Making Space for Diversity: Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice Throughout the K-12 Curriculum* (MS) teachers are encouraged to raise both students' and their family's awareness regarding diversity and social justice. There are two questionable assumptions that are made in the document. The first assumption is that teachers across B.C. are already fully engaged in integrating social justice into their teaching. This may be the case and it is beyond the borders of my study to know this, but the implication of assuming this may be why insufficient emphasis is placed on providing differentiated teaching and support in the curriculum. For example, some parents and relatives from non-Canadian heritage may see their role as designating what their children should take up as a career path. Also, different power dynamics within families may create pressure for these students; for example, the importance of

awareness of students' diversity and investigating their family dynamics as well as culture. Could this challenge be resolved or lessened by exploring decision-making ways in different families?

Additionally, MS document while elaborating on social justice and how to be inclusive in teaching refers teachers to the resources in the second part of the document that are strategies based on the curriculum, although the second part is based on the B.C.'s former curriculum. This is problematic in that the document is 16 years old, and largely tone deaf to the current ideologies on social justice and inclusion.

MS document assumes that teachers in B.C. are already practicing social justice in their classrooms. If this is not the case, then teachers may be perceiving that the students have universal as opposed to differentiated needs. Foucault conceptualized this phenomenon as pastoral power. If teachers don't see students as unique, they may assume their needs and treat them as members of the majority culture. The MS document does not refer to marginalization and does not guide teachers to explicitly discover and respond to socially, culturally, and linguistically diverse students' needs. My overall impression of the curriculum documents is that there is a pervasive assumption that marginalization and discrimination no longer exist in B.C. schools.

### **Limitation of the Study**

There are several limitations in my study. First, this study focused deliberately on only the B.C. career education documents, but to have full understanding of the curriculum and whether the goals are being realized, my study would have needed to include interviews with students and teachers as well as observation of teachers practicing the curriculum (sometimes

called the living curriculum). Second, there may be bias in my interpretation of the findings based on my background and beliefs. For example, I have observed the practices of the secondary career education courses during my work in secondary schools as discussed in my confessional tales. Also, I have studied and had significant, meaningful relationships with my international university community, and we share stories of challenges regarding transitions to Canada and to graduate school. These international relationships, coupled with my work with vulnerable, but often resilient, and promising students in the B.C. school system, makes me sensitive to their acculturation process and their plight as newly immigrated people. This can be a benefit and a challenge: a benefit in the sense that I can relate to the needs of the end users of the curriculum-vulnerable students at a crossroad. This may be a challenge because of confirmation bias. I may look for affirmation/confirmation of what I already believe about the topic. To help reduce this risk, I was careful to keep this reality in mind as I analyzed the documents and I also tried to challenge my patterns and themes by looking for counter evidence.

### **Recommendations for Researchers, Curriculum Designers, and Policy Makers**

I make several recommendations for researchers, curriculum designers, and policy makers to further improve the prospects for students as they learn about how to match their talents and aspirations to societal needs.

Also, future researchers may wish to use qualitative assessment tools to determine if the students are realizing the curricular goals. Additionally, as discussed earlier, a study which focused on the power and many dimensions of mentorship would provide a fuller picture for both pre-service and in-service teachers. Some questions that remain unanswered in this research are: How can teachers be educated to be mentors to adolescents and meet their needs? How may

professional development be used to enhance teachers' practices in guiding students on their life path? How do we increase the support for career education teachers? How do we help teachers realize the importance of students' talents as early as kindergarten so that by high school they have more knowledge of their talents?

As for curriculum designers, I recommend explicitly connecting the sections of the current curriculum to make it more accessible for teachers and to increase the likelihood of meeting the curriculum goals. Furthermore, the curriculum could explicitly address social justice issues especially identifying diverse students' needs and talents to guide them effectively and compassionately.

As for policy makers, I recommend a revision of MS document that could explicitly include decolonization, inclusion, equity, and diversity rather than the wider and less tangible concept of social justice. To update and review the social justice policy in education for B.C., four main areas could be addressed: (1) including information on diversity and traditional marginalization across the B.C. society, (2) advocating for teaching and interacting in a socially just manner with students, (3) informing students and families about social justice in Canada and B.C. during daily interactions and teachings, and (4) integrating information and instruction about social justice in career education materials. Furthermore, I suggest that the curriculum documents need to be overhauled as they seemingly written from a culturally imperialistic position which is in contradiction with the focus in B.C. society around decolonization of the education.

## **Conclusion**

My study was initially triggered by my reflections on experiences over ten years of teaching adolescents and young adults in three countries (Iran, Turkey, and Canada). Based on my reflections and experiences, I realized that many students struggled to explore and find a meaningful life path which connected with their own passions and talents. I noted that culturally and linguistically diverse students received less and non-differentiated guidance. Teachers, including myself, also struggled and often lacked the skills, resources, and sometimes the will, to guide and encourage students based on their interests, talents, and aspirations. Yet, as discussed extensively in my literature review, guidance in exploring one's life path can significantly impact students' competencies, self-awareness, quality of work, and problem-solving ability and overall well-being. Careers which are not aligned with one's talents and competencies can result in being passive and less creative. Additionally, lack of talent and competency development decreases the desire for self-development which in turn negatively impacts overall well-being and subsequently the contributions that those individuals may make to society. It is my hope that *all* students would find meaning in their life journey to better themselves and their world.

### **“What about me?”**

I have come a long way as an educator, and I have a long way to go. During this journey, I stopped to reflect, celebrate my growth and/or think about the challenges I faced. Graduate school and this research were two of those experiences that I grew in the most. For this last tale, I share where I began and what motivates me to continue my work in making.

*I went to her and asked “How did you become a teacher? I am thinking about becoming one. “I had taken classes with her in that language school for a year by then, she had inspired me. I was 17 and one year away from the university entrance exam (which is an exam that all grade 12 students across the country take at the same time to rank before choosing their universities). She told me all about her journey of becoming a language teacher and I thought that it might be a good path for me. I had started reading novels and I was interested in literature. That got me thinking “maybe English literature is a good choice for me. I love English and literature.” I got into the university and in my sophomore year, I completed a teacher training course in a language school before starting to work with kindergarten age kids there. I enjoyed every second of my teaching and I continue doing so. 16 years later, I consider myself lucky for having the chance of meeting her. Her influence and enthusiasm for teaching inspired me and affected my life-path Throughout years, I met former students and had that gratifying feeling that I had made a small contribution to them reaching their goals. Helping others reach their goals and find a life-path has been the biggest motivation for me to carry on.*

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