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Guidance Counselors' Enactment of Educational Equity Policies: A Cross-Case Analysis of Ontario and Trinidad and Tobago

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Abstract

This dissertation examined the experiences of guidance counselors in enacting educational equity policies in one district school board and eight secondary schools in Ontario; and three school districts and eight secondary schools in Trinidad and Tobago (T&T). In Ontario, the enactment of educational equity policy in local district school boards is influenced by broader issues of neoliberal globalization and their impact on education equity, causing a shift in focus on reducing student gaps and increasing student achievement towards the marketization and commodification of education. Likewise in T&T, the issues in education and policy enactment are centered around the lingering effects of colonialism operating within a differentiated and segregated school system that is perceived as elitist and based on meritocratic ideologies.

 In this dissertation, postcolonial, policy sociology, and policy enactment theories serve as conceptual frameworks to understand the actions/positions and roles of guidance counselors in equity policy work. Using a qualitative, cross-case policy enactment approach, interviews were conducted with eight guidance counselors in Ontario, and eight guidance counselors in T&T to investigate their work on enacting educational equity policies at secondary schools. Primary data were collected from semi-structured interviews, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using thematic analysis and coding strategies for inductive studies. Secondary data were collected from the government's Ministry of Education policies in Ontario and T&T.

The findings revealed that postcolonial antecedents and neoliberal globalization influence education and equity work in Ontario and T&T secondary schools. In Ontario and T&T, educational equity policy enactment work exists within contextual dimensions impacting the different roles and positions guidance counselors assumed in their policy enactment work at secondary schools. The analysis of policy documents and interview data for Ontario and T&T revealed the symbolic nature of educational equity policies.

   Keywords*:* equity policy; educational policy; guidance counselor; policy enactment; Ontario; Trinidad and Tobago; postcolonial theory, policy sociology, cross-case analysis, contexts

Summary for Lay Audience

This dissertation is a cross-case study investigating the experiences of guidance counselors in enacting educational equity policies at secondary schools in Ontario and Trinidad and Tobago (T&T). Policy enactment is broadly defined as interpreting and translating policy texts into contextual practice at secondary schools. Understanding the role of contexts in policy enactment within education systems can provide insights into how critical these factors are to policy work at secondary schools. Additionally, within these varied contexts, guidance counselors assume different roles and positions as they engage in policy work at secondary schools.

This dissertation uses three conceptual frameworks: postcolonial theory; policy sociology; and the policy enactment approach. Postcolonial theory shows that colonial strategies of the past are reinterpreted and integrated into present education policies. Policy sociology examines the layered approach to policy analysis, which is historically informed to understand the relationship between local, national, regional, and global forces that shape equity work and policy enactment processes. This dissertation mainly focused on policy sociology and enactment approaches as both theory and methodology, which helps to understand education policy content and the influence of power on policy enactment and practice.

The findings of this dissertation suggest that various contextual dimensions within policy enactment help to understand the complex ways in which educational equity policies get enacted within and across schools. Consequently, a focus on such contextual dimensions is necessary for theorizing enactment and understanding the inter-relatedness and inter-connectedness of policy actors, policies, and the context that influences the enactment process. Additionally, the findings reveal that the positions and roles guidance counselors assume in policy enactment work are based on the different contexts (situated, professional, material, and external) within schools.

The examination of Ontario's Equity Strategy, Education Sector Strategic Plan, and Draft Education Policy in T&T found that these policies are influenced by politics and power during formulation and enactment in the education system. Finally, findings revealed that equity work in secondary schools in Ontario and T&T is influenced by broader system-wide market-based agendas and reforms in education aimed at promoting competition in high-stakes tests to achieve local and global standards and recognitions.

Acknowledgment

"And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith."
- Matthew 21:22

This dissertation journey has been a testimony of my faith. I had the firm belief that I could endure years of writing this thesis. I talk of my faith because I cannot do anything within my strength. It is my faith and belief in God that kept me going when I felt weary and faint.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my late dad, Carlton Richard Duke; and to my mom Victoria Geraldine 'Louise' Sandy-Duke. Thank you both for encouraging me to go after my education. My parents never had a formal high school education but encouraged their kids to appreciate the value of an education. This dissertation is in honor of your memory dad, beyond the grave, and mom for you to frame the certificate and put it up in the house.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

List of Appendices

Chapter 1:

Introduction

Introduction

This research investigated the enactment of educational equity policies by guidance counselors in secondary schools in Ontario and Trinidad and Tobago (T&T). Ball et al. (2012) explained that enacting policy in secondary schools is seen as either a "top-down or bottom-up process of making policy work" (p. 6). As such, the enactment of policy in secondary schools is a "dynamic, non-linear, and complex process which involves interactions and accommodations between policy mandate, institutional histories, and commitments" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 8). Ball et al. (2012) further explained that policies do not often arrive fully formed in the process of policy enactment because the process involves "borrowing, re-ordering, displacing, making do, and re-invention" (p. 8). Enacting policies into practice is complex and is often a contested process that is subjected to varied interpretations occurring in diverse ways within schools (Ball et al., 2012).

Ball (1994) asserted that "policy texts cannot simply be implemented [enacted] because they have to be translated from text to action and put into practice and into context" (p. 10). Therefore, it is necessary to understand the complex nature of policy enactment by investigating how educational equity policies become recontextualized by guidance counselors (Ball, 1994; Ball et al., 2011; 2012). Policy enactment is the (re)construction of policy ideas into contextualized practice which involves a process of 'interpretations of interpretations' (Ball et al., 2012), whereas recontextualization is a relational process in which knowledge changes and re-organizes from one context to another (Singh et al., 2013). Therefore, policy enactment and

recontextualization co-occur as policy texts become interpreted, reinterpreted, and translated into practice (Ball et al., 2012; Singh et al., 2013).

Given the importance of understanding how educational equity policies become enacted at secondary schools in the province of Ontario and T&T, this study explored the roles and positions guidance counselors assume in policy work at these two locations. This research situates guidance counselors as significant policy actors in enacting educational policies at secondary schools. Stone-Johnson (2015) suggested that the specific involvement of guidance counselors in enacting college and career readiness policies is challenging, as they are often marginalized from meaningful participation. Further, enacting policies in school requires the "systemic involvement of all school professionals" (Stone-Johnson, 2015, p. 1). However, guidance counselors are not always considered in policy discussion-making. Stone-Johnson (2015) explained that guidance counselors' voices become silenced in the policy enactment process, although they are relevant policy actors within any education system.

In discussing the role of policy actors in policy enactment, Saunders (1987) asserted that actors in the policy process are both receivers and agents, in which all actors are equal, except school leaders. However, Ball et al. (2011) explained that actors in schools are not at the same level as they are "positioned differently, and assume positions with policy, positions of indifference, of avoidance, or irrelevance" (p. 1) in policy enactment at secondary schools.

Positionality

According to Lave and Wenger (1991), discussing positionality and how it influences a topic is crucial. Positionality is the researcher's reflection, placement, and identity within the research contexts and the subjectivities of a viewpoint. Stating one's position in a research study serves to inform rather than invalidate it as biased or tainted by a personal view. As such,

"conveyance of positionality offers transparency, delineates viewpoint in drawing conclusions and defines implications from results of the inquiry" (McKnight, 2017, p. 17). In this research, the term insider/outsider referred to the researcher's position with participants and the research setting (Merriam et al., 2001).

As a former guidance counselor, acknowledging the positionality of an insider in this research was essential. First, as an *insider*, I have knowledge of the education system in T&T. Specifically, I know the operations of the Student Support Services Unit (SSSU) in Tobago which employs guidance counselors. From 2008-2011, I worked as a guidance counselor with the SSSU Tobago in the Division of Education, Research, and Technology (formerly the Division of Education, Energy, and Innovation) in the Tobago House of Assembly. During my tenure as a guidance counselor, I supported students in five primary schools on the Island of Tobago and collectively served approximately 1,000 students. Also, as a guidance counselor in Tobago, I conducted needs assessments with principals and other school professionals such as teachers to determine the student population's needs. Then, I used these assessments to develop individual or group lesson plans to meet the varied student needs. To address those varied needs, I often borrowed, amended, and utilized guidance and counseling frameworks and lesson plans from the United States of America. These policies were borrowed from the K-12 curriculum and juxtaposed within a T&T classroom context. This, at times, proved to be very problematic as appropriating lesson plans [policy] from the United States of America to fit specific issues within the Tobago classroom and student population was, sometimes, challenging.

Second, as an *outsider* to the population of Ontario, where I conducted this study, I have limited knowledge and familiarity with Ontario's Ministry of Education and the role of guidance counselors who function in various capacities within Ontario's education system. The

information gathered and presented here on Ontario is drawn from Google searches, interviews with participants, document analysis, and from other researchers who conducted research within Ontario's education system (See, for example, Rezai-Rashti et al., 2017; Segeren, 2016). While I can relate to guidance counselors, understand their views, and sympathize with the challenges they experience in their work at secondary school, I am aware of my position as an outsider.

One important methodological consideration of being an insider-outsider is "foregrounding and bracketing; one's assumptions through a process of reflection and comparison" (Phillips & Schweisfurth, 2014, p. 1). Phillips and Schweisfurth (2014) explain that when this is done, the novice researcher comes to "understand his or her perspective to the point where its influence on the research process can be controlled, if not eliminated" (p. 1). In this research, it was necessary to foreground and bracket my knowledge and experience as a former guidance counselor within the education system in T&T. However, reflecting on the knowledge and experience gained over the years only served to draw comparisons.

Maykut and Morehouse (2002) further explained that the perspective of a qualitative researcher is:

> paradoxical as it requires him or her to be acutely tuned in to the experiences and meaning systems of others- to indwell- and at the same time, to be aware of how one's own biases and preconceptions may be influencing what one is trying to understand. (p. 123)

However, Bourke (2014) warned that researchers must be aware of their positionality in the research process by being reflexive, as their positionality serves as a reminder of the direct and indirect effects on the research process, participants, and the researcher. Thus, Phillips and Schweisfurth (2014) explained that the study of education from an outsider's perspective "inevitably involves implicit comparisons as the researcher's frame of reference is his or her own cultural and educational experience" (p. 1).

In this research, the cultural, educational, and professional experiences as a citizen of T&T and as a previous guidance counselor influenced the interest in equity in the education system. As a former guidance counselor in T&T's primary school system, I would have advocated for students' inclusion and equitable treatment in the classroom; conducting discussions with principals and teachers on strategies for working with students who encounter academic challenges within the education system in Tobago.

In reflecting on my role as a guidance counselor, the knowledge gained over the last few years has contributed to and fostered the desire to see a more equitable education system in T&T in line with what exists in Ontario, where all students have the same access and quality of education so they can succeed at school. As a doctoral student studying in a foreign country and conducting research in Ontario and T&T simultaneously, my research lens has been expanded through conversations with diverse participants. In Ontario, equity issues are essential to a diverse and multiethnic population like what exists in T&T. The possibility of T&T having its equity policies would allow for reforming and restructuring the education system to be fair and inclusive to all students.

This study could be a starting point for discussing and developing educational equity policies geared toward removing institutional barriers and discriminatory practices in the education system in T&T. As a researcher whose interest lies in equity and equitable education systems, there is a need to advance new ways of seamlessly transitioning students through the education system without a high-stakes test such as the Secondary Entrance Assessment examination in T&T.

Research Contexts

The section discusses the two case sites and establishes the relationships and similarities between the countries and their populations. The two case sites in this research are unique, as Canada and T&T's relations are close and longstanding. Former Prime Minister of Canada, Stephen Harper, and the previous Prime Minister of T&T, Kamla Persad-Bissessar, in a joint statement on April 23, 2013, characterized the relationship between the two hemispheric and Commonwealth partners as countries with shared common values, multicultural societies, similar systems of government with a commitment to democracy, freedom, the rule of law, and human rights (Government of Trinidad and Tobago Office of the Prime Minister, 2013). Canada has established High Commission Offices in T&T. Likewise, T&T has Consulate Offices in Toronto and Winnipeg (High Commission of Canada in Trinidad and Tobago Report, n/d).

The vibrant bilateral relations between the two countries span education, science and technology, security, governance, and culture (High Commission of Canada in Trinidad and Tobago Report, n/d). In addition, Canada and T&T cooperate within the Commonwealth, the United Nations, and the Organization of American States (High Commission of Canada in Trinidad and Tobago Report, n/d). Therefore, the bilateral relationship between these two countries made them compatible case sites for conducting this cross-case study.

T&T is one country but two separate Islands. T&T is diverse, with an estimated population of 1.399 million (United Nations, Department of Economics, and Social Affairs., 2020). The Twin Islands are very cosmopolitan, and its people are categorized as Indians and Africans. Indians in T&T are colloquially known as Indo-Trinidadians and Tobagonians. Africans in T&T are colloquially known as Afro-Trinidadians and Tobagonians. Indo-Trinidadians and Tobagonians consist of approximately 35.4% of the population. In comparison,

Afro-Trinidadians and Tobagonians comprise approximately 34.2% of the population. Other people in T&T are categorized as mixed race (Mixture of Africans and Indians), consisting of 22.8% of the population, and mixed others (Chinese, Portuguese, and Caucasians) consisting of 15.1% (Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Planning, 2011).

In Ontario, Canada, the population is also as diverse as T&T's. Ontario has a higher percentage of foreign-born people than the national average population. The 2016 Census enumerated a total of 336,530 Caribbean-born individuals in the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) and 462,600 in the province of Ontario (Statistics Canada, 2017). In the 2016 Census in Canada, people of T&T origins in the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area were calculated at 44,300, and in the province of Ontario, this same population of people was calculated at 59,560 (Statistics Canada, 2017). Participants in the study were drawn from T&T and Ontario. T&T and Ontario are both multicultural and ethnocultural societies that adopted a multiculturalism philosophy that made them suitable for this cross-case research.

In T&T, "multiculturalism is an overarching policy whose objectives include the fostering of inclusion, equitable resource distribution, and the celebration of cultural diversity" (Government of Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Arts and Multiculturalism, 2013, p. 5). According to Kerrigan (2012), T&T's multiculturalism enshrined in the nation's National Anthem and Motto is that "every creed and race find an equal place" and "together we aspire, together we achieve" (p. 1).

In Canada, multiculturalism is directed toward various goals, such as preserving culture and language, reducing discrimination, enhancing cultural awareness and understanding, and promoting culturally sensitive institutional change at the federal level (Department of Canadian Heritage-Annual Report 1990-2000, n/d). Ontario's multiculturalism policy provides "a

framework for nurturing and valuing diversity, citizenship acquisition, participation, and quality

of life, and a strong sense of pride in what Canada stands for internationally" (Department of

Canadian Heritage - Annual Report 1990-2000, n/d, p. 9).

T&T and Ontario have both signed the universal proclamation for education for all

(United Nations Education, Science, and Cultural Organization – UNESCO, 2000). Adopting

this universal proclamation proposed by UNESCO facilitates an education system that is more

inclusive, equitable, and accessible for diverse student populations. To satisfy the educational

needs of this diverse population of students, the governments of Ontario drafted and

implemented many equity policies. Likewise, T&T has drafted many educational sector strategic

plans and policies over the years to ensure education for all students. The removal of systemic

and institutional barriers in both locations will aid in the holistic development of students at

school and within society (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2015; Trinidad and Tobago Ministry

of Education, 2011). To facilitate an education system and an inclusive and more equitable

education, both Ontario and T&T have adopted and enacted several educational equity policies

and strategic plans to meet the diverse needs of their student population.

Education policy, as defined by Ozga and Lingard (2007), involves "all texts, apart from

curricula, which seek to frame, constitute, and change educational practice" (p. 2). In this

dissertation, specific education equity policies and strategic plans and mandates identified are

discussed broadly in chapter 4 and by participants in the data collection stages.

Problem Statement

Despite the establishment and enactment of educational equity policies and strategies in

Ontario and T&T, the policy enactment process is still challenging because of multiple

interpretations of written text by different policy actors. Multiple interpretations occur as policy

texts are interpreted and translated into practice, thus, shifting the focus and meaning of equity to the periphery of policy processes (Ball et al., 2012). The shift in the direction and meaning of equity is attributed to how different actors interpret and translate written texts in the policy enactment process which involves a creative process of interpretations and recontextualization (Singh et al., 2013); which is the "translation of texts into action and the abstractions of policy ideas into practice" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 3).

Policy enactment is problematized as occurring "within a process of adhockery, negotiation, and serendipity" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 11). The problematizing of policy enactment creates contestations between policy formulation and policy practice, as it involves a complex process of discussion of policy principles and mandates among multiple actors at different levels (Ball et al., 2012). The complexity and difficulty of policy enactment point to the disjuncture between what policy is enacted and what is given preference to be enacted into contextualized practice (Ball et al., 2012).

Such framing of the enactment of educational equity policy in secondary schools highlights the difficulty of connecting the ethos of education equity policies with what is enacted into practice (Ball et al., 2012; Braun et al., 2011; Maguire et al., 2015). For example, Singh et al. (2013) suggested that "at the school level, state-mandated educational policies are often reproduced after a complex process of pressure, advice-seeking and consultation" (p. 4) by policy actors. Singh et al. (2013) further explained that policy actors are not passive receivers and enactors of educational policy decisions made elsewhere. In many instances, policy actors shape the policy process through what gets enacted, especially at the institutional level (Bell & Stevenson, 2006). Additionally, Braun et al. (2011) noted that when engaging in the policy enactment processes, policy actors tend to establish their views on how educational policies are

screened, filtered, and dissected for meaning, resonance, and relevance, thereby causing policy ideas to become recontextualized (Singh et al., 2013).

Given the challenge of policy enactment, this research utilized the typologies proposed by Ball et al. (2012) to investigate the contextual dimensions in which policy work occurs at secondary schools. This investigation is done to examine the contexts, roles, and positions guidance counselors in Ontario, and T&T assumes in the conduct of their policy work at secondary school. For example, Ball et al. (2012) noted that a significant challenge of policy enactment is the complexity of enacting educational policies because the process is often dynamic and non-linear; therefore, interpreting policy mandates and principles and translating them into practices do not follow from one stage to the next. As a result, the policy process is often incomplete, as what is handed down by the policymakers to policy actors involves an ongoing process, as written policy (text) is interpreted and reinterpreted before it is enacted into practice (Ball, 1994; Ball et al., 2012; Maguire et al., 2015).

Purpose of Study

This cross-case policy enactment study investigated how guidance counselors enact educational equity policies including strategies and mandates at secondary schools in one district school board in Ontario and across eight of its secondary schools. Similarly, the study investigated the enactment practices of guidance counselors in T&T across three school districts and eight secondary schools.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. How do historical antecedents on education in Ontario, and T&T impact educational equity policy mandates and principles in the policy enactment process at secondary schools?

2. How have guidance counselors interpreted and translated educational equity policies at the local secondary school level in Ontario and T&T?

3. How have contextual factors in secondary schools impacted the enactment of educational equity policy in Ontario, Canada, and T&T?

Significance of Study

Over the last few decades, there has been increasing debate on equity in education as it relates to issues on educational policy enactment (Ball et al., 2012; Braun et al., 2011; Rezai-Rashti et al., 2017; Rizvi, 2013; Savage et al., 2013). The debates have been centered around the shifting focus of equity issues in schools (Rezai-Rashti et al., 2017) and the increasing pressure to adopt a neoliberal reform education philosophy (Savage et al., 2013). Recently, the changes in the meaning of equity within policy enactment have engaged the interest of educational equity scholars (e.g., Rezai-Rashti et al., 2017; Savage et al., 2013; Segeren, 2016). The changes include the intrusion of the state in education governance, the adoption of a neoliberal policy agenda in the education system (Rezai-Rashti et al., 2017; Savage et al., 2013), and the recontextualization of equity (Singh et al., 2013).

Rezai-Rashti et al. (2017) advanced that equity issues in education policies have become rearticulated; misaligned, misrecognized, and invisible. The shift in the discourse on equity has moved away from student competencies and achievement issues to a focus on marketization,

performativity, and accountability in the education system (Savage et al., 2013). The impact of neoliberal globalization on education globally has marginalized equity consideration as the focus continues to be on attaining gold standards in standardized tests and the commodification of education. According to Ozga (1987), policy sociology seeks to understand the neoliberal educational restructuring and its impact on secondary schools' macro and micro contexts.

This study will contribute to the field of policy sociology by examining neoliberal restructuring in education and the impact on policy discourse in equity. Additionally, this study will provide information on how national and provincial governments mediate policy enactment across geographical contexts and how they operate at the local school board and school levels. This research is significant in that it may incorporate the contextual dimensions presented by Ball et al. (2012) to examine contexts and the roles and positions guidance counselors assume in policy enactment using typologies as an analytic device to make sense of the processes of policy enactment. The focus on theorizing policy enactment through the conceptual lens of Ball et al. (2012) typology of contextual dimensions is significant to critical policy studies (see Bernstein, 2000).

The research is also significant in that it can help to build knowledge claims in comparative and international education regarding theoretical perspectives that can guide social inquiry related to enacting policies across multiple cases (Karns & Mingst, 2010; Manzon, 2011). According to Swapp (2015), there is debate surrounding the kinds of phenomena that can be situated within the field of comparative research. This debate has to do with the methods employed not deemed comparative, which has brought about "the re-articulation of the field into comparative and international education, making it, arguably, more open to scholarships of unorthodox conceptualizations" (Swapp, 2015, p. 18).

The research approach outlined in this dissertation fits into this unorthodox conceptualization because it juxtaposes the discourse on policy enactment, as it relates to equity in the Caribbean country of T&T, to the discourse in Ontario. This conceptualization allows for a cross-case examination of how equity and policy enactment changes across two different geographical policy contexts. The research is also significant because there seems to be a limited scholarship that problematizes recontextualization as a process in policy enactment (see Chen & Derewianka, 2009; Singh et al., 2013, for exceptions). Researchers who looked at recontextualization focused on policy borrowing and lending (Steiner-Khamsi & Waldow, 2012) and cross-national policy borrowing (Steiner-Khamsi, 2014). The approach for this research does not focus on borrowing and lending policies. This research examined policy enactment in two decidedly different geographic and policy contexts: a developing country; T&T, and a developed country; Canada, specifically the province of Ontario.

This exploratory examination allowed for a cross-case analysis of policy enactment, which could reveal generic ways in which policy enactment occurs at secondary schools. The research also focused on guidance counselors within the secondary school system to examine how they enact educational equity policies in their guidance and counseling work and how their professional responsibilities may enable or constrain their practice. Finally, this research sought to make a direct connection between some of the current conceptual thinking on policy enactment to understand how policy work occurs in and within various contexts at secondary schools (Ball et al., 2012).

Research Justification

The work on policy enactment has been problematized and analyzed as a complex process (Ball et al., 2012). In addition, researchers utilizing policy enactment in their case studies

have postulated how challenging the process can be, especially when multiple actors are involved (Ball et al., 2012; Maguire et al., 2015). Researchers have conceptualized policy enactment in novel and exciting ways for understanding the challenges presented in the enactment process (Shewchuk & Cooper, 2018; Singh et al., 2013).

Research exploring the complexity and contradictory ways equity becomes shifted in policy enactment (Ball et al., 2012; Singh et al., 2013) can facilitate a greater understanding of how educational equity policy changes across geographical spaces such as T&T and Ontario. According to Rezai-Rashti et al. (2017), the effects of neoliberal globalization and its impact on equity in Canada have been under-investigated. As such, there is a need to find common grounds for understanding how policy ideas change within the process of policy enactment across different geographical policy locations, as in this research conducted in Ontario and T&T. This issue represented a potential gap in the education literature that this research tried to explore.

Conceptual Frameworks

This section provides the conceptual frameworks of this study. Three theoretical perspectives outline their fit for investigating how principles of equity outlined in educational policies change policy work at school by guidance counselors within the enactment process in one district school board in Ontario and three school districts in T&T. One district school board is chosen in Ontario because it is large with responsibility for thousands of students and teachers and other support staff with vast operating budgets. Three school districts are chosen for T&T to support comparisons in the data analysis process because the student, teachers and support staffs population in these districts are smaller compared to Ontario's one district school board population selected within a specific city in this province.

Education and educational equity policies in Ontario, and T&T have become influenced by post-colonial theoretical perspectives. In this discussion, an exploration of the core ideas of postcolonial theory help to address policy adoption and practice. This study demonstrated the connections between postcolonial theory and policy sociology as proposed by Buzinde and Yarnal (2012).

Postcolonial Theory

Colonial and postcolonial thinking and historical antecedents have impacted education and educational policies in Ontario and T&T. Hence, the postcolonial theory provided an avenue for understanding how education strategies of the past become reinterpreted in the present education policy, thereby, resulting in inequity among diverse student populations (Brissett, 2018). According to Brissett (2018), "postcolonial theory critically engages with colonial processes" (p. 2) to "reveal a complex set of phenomena which explains colonialism's continuing effects on people, societies, and institutions today" (Brissett, 2018, p. 2). Postcolonial theory helps to explain how structures and processes of globalization have deep roots in colonial techniques of exploitation and power imbalances (McKnight, 2017). Hence, the adoption of postcolonial theory in education policy research emerged to understand the "structural inequalities of the past in which large and particular groups were and continue to be excluded from educational opportunities" (Brissett, 2011, p. 12).

In adopting postcolonial theory, recognition needs to highlight the colonial influence on formal education in regions and nations (Makaryk, 2004) like the Caribbean. The postcolonial theory emerged from a critique of Eurocentric colonial practices and policies that shape colonized and colonizing countries (Takayama et al., 2017; Tikly, 2004; Tikly & Bond, 2013) such as T&T.

When adopted in education research, postcolonial theory examines power structures extending control over or governing a weaker, dependent country, territory, or people (Brissett, 2011). For instance, in a previously colonialized country such as T&T, even after independence in 1962, gaining political independence from the British did not solve issues of colonization (London, 2003). Instead, according to McKnight (2017), what occurred in the Caribbean Islands such as Jamaica after colonialization was that new forms of domination/oppression existed, especially in the education system. Similarly, London (2003) asserted that the influence of colonial traditions on education in T&T spans the late colonial period around 1938-1959. As such, colonial influence is still evident today, especially where British-style teaching and learning remains prominent in education and examination systems.

When applied specifically to education, postcolonial theory "interpret education's role in the colonization process and examines how current educational institutions and the knowledge they produce are functions of past colonial legacies" (Brissett, 2018, p. 2). Lavia (2007) further explained that applying postcolonial theory to education research "provides a set of lenses through which the persistent legacies of European colonialism can be made visible" (p. 26). As such, Brissett (2018) suggested that "using postcolonial theory is not limited to recalling and remembering what occurred in the past, rather postcolonial theory gives agency to the colonialized to reclaim and reconstruct their identities, cultures, societies, and institutions" (p. 2). Brissett (2018), in his postcolonial analysis of the Caribbean region, explained that the concepts and practices of postcolonial theory on education help to "reinterpret and challenge the historical past and the oppressive present" (p. 26). Postcolonial theory "posits a decolonizing discourse about schooling and educational practice by connecting the past, present, and future as a

necessary philosophical, and methodological endeavor of educational practice" (Lavia, 2007, p.

281).

To understand the relevance of postcolonial theory in education, researchers Buzinde and

Yarnal (2012) proposed that there can be synergistic linkages between postcolonial theory and

policy sociology; because both offer an analysis of economic, moral, and cultural tensions, which

emerge from political power structures (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Ozga (2000) supported this

notion of the synergy between postcolonial theory and policy sociology and explained that they

are rooted in historically informed traditions that consider power structures to govern and

transform education and its practices. Go (2013) suggested that postcolonial theory "offers a

substantial critique of sociology because it alerts us to sociology's tendency to bifurcate social

relations" (p. 25) analytically.

Policy Sociology

Policy sociology is concerned with "understanding policy content, its related processes,

and its effects on educational practice" (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 50). Policy sociology in

education research critically engages with the underlying assumptions of educational policies

agenda in terms of understanding the local and global social effects they may produce.

Furthermore, policy sociology examines the influence of power concerning how and what policy

gets enacted into practice (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010).

According to Ozga (2000), educational practices assert that there is "the need to

understand education policy in a theoretically informed way" (p. 42); through policy sociology

that is also "historically informed" (p. 382). The historical influence of policy sociology as it

relates to educational equity policies allows for "chronological consideration of what policies

have preceded any given policy and the extent to which the policy represents incremental or

radical change" (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 48). De Lisle et al. (2010) discussed the education system in T&T and how it has shifted from one that facilitated optimum human capital to one of low quality with unequal human capital development.

The changes observed in the function of education in Ontario and T&T occurred because of a realignment of the education system with economic structure and the emerging requirements of a knowledge-based society (De Lisle et al., 2010; Savage et al., 2013). De Lisle (2012) suggested that the education system in T&T, inherited from British colonial rule, is noticeably elitist and examination-oriented and is designed to filter, segregate, and retain students based on perceived meritocracy, defined solely by student performances in public examinations (see also De Lisle et al., 2010; London, 2003).

Policy sociology emphasizes the effects of the relations of power, which is overtly political, seeking to interrogate the exclusionary nature of policy processes (Rizvi & Lingard, 2009; 2010). The policy process is often top-down, where only certain people, such as politicians and technical staff, draft policies. Usually, individuals affected by inequitable policies do not have the opportunity to contribute by providing solutions to their problems. Burawoy (2005) believed that policy sociology can serve as a tool to empower and ratify the interests and interpretations of those in power. Issues of power are central to policy analysis and policy sociology can help address the question "in whose interests are the policy made and the analysis of policy conducted" (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 50).

Policy sociology also highlights the tensions between the state and other policy interests, such as the market (Lingard, 1993; Ozga, 2000). For instance, Lingard (1993) asserted that the relationship between the state and the market has become reconfigured, that is, the internal structure and operation changes to drive market forces on educational policy. Ozga (2000)

asserted that a dichotomy exists between the state and the policy cycle. As such, the policy cycle

highlights the complex and contested nature of educational policy processes rather than the

outcome because "policy formulation, struggle and respond from within the state itself through

the various recipients of policy" (Ball, 1993, p. 16). The impact of the state on the policy cycle

has influenced policymaking and policy practice within sociology and has caused these two ideas

to become rejected (Ozga, 2000). The rejection occurred because of the power of the state in

policy implementation, and the failure of the state to consider the internal structures of policy

formulation brought about by tensions in the relationship (Ozga, 2000). However, Crowson and

Boyd (1995) emphasized that:

> the state is more than just another actor because it performs a central role in policy
> analysis such as employing legitimate coercion; shaping other institutional features;
> defining and enforcing conditions of ownership and control and fusing the collective will.
> (p. 205)

Policy sociology also provides the avenue for engaging critically with literature to garner

insights into how educational equity policies become transformed over time and how this

transformation is driven by ideas shaped by political agendas, policy formulation, and the

shifting conceptions of equity (Ozga, 2000; Rezai-Rashti et al., 2017; Savage et al., 2013). This

critical analysis within policy sociology examines the basic tenets of critical theories to evaluate

the construction of policies, their assumptions, and their actual anticipated impact (Edmondson,

2004).

Critical analysis in policy sociology incorporates the breadth of knowledge between

contexts, texts, and the consequences of policy outcomes (Henry et al., 2013). One of the goals

of policy sociology is to apply sociological knowledge to decipher the best action policy actors

can take to solve problems as they try to enact educational policies to make social improvements

in students' lives (Thibodeaux, 2016). According to Henry et al. (2013), critical analysis of

educational policies encompasses more than a narrow concern with a policy document or text and indicates that there is a need to understand the background and context of policies which includes their historical antecedents, relations with other texts, and the short and long-term impact on practice.

Policy Enactment

Policy enactment helped to examine and explore how policy texts become interpreted and translated into contextualized practice (Ball et al., 2012). A policy is characterized as "both text, action, words, and deeds. It is what is enacted, as well as intended" (Ball, 1994, p. 10). Enactment is concerned with "the interpretation of, and engagement in policy texts, and the translation of these texts into practice" (Maguire & Ball, 1994, p. 280). According to Maguire et al. (2015) and Ball et al. (2012), enactment is a concept that captures the multi-layered ways policies are read alongside contextual factors by different sets of policy interpreters and translators. For example, Maguire et al. (2015) suggested that enactment, as an approach to understanding policy work, allows researchers to recognize how different schools attempt to understand the policy process through activities such as in-service sessions for teachers or circulation of assessment data.

At the level of practice, recontextualization involves a dual process by which policies are interpreted (decoded) from texts and translated (recoded) into practice (Ball et al., 2012; Singh et al., 2013). The process of decoding and recoding in policy enactment is constituted by power and control relations, which limit or constrain what texts are selected and how texts are re-organized and packaged for specific contexts (Bernstein, 1990). This is because decoding and recoding involve a collaborative, collective, and often interconnected process between diverse actors, utilizing different artifacts, e.g., texts, talk, technology, and objects (Ball et al., 2012). Further,

20

Ball (1994) and Ball et al. (2012) suggested that policy enactment processes are incomplete because when the policymakers hand them down, there is still an ongoing process the written policy (text) must go through before it becomes enacted into practice.

Contextualizing Policy Enactment

Policy enactment is a process that shapes context (Ball et al., 2012). The policy does not only create context; but context precedes policy to understand its role within policy enactment (Ball et al., 2012). Braun et al. (2011) postulated that studying context within policy enactment is necessary for understanding what facilitates or constrains the enactment process of educational equity policy.

Greater attention is needed to understand the context and complexity of policy enactment within education reform, which can provide insights into how critical contextual factors can impact policy at school (Keddie, 2015). This study adopted Ball et al. (2012) typology of contextual dimensions to examine how policy is understood and enacted in secondary schools and how they influence the roles and positions guidance counselors assume as they engage in policy work.

Researchers have suggested that contextual factors are necessary for understanding political, social, and cultural forces across different scales within institutional and social relations (Ball et al., 2012). Ball et al. (2012) four contextual dimensions overlap and are interconnected, which was important to this study. The four contextual dimensions are situated contexts, professional cultures, material contexts, and external contexts. According to definitions provided by Ball et al. (2012):

> the situated context examines historical and locational influences of schools such as their setting, history, demographics, and [student] intake; the professional cultures examine the ethos, teachers' values, and commitments within the school that shape the way policies are enacted. Additionally, professional cultures are distinct in individual schools and

evolve and inflict policy responses in particular ways; material contexts describe the physical aspects of a school, its buildings and infrastructure, budgets, levels of staffing, and information technology that bound the enactment of policy. Finally, external contexts relate to pressures and expectations generated by local and national policy frameworks. (p. 36)

These four contexts function as mediating factors in the policy enactment process and are unique to individual schools, despite how interrelated they may seem to be initially.

Framing policy enactment within different contexts allows for examining the historical circumstances of the policy environment within which the policy becomes enacted (Braun et al., 2011). Additionally, an examination of the interplay between different contexts is necessary for understanding how policy is translated from text into practice within secondary schools.

The local context of policy enactment is challenging as it involves negotiating the meaning of text within a professional context because of multiple policy actors. Ball et al. (2012) explained that one way to examine how educational equity policies transform in the local context is by exploring how policy actors make sense of policy mandates and translate them into practice. For example, in the secondary school system, Maguire et al. (2015) discussed the challenges junior and newly qualified teachers have in their first year of teaching and suggested that these teachers exhibit 'policy dependency' and high levels of compliance. Policy dependency and high levels of compliance occur because teachers must cope with the reality that the constructions of meaning rely heavily on (policy) interpretations (Rizvi & Kemmis, 1987) by other teachers in the school system.

The process whereby policy actors interpret and reinterpret policies within school networks represents chains of relations constituting an ongoing response to policy enactment (Rizvi & Kemmis, 1987). Consequently, Ball et al. (2012) asserted that the collaborative and collective processes created within school networks are essential for understanding how various policy actors negotiate the enactment of policies within the school system successfully.

22

Additionally, Maguire et al. (2015) postulated that when policies are centrally mandated, they are adjusted and worked on differently by diverse sets of actors in enacting educational policies in schools.

The Role of Policy Actors in Policy Enactment

Ball et al. (2011) suggested that policy actors are the enactors and subjects of policy texts. Such framing of policy actors in policy enactment research asserts that policies make actors in the school system into "producers and consumers of policy, and readers and writers of policy" (Ball et al., 2011, p. 1). Additionally, the school system represents "a cipher of government policy, which comes from outside, and which overrides local particularities, priorities or principles and enacts 'designed teaching and learning" (Buckles, 2010, p.7). In this context, policy actors have little leeway in making changes, as policy enactment in schools is decisive and unequivocal, set narrow with well-defined conditions (Ball et al., 2011).

According to Ball et al. (2012), adopting educational policies in schools is a complex process where conflict and negotiation occur. Similarly, Riveros (2013) explained that in the enactment of policies, the "notions of contestation, resistance, and negotiation (and consensus) occur as a result of the existence of political interference in the analysis of policy" (p.15). Blase and Anderson (1995) supported Riveros' (2013) assumption and suggested that schools are a "political world of power and influence, bargaining and negotiation" (p.1). As such, the micropolitics that exists in the school environment impact not only policy actors and how they enact policies (Blase & Anderson, 1995); but also, the language and discourse of policy (Ball et al., 2012). Additionally, Ball et al. (2012) suggested that "policy provides a language of thinking about and talking about …squeezing out other ways of articulating practice" (p.8). Ball et al. (2012) asserted that "meaning work" (p.9) is central to policy work. The meaning-making

aspects of analyzing written texts of the policy are referred to as 'sensemaking' (Blackman, 2016; Riveros, 2013). Sensemaking speaks to how policy actors interpret and translate policy text and the knowledge they bring to the process.

The agency of policy actors is central to understanding how policies become enacted. According to Ball (1994), there is tension when moving from policy actors as subjects to the policy actor as agents in research. For example, Naimi and Cepin (2015), in their examination of Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy, found that the policy excluded a critical policy actor in the education system, which is the voice of the teachers. Segeren and Kutsyuruba (2012) also supported this claim of the exclusion of critical stakeholders and suggested the need for more inclusion of stakeholders for developing future policies in equity and inclusivity in Ontario.

Other researchers addressed the exclusion of policy actors in policy implementation in Ontario. For instance, Werts and Brewer (2015), in their examination of policy implementation in Ontario, found that education policies do not usually align with what teachers believe. As such, consideration is not given to their motivation and capacities as education policies do not anticipate any democratic engagement at the place where they are practiced, but they tend to marginalize, as such "the perspectives and experiences of those living out the policy" (Werts & Brewer, 2015, p. 224), which are the policy actors are not considered. Similarly, Massouti (2018) looked at the translation of Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy into practice and found that the policy's objectives were not achievable because transforming them into real-life practices required considering factors such as policy actors, the school environment, as well as, various social, cultural, organizational, and belief systems at school.

According to Vekeman et al. (2015), space must be created in policy enactment for policy actors to interpret and translate mandated policies according to their context. In this study Ball et al. (2012) typologies of contextual dimensions for policy enactment at secondary school help to understand how guidance counselors interpret and translate educational equity policies within various contexts. Consequently, the enactment of policy shifts the focus of analysis from understanding the conceptual meaning to examining the contextual practice of policy actors (Heimans, 2014). Thus, this is crucial for allowing policy actors in the enactment process to negotiate policy goals and practices in their various contexts at secondary schools (Ball, 1994).

Chapter Summary

The chapter outlined the research topic and situated the researcher's positionality as an insider/outsider within Ontario and T&T. The chapter presented and juxtaposed the research context of the two cases: Ontario, and T&T, outlining the relationship and similarities in the diverse population in these locations. The chapter then outlined the purpose of the study deriving from the broad research context, the significance of the study, and the justification for the conduct of the study. Finally, the chapter posited three research questions and outlined the conceptual frameworks namely: postcolonial theory, policy sociology, and policy enactment theories that helped to analyze and address the research questions.

Chapter 2:

Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature on equity, particularly in the field of policy studies in education. The first section reviews and briefly discusses the global policy field in education and the discourse around reforms in education that originate at the global level and filter down into local school boards and schools. The second section of the chapter explores globalized policy discourses in education. It examines broad issues of the global policy agenda on equity education by addressing issues of globalization, neoliberal globalization, and the influence of international organizations such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). This section also explores the shifting conception of equity in education to understand the origin of neoliberal globalization and its social and economic impacts on educational equity policies globally. The third section of this chapter reviews empirical research in Ontario, specifically observing the historical context of equity initiatives and policies to understand their role in the education system. The fourth and last section reviews the literature on education reform and the restructuring of education in Trinidad and Tobago (T&T); and documents how this present study contributes to educational policy research across two diverse contexts: Ontario, and T&T.

Global Reform in Education

A reform epidemic in education over the past few decades has occurred through the influx of legislation, initiatives, documents, and policies geared toward school restructuring (Ball et al., 2012; Levin, 1998; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). This education reform has been labeled in several ways: first, in economic terms where education is linked to competitiveness and

obtaining global standards; second, as an engineered education crisis where the achievement gap is widening and students are failing, yet the school system seems unable to mitigate the challenges; third, through a perceived need for the education system to be more efficient at meeting the needs of all students; fourth, by a shift from government to governance where the focus is on moving the power away from the state to school boards and the establishment of school-level management; and fifth, by the increases in the commodification and marketization of education (Levin, 1998; Ozga, 2000; Rezai-Rashti et al., 2017; Rizvi, 2013; Rizvi & Lingard, 2009, 2010)

The reform epidemic has resulted in a "rescaling of educational policymaking, such that political authority is no longer vested solely in the national domain but emanates from a global level" (Lingard & Rawolle., 2011, p. 490). Ball et al. (2012) asserted that educational reform has brought about "a series of 'fast policies' designed to make the education system open, diverse, flexible, able to adjust and adapt to the changing world" (p. 9). This has resulted in what Lingard and Rawolle (2011) described as "an emergent global education policy field" (p. 490), where the government is no longer the only central unit of analysis in education policy reform.

The move away from government to governance in education suggests that the "national government is no longer the only source of political authority, but that the interests of a whole range of policy actors, both national and international, have now become enmeshed in policy processes" (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 117). However, Lingard and Rawolle (2011) suggested that researching "this emergent global education policy field and the way it affects national policy and policy processes through what might be seen as cross-field effects" (p. 490) is necessary for understanding the impact on education systems. Ball (1998) asserted that:

> one of the tensions which run through all varieties of policy analysis is between the need to address local particularities of policymaking and policy enactment and the need to be

aware of general patterns and apparent commonalities or convergence across localities. (p. 119)

Therefore, understanding the impact of globalized education reform is necessary for mitigating the challenges it will pose to moving education forward at the local school levels.

The Global Policy Agenda on Equity Education

The concept of globalization has become a buzzword in education policy discourse and helps examine the changing "arenas of policymaking and convergence of education policy ideas and forms of governance across western countries as well as many so-called third world countries" (Taylor & Henry, 2003, p. 2). Arnove (2007) conceptualized globalization as the "intensification of worldwide social relations which link localities in such a way that local happenings become shaped by events many miles away and vice versa" (p.2). Lingard and Rawolle (2011) suggested that globalization "involves a set of objective processes" (p. 4) that have shifted powers from the government's organization and supervision to the governance of education (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Ball (2008) explained that governance in education has brought about changes in policy processes and new methods of governing society, leading to "a shift from centralized and bureaucratic government to governance in and by networks" (p. 1). Ball (2008) further argued that governance involves the 'catalyzing of all sectors – public, private, and voluntary – into action to solve problems (p. 747) through a network type of authority that "interweaves and interrelates markets and hierarchies" (Ball, 2008, p. 749). Emphasizing that neoliberal globalization encourages the implementation of capitalist management methods in education (Rizvi & Lingard, 2009).

Globalization has also brought about both "structural and qualitative changes in education as governments, in their quest for excellence, quality, and accountability, have adopted and implemented international and comparative education strategies for attaining universal global

standards" (Rizvi & Lingard, 2009, p.3). These global standards have been established within the 'International Agreed Framework' such as the Organization for Economic Co-operation Development's OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) (Zajda et al., 2006). As such, the adoption of these measures by governments compares students' academic performance in the global market (OECD, 2011) to compete and increase profits in a competitive education market (Levin, 2003; Savage et al., 2013). This competitive education market is driven by the policy itself as a profit opportunity "for global edu-businesses – both the 'selling' and the giving away of policy and education services, and the participation of these businesses in national and international education policy communities and the work of policy mobility" (Ball, 2012, p. 5).

The OECD has also influenced education policy thinking in developed and developing countries. The OECD was established in 1961 as a forum for governments "to promote policies that will improve the economic and social well-being of people around the world" (OECD Watch, n/d). The OECD remains prominent in educational policy work that guides reform agendas (Rizvi & Lingard, 2009). Through its 'Indicators in Education project, the PISA, thematic policy reviews, and its educational agenda suggest that OECD has become an important reference point for assessing policy initiatives and program effectiveness at the national level, contributing to the creation of a global policy space in education (Lingard et al., 2005).

Rizvi and Lingard (2009) explained that "global processes are transforming education policy around the world in a range of complicated, complex, commensurate, and contradictory ways" (p. 3). The transformation of educational equity policy, as proposed by Rizvi and Lingard (2010), is shaped by "a range of transnational forces and connections, demanding a new global

imagination" (p. 3), supported by a neoliberal globalization focus on education (Gupta, 2018; Rizvi, 2017; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010).

Neoliberal Globalization on Education

Neoliberal globalization "promotes market over the state and regulation, and individual advancement over the collective good and common well-being" (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 141). As such, neoliberal globalization is also leading education away from the state and toward market-led commodification, which has the potential to cause social exclusion and inequalities (Brown, 2015). According to researchers, social exclusion and inequity limit the transformative potential of education (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Neoliberal globalization has constructed a global policy field in education that is now "framing education policy globally and beyond the nation-state, even if they are articulated in nationally specific terms" (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 3). As such, a growing discourse around globalization is influenced by a neoliberal ideology/imaginary of education (Savage et al., 2013). The neoliberal imaginary involves a "deep, normative and largely implicit set of neoliberal ideas, which shape 'common-sense' ways of imagining and practicing everyday life" (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 3). Through this neoliberal imaginary, "globalization efficiency, and effectiveness have become meta-values that frame educational governance" (Rezai-Rashti et al., 2017, p. 142).

The contemporary assemblage of social and economic rationales in education policy and practice based on a market-based governance model places significant emphasis on transparency, accountability, and choice (Savage et al., 2013). The broad principles of transparency, accountability, and choice are essential to the market-based education governance model and are necessary for effective educational policy management. Accountability involves giving an account or being held to account (Biesta, 2004; Sahlberg, 2010). Educational accountability is

focused on schools and teachers and holding them accountable for their educative outcomes (Lingard et al., 2015). However, international organizations' work in education has "shifted away from an earlier focus on educational equity, towards a central focus on educational reform in the context of neoliberal globalization" (Mundy & Ghali, 2009, p. 723).

Neoliberal globalization's focus on new market reform is now widespread globally (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). For example, the emphasis on attaining international standards in education has opened the door for a market-based policy agenda in education (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Savage et al., 2013). The market-based agenda has shifted the discourse in education towards educational outcomes, causing equity issues to evolve in new ways that align with economic, political, and cultural factors (Savage et al., 2013). The alignment of education with a market-based model has reconfigured the nature of social relations (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010) and transformed equity issues in policies and practices. For example, Scott and Holme (2016) noted that the market-based agenda in education now incorporates elements of capitalism, designed with a focus on high-stakes standardized assessments for judging student learning and school performance.

According to Meyer et al. (1997), the increased influence of international organizations like the OECD, on educational policy supports the permeation of neoliberal globalization into national education systems. Neoliberal globalization, as espoused via the activities of organizations like the OECD, impact the more local, micro-politics of policy formulation and text production (Mundy & Ghali, 2009). The theories of enactment and policy sociology help further unpack this process.

The effects of neoliberal education policies have become a significant concern for policymakers. In addition, the results of neoliberalism are impacting education equity policies and the future of public education globally as the focus continues to be on marketization, which has made it difficult to articulate and implement an equity agenda in education (Whitty, 1997).

The Shifting Conception of Equity

The shifting conception of equity in education is ubiquitous in nature as equity continues to take on different meanings in various contexts. For instance, in the early 1980s, equity education was explored within social and democratic terms, which brought about redistributive policies and practices (Ozga, 2000). The framing of equity education decades later focused on human capital, which looked at the development of the individual to function within society after formal education (De Lisle et al., 2010; Taylor & Henry, 2003). In the present-day, equity education is now framed within a market-enhancing mechanism (Rezai-Rashti et al., 2017; Savage et al., 2013; Segeren, 2016). Rizvi (2013) supported this view of equity as a market-enhancing mechanism when he suggested that it is now becoming subsumed by the market, defining how it is being interpreted, promoted, measured, and governed. The market-enhancing focus in education has brought about ideas of new and evolving conceptions of equity, such as 'new equity' (Savage et al., 2013) and the re-articulation of equity (Rezai-Rashti et al., 2017). The evolving conception of equity also draws attention to how equity has become reframed by neoliberalism (Rezai-Rashti et al., 2017; Savage et al., 2013).

Neoliberalism posits various aspects of globalization as historically unavoidable, with which people, institutions, and nations must come to terms and negotiate while taking advantage of its possibilities (Rizvi, 2017). The core of neoliberalism comprises the ideas of individualism, consumerism, free choice, competition, and efficiency, which are the core concepts of a market

economy (Rizvi, 2017). For example, Gupta (2018) studied the effect of neoliberalism on early childhood education in Asian countries and found that when neoliberalism is adopted and translated into education policy and pedagogy, it shifts from being a social, not-for-profit enterprise to a consumer-based, for-profit movement. The shift is manifested in this Asian case "as increased privatization of schools, standardization of curriculum, more regulations, tighter licensing procedures, increased control over teachers, and decreased autonomy as policy narratives" if the dominant Western education discourses are adopted (Gupta, 2018, p. 12). Rizvi and Lingard (2010) suggested that neoliberalism creates a specific social imaginary of globalization by influencing educational policy shifts based on a global trend toward policy convergence in education. The effects of globalization on educational policy, "has led to new scales of policy production and new policy players" (Segeren, 2016, p. 29) ushering in the shift from government to governance. Rizvi and Lingard (2010) noted that education is no longer strictly under the purview of national governments as the only source of policy authority, but that the interests of a whole range of policy actors, both national and international, have now become enmeshed in policy processes" (p. 117). Consequently, this has "re-engineered the relationship between provincial educational ministries who determine policies priorities and local school districts that are responsible for implementing them" (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Segeren, 2016, p. 29).

Policy as Numbers

Policy as numbers is derived from the mutually constitutive relationship between numbers and politics (Rose, 1991). According to Rose, "the exercise of politics depends upon numbers; acts of social quantification are politicized; our images of political life are shaped by the realities that statistics appear to disclose" (1991, p. 673). As such, "democratic power is

calculated power, calculating power requiring citizens who calculate about power" (Rose, 1991, p. 673). Rose (1991) further explained that "numbers are integral to the problematizations that shape what is to be governed, the programs that seek to give effect to government, and the unrelenting evaluation of the performance of government" (p. 674). According to Segeren (2016), "numbers are also used to lend legitimacy to the actions of government. In the case of education policy, numbers are strategically used to show that policy agendas are set, and programs are created based on objective facts as opposed to special interest" (p. 31).

Neoliberal educational equity policy realities have been classified as 'policy as numbers' (Martino & Rezai-Rashti., 2012; Ozga, 2005; Ozga & Lingard, 2007). The 'policy as numbers' debate was influenced by the OECD, through performance indicators and comparative measures for schools to use globally (Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2012; Segeren, 2016). Policy as numbers has been theorized in the education literature as a technology for governing and has become an integral aspect of shaping education programs and the performances of government (Rose, 1991; Segeren, 2016).

The idea of policy as numbers steers the government's actions and impacts education policymaking and everyday schooling practices through neoliberal forms of accountability (Segeren, 2016). The neoliberal forms of accountability use data as strategic evidence by using numbers to enable authoritative judgments in education on the grounds of objectivity (Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2012; Ozga, 2013; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Segeren, 2016). However, the emphasis on 'policy as numbers' has marginalized some segments of students in the Ontario context (Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2013). As such, Wiseman (2010) postulated that the focus on numbers in education excludes and obscures student achievement based on socio-demographic factors, such as social class, ethnicity, and cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Implementation of Equity Policies in Ontario's Education System

Ontario's first school was private, opened in 1798 in Toronto (Gord, 2019). The Public School Act established in 1807 was passed by the provincial legislature with the establishment of eight public schools (Gord, 2019). In the mid-18th century superintendent of education, Egerton Ryerson promoted the agenda for education for all and was known as the 'father of public education in Ontario' (Gord, 2019, p.v1). However, while advocating for free and compulsory education, Ryerson supported a differentiated system of education for Indigenous students that led to the development of residential schools (Gord, 2019). This study will not dive further into this discussion, but the information provided above is to add the context of education in Ontario.

Equity policies in Ontario, Canada, have undergone considerable changes since the 1990s (Anderson & Jaafar, 2003; Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2012; Segeren, 2016). As such, major policy proposals and initiatives occurred between 1990 and 2003 in the Ontario Education system, "reflecting government statements, policy positions, policy directives, regulations, pieces of the legislature (Bills, Acts), and reports with recommendations" (Jaafar & Anderson, 2007, p. 2). For instance, in 1992, the New Democratic Party (NDP) government announced in the policy/program Memorandum No. 115, 1992, a new "Common Curriculum" to promote the integration of special education students in regular classrooms. The Common Curriculum developed and adopted by the Ministry of Education occurred during the NDP years. However, it became widely criticized as unintelligible educational jargon (Anderson & Jaafar, 2003). The Common Curriculum integrated traditional subject matter into four broad areas: language arts, mathematics and science, arts, and self and society. However, implementation of the policy did not begin until the NDP lost to the Conservatives in 1995, and there was no clear indication if the policy was continued by the new government (Jaafar & Anderson, 2007).

From the 1990s to 2003, several changes occurred in Ontario's education system as it relates to "policy, curriculum, program structure, provisions for student diversity, accountability, governance, funding, teacher professionalism, teacher working conditions, school safety, and school choice" (Anderson & Jaafar, 2003, p. 3). For instance, as it relates to the changes in accountability, Volante (2006) explained that large-scale assessment is the sole indicator of the education system's effectiveness. In Ontario, educational accountability has been the impetus for establishing the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) in 1995 (Volante, 2007).

The establishment of the EQAO in Ontario created large-scale assessment programs within Canada in literacy and mathematics for students in Grades three, six, nine, and ten. The EQAO was responsible for coordinating Ontario's participation in these large-scale assessment programs (Volante, 2006). One of the main challenges with these large-scale achievement tests is the disparities in student achievement and performance among certain groups of students. These groups of students are racial or ethnic minorities, recent immigrants, and children from low-income families in Ontario (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009a). Volante (2006) suggested that the feedback on these large-scale achievement test guides "instructional decision making, identifying areas for future action, and serving as a fair selection mechanism for grade promotion" (p. 2).

The EQAO in reporting on the disparity in achievement among racialized groups noted that Black Caribbean and Canadian parentage students were underperforming in all test areas, particularly mathematics (Codjoe, 2006). The underachievement resulted from factors entrenched in Ontario's schools, such as "low teacher expectations; culturally insensitive curricula; school disciplinary practices; lack of linkage between school and the Caribbean community and peer culture" (Linley, 2009, p. 5). Consequently, Young et al. (2007) argued that

the curriculum in Canada does not account for the diverse student population and their learning needs; because the curriculum contains biased conclusions presented as if they were the truth (Pinto, 2012).

Researchers, further, explain the Ontario curricula do not reflect, in a broad sense, Aboriginal ways of life leading to a lack of understanding and culturally appropriate practices for this student population (Pinto, 2012; Young, 2018). Hence, the EQAO assessment program, which served as a benchmark for measuring provincial and individual schools' performances, is ineffective (Volante, 2007). A significant critique of the EQAO is that this form of assessment is more concerned with teaching-to-the-test (Popham, 2001; Slomp, 2008) and may be ineffective in boosting scores because the test does not address underlying issues related to why students are underperforming or not meeting the provincial standards (Volante, 2006).

Standardized Testing and its Impact on Equity Education Policies in Ontario

Another issue observed in the literature on equity in Ontario is standardized testing. Meaghan and Casas (2004) suggested that standardized testing "is an integral component of the accountability-driven and outcomes-based educational paradigm in which gatekeeping based on test results serves to perpetuate and reproduce social inequalities" (p. 35). As such, researchers have looked at the impact of standardized testing and its effect on persistent student underachievement and academic underperformance among Ontario's students (Martino & Rezai-Rashti., 2012; Rezai-Rashti et al., 2017) and found that it reproduces inequalities for a specific group of students.

The Canadian Teachers' Federation (1999) proposed in their National Issues in Education Initiative report that "standardized tests are constructed in ways that often guarantee biased results against minorities, females and low-income students" (p. 4). The biased result occurs

because examiners' unfamiliarity with test-takers prevents the effective measurement of achievement, abilities, or skills (p. 4). As such, the effects of standardized testing on educational equity, emphasize the impact of testing bias and the misuse of test results to fit political agendas (Froese-Germain, 1999). Similarly, Nezavdal (2003) suggested that increasing standardized mass testing of students in the public school system in Ontario "penalizes students who are socially disadvantaged, and limits teachers' ability to help and rectify that social inequity" (p. 2).

Skerrett and Hargreaves (2008) addressed other effects of standardized testing in their longitudinal study on racially diverse schools in Canada and America. They found that the institutionalization of equity has "inhibited secondary schools' capacity to respond to students' diversity in ways that address the depth of learning, rather than easily tested basic achievement" (p. 937). Similarly, Spencer (2012), who looked at the effects of standardized testing in Canadian schools among visible minorities, found that the testing practices reinforce inequity and increase the social disparity. Rezai-Rashti (2009) also questioned the merit of standardizing testing in Canada when she asserted that the test results in less autonomy for teachers because of a curriculum that has become very prescriptive (see Popham, 2001; Slomp, 2008).

Kapustka et al. (2009) suggested that addressing students' underperformance in standardized tests requires teachers and school administrators to take responsibility for student learning and set high expectations for students. Kapustka et al. (2009) also explain that educational equity policies that address low academic achievement must derive from understanding the socio-cultural and socioeconomic circumstances that underlie academic outcomes. Naimi and Cepin (2015) explained that the movement toward standardization can be very efficient at determining the abilities of students to meet literacy and numeracy targets. However, this can be counterproductive because expanding on standardized measures to evaluate

student success in Ontario's education system cannot occur without considering the diversity and differences of the student population (Naimi & Cepin, 2015).

For instance, many problems have been identified by McBean (2018) as contributing to Black students' under-achievement with standardized testing in Ontario. These problems are:

> the tests do not ensure accountability, or give parents an accurate reflection of their child's progress; the format of the test which entails multiple-choice does not precisely assess student knowledge or critical thinking; the tests do not assess the whole child or the whole curriculum, and the tests only provide one form of assessment which is limited in its capacity to assess students' abilities. (McBean, 2018, p. n/a)

To overcome these challenges, McBean (2018) asserted that there needs to be careful consideration given to the abovementioned problems inhibiting and perpetuating students' underachievement in Ontario.

Enacting Educational Equity Policies in Ontario and Persistent Inequities

Ontario Ministry of Education has a long history of establishing equity educational policies in its education system to deal with persistent inequity (Rezai-Rashti, 2009; Rezai-Rashti et al., 2017; Segeren, 2016). One such prescription is the Policy/Program Memorandum No. 119 (2009): Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Policies in Ontario Schools. This policy intended to promote a system-wide approach to identifying and removing discriminatory biases and systemic barriers in Ontario's education system by ensuring that all students feel welcomed and accepted in school life. However, researchers Segeren and Kutsyuruba (2012), in their examination of the PPM No. 119 (2009) Policy/Program, found considerable and observable gaps in the development of the policy goals and its realities of practice in Ontario's schools. Agyepong (2010) believed that the Ministry of Education in Ontario has reneged on its pursuit of implementing equity policies in the school system (Segeren & Kutsyuruba, 2012).

The failure of the Ministry of Education to enforce equity policies has contributed to issues of equity shifting and "becoming subsumed under the banner of school safety, discipline, harassment, and bullying" (Segeren & Kutsyuruba, 2012, p. 2). Carr (2008) asserted that there is a preoccupation in the education system in Canada with ensuring that "students receive holistic, inclusive, anti-discriminatory education immersed in social justice" (p. 8). However, Agyepong (2010) reported that the effectiveness of the equity policies in Ontario continues to suffer setbacks because there is no systemic way of enforcing equity policies in the school systems. As such Carr (2008) explained that for equity to be achieved in Ontario's education system within a neoliberal focus, the system must strive for high achievement, broad accessibility, and equity concurrently (Leithwood & Riehl, 2004).

Ensuring Equity in Ontario's Education System

A central objective of the publicly funded education system in Ontario, as outlined in the policy *'Achieving Excellence a Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario' 2014*, is to ensure that every child succeeds both personally and academically, regardless of background, identity, or personal circumstances (Segeren, 2016). *The Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario* proposed three goals focusing on students. These are: achieving excellence, ensuring equity, and promoting well-being. These goals are interconnected, as success in one area contributes to success in other areas (Longboat et al., 2018). The focus on achieving excellence is challenging the education sector in Ontario. As such, for the Ministry of Education to achieve excellence, it must inform students' backgrounds, aspirations, and interests, which they bring to the classroom, as prior knowledge and experience can be of great benefit (Campbell, 2021).

Accordingly, achieving an inclusive education system in Ontario requires that students be reflected in every aspect of school life and "that their learning environment facilitates acceptance

of students' identities and uniqueness; that the school settings reflect cultures and cultural teachings of the diverse student as well as the teacher population; and that the curriculum integrates students' interest and backgrounds" (Longboat et al., 2018, p. 2). Ensuring equity in Ontario's education system, therefore, requires the removal of systemic barriers that will level the playing field so that all students can thrive at school while experiencing a sense of belonging, recognition, and support (Longboat et al., 2018).

Adoption of Education Equity Policies in Ontario

In the continuous effort to make Ontario's education system more equitable, the Ministry of Education developed and implemented *Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan 2017*. Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan according to Ontario's Ministry of Education (2017) complements and builds on the Ministry of Education's 2009 strategy, which outlines *Realizing the Promise of Diversity: Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy* and the *Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy 2014* to guide and support the education community in the removal of biases and barriers that inhibit student's success at school (Ontario's Ministry of Education, 2014). Ontario's 2017 Education Equity Action Plan was designed to realize the goal of ensuring equity in Ontario's schools. This plan had a renewed vision for education in Ontario is that "schools need to be a place where everyone can succeed in a culture of high expectations by providing a space where educators and students value diversity, respect each other, and see themselves reflected in their learning" (Ontario's Ministry of Education- Achieving excellence, 2014, p. 8).

The fundamental principle of the Ontario Education Equity Action Plan is that "every student has the opportunity to succeed, regardless of ancestry, culture, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, language, physical and intellectual ability, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, and

socioeconomic status or other factors" (Ontario's Ministry of Education- Achieving Excellence, 2014, p. 8). However, concerns have been raised about how Ontario's Ministry of Education may make public schools more equitable so all students can access them (Ontario's Ministry of Education, 2009).

Several school boards in Ontario have adopted and modeled policies such as the Ontario Education Equity Action Plan, which outlines and re-affirms the commitment to equity and inclusion in the education system. For example, one such school board is the Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB) which drafted a three-year mandate from 2018-2021 to facilitate the Ontario Education Equity Action Plan 2017. The Equity Action Plan adopted by the TCDSB is a "promise to ensure equity at all levels of their education system, to strive and close the achievement gap, enhance student physical, mental, and spiritual well-being, and ensure equitable opportunities and outcomes for all" (Toronto Catholic District School Board, 2018, p. 7).

The Catholic Equity Action Plan's first three areas were adopted as they appeared in the OEEAP- 2017. The three areas focused on "school and classroom practice; leadership; governance and human resource practice; data collection, integration, and reporting, and the fourth were adapted to address Catholic concepts of equity" (Toronto Catholic District School Board, 2018, p. 7). The implementation of equity action plans in Ontario by school boards and the extent to which they get implemented are at the discretion of school boards. As a result, the adoption and implementation of these action plans may occur because of legal actions, as not all school boards are willing to adopt these policies (Carr & Klassen, 1996).

Ontario's drive for equity education is stymied by barriers such as lack of staff support, and parents' resistance, which may constrain how school action plans are implemented (Carr &

Klassen, 1996). Another problem that may persist with the implementation of education action plans in Ontario is under-representation in the education system caused by the "lack of religious accommodation, antiracism and ethnocultural discrimination, anti-discrimination procedures for LGBTQ2+ students, gender identity, and socioeconomic status" (Carr, 2008, p. 1).

Carr's (2008) Canadian study on equity in the education system postulated that "there remain a plethora of issues related to equity, diversity, and human rights" (p. 4). One such issue is the inequity among students with disabilities in the Ontario Education system. According to Stephens et al. (2015), students with a disability still face significant barriers in the school systems despite all the calls to remove discriminatory barriers to foster inclusion and equity.

Davidson (2009) also conducted a case study on implementing inclusive education strategies in the Peel District School Board in Ontario. He found that the mandates for their policy, *The Future We Want: Building an Inclusive Curriculum*, had no clear directives on how the school policy goals were achieved. Davidson (2009) noted that the school policy created a broad spectrum of interpretations that hindered rather than helped the implementation process. However, Davidson (2009) believed that even when schools with vague policy directives from government ministries, like the Ontario Ministry of Education, can still forge ahead and implement equity policy with some measure of success, as evidenced by the Peel District School Boards.

Carr and Klassen (1996) refuted Davidson's (2009) argument, which proposed that schools can still attempt to implement equity policies without clear indicators to guide policymakers. Carr and Klassen (1996) explained that without clear directives for implementation, policymakers run the risk of marginalizing and disenfranchising vulnerable groups. Additionally, Segeren (2016) conducted a multi-case study on the adoption and

implementation of equity policies by school boards in Ontario and found that the "policy approach to equity at the board level was largely symbolic" (p. 191). Hence, "there was no substantive change since individual board, staff, and school leaders were not equipped with the political clout and resources to address educational inequity" (Segeren, 2016, p. 191). Segeren (2016) postulated that other school boards across Ontario must undertake future research that examines equity-related implementation activities to gauge the effectiveness of these equity policies.

Education in the Caribbean and Trinidad and Tobago

The education system in the Caribbean was implemented in the 19th century with public education provided by religious groups or churches such as the Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Moravian, and Baptist introducing primary and secondary schools (Schrouder, 2008). The latter half of the 20th century saw a growth in the education system after many of the former colonies of the British gained political independence (Schrouder, 2008). Gaining political independence meant that countries now had the opportunity to determine their destinies and create education systems with greater accountability and responsibility (Schrouder, 2008). However, the British education system continued to dominate the English-speaking Caribbean even after independence in the 1960s (London, 2003; Schrouder, 2008).

The British examination system still heavily influences certain islands in the Caribbean. For instance, in the 1990s, students on several Caribbean islands, including T&T, were compelled to take Advanced Level (A-Level) examinations offered by the University of Cambridge. In 1998, the Caribbean Examination Council introduced the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (CAPE), equivalent to the Advanced Levels (A-levels). CAPE,

is designed to provide certification of the academic, vocational, and technical achievement of students in the Caribbean who have completed a minimum of five years of secondary education and wish to acquire A levels to further their studies at tertiary institutions. (Overseas Examination Commission, n/d)

In T&T, the education system caters to a diverse multi-cultural, multi-religious, and multi-ethnic student population (Campbell, 1992). Historically, education institutions in T&T have become elitists (Campbell, 1992; Mohammed, 2018). The education system in T&T is patterned after the structures and practices of commonwealth countries (George et al., 2003). Education (public and private) is derived from a colonial and postcolonial system (De Lisle et al., 2010). This patterning of the education system within colonial and postcolonial influences has led to persistent inequities, especially in secondary education, which has marginalized certain groups of students (Mohammed, 2018).

 Mohammed (2018) asserted that the education system in secondary schools in T&T is plagued by student underachievement, leading to unemployment, poverty, and for some, a life of crime. For example, Jackman and Morrain-Webb (2019) examined student achievement and gender differences in secondary school between male and female students. They found that females were gaining superior performances while male students failed because they lacked motivation, focus, and determination.

Additionally, Jackman and Morrain-Webb (2019) suggested that the achievement gap between females and males persists in secondary schools because teachers engage with male and female students differently. These researchers explained that more accommodation is often given to girls through the extra attention and support they receive from teachers. At the same time, boys were left to their own devices, resulting in inequitable achievement outcomes (Jackman & Morrain-Webb, 2019). However, these assertions cannot be generalized to all secondary schools

in T&T because 'boys only' schools and 'girls only' schools still exist on the Islands derived from the early development of secondary education.

These early schools in the 1850s originated out of "the sisters of the Order of St. Joseph of Cluny operating a Convent High School for young ladies and the Roman Catholic authorities operating a secondary school for boys called St. George's College" (Digital Library of the Caribbean, n/d, p. 15). Then, in 1851, the first state-run government secondary school, Queen's Collegiate School became established in T&T. However, other denominational schools for girls and boys only existed after the Ordinance of 1870 (Digital Library of the Caribbean, n/d, p. 15).

Structural Inequalities in the Education System in Trinidad and Tobago

The education system in T&T is designed and structured to select and sort students (Heyneman, 2004). These structures have contributed to unequal human capital and brought about an education system based on stratification and selection, leading to inequity in education attainment (De Lisle et al., 2010). London (1993) and De Lisle et al. (2010) have both suggested that education in T&T has a long history of being selective, stratified, and segregated, contributing to students' underachievement for years and the cause of a differentiated education system at primary and secondary school levels. For instance, Gibson and Hasbrouck (2009) reviewed differentiating instructions among teachers in the classroom and the problem they experience with how to get everything completed to increase student achievement. De Lisle et al. (2010) postulated that at the primary school level, selection, stratified, and segregation occur as students get streamed into different classes and taught another way which usually happens at year five of the primary school education system.

In T&T, after five years of primary school, all students write the Secondary Entrance Assessment (SEA) examination for placement in secondary schools on the Island. Students who

do exceptionally well in their SEA, scoring above 80-90%, enter prestigious T&T schools. Students scoring below 30% are placed in alternative programs in junior secondary schools with a remedial program (Steinbach, 2012). Depending on the student's age at the examination time, they may have a second opportunity to retake the examination. Students in T&T write the SEA around 11 or 12 years old (Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Education, 2008).

The Concordat of 1960 has been a significant contributor to the system of selection, stratification, and segregation in the education system in T&T. The Concordat of 1960 is a signed agreement between the state and religious bodies/churches (denominational schools). In T&T, the education system is decentralized between the state and the church (Coates, 2012). The government manages 37% of the schools in T&T, and the remaining 63% of schools are controlled by either church/denominational boards or private entities (Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Education, 2008). The Concordat 1960 agreement gives denominational schools the right to determine their curriculum and select 20% of new students entering denominational secondary schools regardless of their performance on the annual SEA examination formally known as the Common Entrance Examination (Mendes-Franco, 2019). For example, the 20% rule has been criticized for influencing inequity in the education system. Based on the 20% rule, students underperforming in primary schools can enter a prestigious school because of religious affiliation (Mendes-Franco, 2019).

Mendes-Franco (2019) explained that in the T&T SEA examination, students who score high marks usually get into their first-choice schools based on how their scores are ranked relative to the availability of school spaces. Students with religious affiliation who score average in the SEA examination have the same opportunity of getting into a prestigious school as high-performing students because of the 20% rule enforced by the Concordat 1960 for denominational

schools. The Concordat 1960 continues to be a contentious debate yearly around the SEA examination results time, usually in June (Mendes-Franco, 2019). In 1998, the government of Trinidad and Tobago (T&T) established a Task Force to remove the common entrance examination, now known as the SEA.

In recent years, the government of Trinidad and Tobago established a committee to look at the SEA and the role of the 1960 Concordat in the education system. In T&T, removing the SEA and redefining the role of the 1960 Concordat will continue to be met with an incredible challenge by different stakeholders in the education system, including parents who want to retain the SEA as it serves as a gatekeeping examination at the primary to secondary transition point to allow the top academic students in the SEA examination access to the best types of schools on the Island (De Lisle et al., 2010). To date, the SEA examination is still playing that gatekeeper role of selecting and segregating students in the education system in Trinidad and Tobago.

Local School Boards and School Districts in Trinidad and Tobago

Like Ontario, the education system in T&T is run by local school boards. In the case of T&T, the schools are managed by local school boards under the Education Act Chapter 39:01. The local school boards are constituted by Order Section 23 of the Education Act. The school boards comprise several persons in the education system, stakeholders, and interest groups in the community (Ministry of Education, n/d). The local school board is not an independent body in the sense that it can make its policies to govern education on the Island in the way that school boards are governed in Ontario. Local school boards are established by the Ministry of Education and answer directly to the head of that office.

In T&T, local school boards function in government schools at both primary and secondary levels. The Ministry of Education establishes local school boards to promote school-

based management and decentralization. The school-based management focuses on improving student achievement and enrichment at school (Ministry of Education, n/d). On the other hand, decentralization was centered around providing stakeholders with authority for decision-making geared toward improved quality, efficiency, and effectiveness in schools. The local school boards in T&T have responsibilities for governing primary and secondary schools in areas related to strategic planning; building community relationships; and maintenance and upgrade of physical facilities. The general role of the local school boards within government primary and secondary schools is to support and complement the strategic plan and policies of the Ministry of Education and schools (Ministry of Education, n/d). However, despite having local school boards in T&T, Education is managed by the Ministry of Education and the Education Act 39:01 of 1966. In T&T there are eight school districts. Seven of these school districts are in Trinidad and one of the school district is in Tobago. The seven education districts in Trinidad are: Port of Spain and Environs, St. George East, North Eastern, Caroni, Victoria, St. Patrick and South Eastern (Ministry of Education, n/d).

By Executive Order and a Tobago House of Assembly Act, the 'Tobago' education district is managed by the Division of Education, Research, and Technology (DERTech; previously known as the Division of Education, Energy, and Innovation) on the Island of Tobago. Under the fifth schedule of the Tobago House of Assembly Act 40 of 96, DERTech has responsibilities for education, including curriculum in Tobago (Ministry of Education, n/d).

Inclusive Education in Trinidad and Tobago (Special Education)

Inclusive education in T&T is specifically designed for students with special education needs (Johnstone, 2010). It involves "the integration and education of most students with disabilities in general education classrooms" (Eleweke & Rodda, 2002, p. 113). Inclusion

involves all students learning in regular classrooms with all the essential support accessible (Bergsma, 2000). The fundamental principle of inclusive education is that "all children should learn together, wherever possible, regardless of any difficulties and differences they may have" (Eleweke & Rodda, 2002, p. 113).

In T&T, there is recognition of inclusive education policy for persons with disabilities. However, implementing inclusive education practices has been minimal (Pedro & Conrad., 2006). Inclusive education policies often stress equity and equality for all people, but many challenges are identified as hindering the total inclusion of all students with or without disabilities. Issues contributing to the lack of inclusion in the education system are insufficient resources and facilities, and a lack of teachers with special education training (Bergsma, 2000; Pedro & Conrad, 2006). However, these issues are not unique to small island states like T&T. Ainscow and Sandhill (2010) suggested that implementing inclusion in schools has been a major global challenge. For instance, Tsang et al. (2002) suggested that countries with developing economies, specifically the Caribbean, experience limitations and frustrations regarding adopting inclusive practices.

There is also a limited amount of research concerning the state of inclusive education in T&T and the Caribbean by an extension (Armstrong et al., 2005; Blackman et al., 2012; Charran, 2016, 2018; Johnstone, 2010; Pedro & Conrad, 2006). The gap in Caribbean-specific research on inclusive education is a significant issue, as current research does not account for the abundance of barriers that the Caribbean faces (Armstrong et al., 2005). Implementing inclusive strategies and proposed frameworks remains inadequate for developing economies like T&T (Hardy & Woodcock, 2015). Therefore, the implementation of the inclusive education policy in T&T was one of the most poorly executed equity policies, as the policy lagged behind the inclusion

priorities proposed in the White Paper 1993-2003 (Lavia, 2007; Williams, 2007). The White

Paper is the Education Policy Paper established by the Ministry of Education for the period 1993

to 2003. The White Paper's philosophy and educational objective are on the rights to education

and providing the same to all regardless of gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic or religious

background (Trinidad and Tobago National Task Force on Education, 2003).

Johnstone (2010) explained that adopting the inclusive education strategy into the

education system in T&T did not factor in students with learning challenges associated with

cognitive or sensory impairments. For instance, Johnstone (2010) explained that the Ministry of

Education was aware that students might present with sensory, learning, psychological, and

behavioral challenges. However, nothing is in place for their inclusion, which clearly shows that

the focus on inclusive education strategy was not on removing or minimizing barriers to learning

for all students. The goal of the inclusive education strategy in T&T was to create an education

system whereby all schools, from early childhood to post-secondary, are accessible to all

students, including students with disabilities (Johnstone, 2010).

However, in 2022, there are still barriers to access education for students with disabilities

in T&T. Students with disabilities are still not integrated fully into the mainstream education

system and attend special schools on the Island (Cambridge et al., 2006). Charran (2016) labeled

the inclusive education strategy in T&T by the Ministry of Education a 'dream in progress' (p. 1),

which might be attainable in years to come.

Access to Education in Trinidad and Tobago

In T&T, access to education begins in early childhood, then primary and secondary, and

up to tertiary level education. Early childhood education facilitates the introduction of Early

Childhood Care Centers (Government of Trinidad and Tobago, 1999). Early childhood education

created in the 1990s was geared toward children ages 3-4; primary school education is seven years consisting of students ages 5-6 years (known as infants I and II), and students 7-12 years (standards I-V). Secondary school education is 5-7 years of schooling. Various schools in T&T offer secondary programs of different lengths and types. Students attend government-assisted and private secondary schools for 5-7 years. The latter two years of study are intended to prepare students who wish to attain matriculation requirements for entry into tertiary-level education at a university or college. Tertiary level education typically occurs after seven years of high school, but this level of education can occur at any time in students' lives. Tertiary education primarily operates and is financed by the government through the Government Assistance Tuition Expense (GATE).

Previously, GATE provided full-tuition coverage for all citizens to pursue an undergraduate education at any university or accredited higher education institution (Ministry of Science, Technology and Tertiary Education, 2011). GATE also provides 50% of tuition for all citizens pursuing postgraduate degrees at any accredited institution in T&T or the Caribbean. However, in 2021, changes were made to GATE. A mandatory means test is now required where students are awarded GATE based on household income. The unlimited access students once had to enroll in second and third degrees with funding, has now ceased. GATE now funds only one undergraduate-level degree. The funding of postdoctoral programs with GATE has also been discontinued. Since students now have to self-fund their second and third degrees, the access students had and the barriers to accessing advanced-level schooling have widened.

In T&T, students still experience barriers to accessing education. Although there is free access to schooling from childhood to the first-degree level with conditions that students must meet to get funding, other barriers such as lower socioeconomic, neighborhood a student comes

from, ethnicity, and sex all contribute to inequity and students' underachievement in the education system (Nakhid et al., 2014; Steinbach, 2012).

Nakhid et al. (2014) looked at underachievement across ethnic groups in T&T. Two main ethnic groups exist in T&T: African and Indian. Nakhid et al. (2014) found disparities between African and Indian students based on their socioeconomic status and school attendance. For example, Nakhid et al. (2014) reported that [Indian] students attending prestige schools came from parents with higher occupational levels and outstanding educational qualifications. Conversely, [African] students attending junior and senior comprehensive schools came from families employed in manual jobs with lower levels of education (Brunton, 2002).

Nevertheless, Brunton's (2002) proposition is not always accurate. Students from lower socioeconomic status can also attend prestigious schools due to the Concordat of 1960 scoring in the 80-90 percentile in the SEA examination. Nakhid et al. (2014) suggested that to address this perceived gap in student achievement between Indian and African students in T&T, there needs to be a disruption of the current discourse that perceives [African] students as underachievers.

The Equity-Quality Debate in Education in Trinidad and Tobago

In T&T, researchers are providing a different stance on the idea of high-quality and high-equal [equity] features of the education system. The tension between high-quality and high equity occurs because they cannot coexist in the education system. Valverde (1988) suggests that it is difficult and impossible to achieve high-quality and high-equity education simultaneously for most students while ensuring that all have the same opportunity, access, and outcomes. However, De Lisle et al. (2010) explain that high quality and 'equal' are features of achieving optimal human capital that is central to the development of education in T&T. High quality refers to "the range and extent of skills and competencies necessary for sustaining economic

growth" (Olaniyan & Akemakinde, 2008, p. 5). Thus, quality and equality/equity are deeply intertwined but promote independent outcomes (De Lisle et al., 2010). De Lisle et al. (2010) explained that high-quality and equal human capital can be achieved through a seamless, high-quality education system as proposed in the Vision 2020 Operational Plan. The seamless, high-quality, and equal [equitable] education system:

> Ensures that every citizen, regardless of age, experience, or social status, is allowed to access education and become prepared to participate in developing a modern skills-based economy. Through this system, students can transition smoothly through the education continuum, from early childhood/pre-primary, primary, secondary, tertiary, technical, and adult education, all part of a continuous and integrated education system. (De Lisle et al., 2010, p. 23)

In 2003, the United Nations Education, Science, and Cultural Organization - UNESCO noted that T&T equity issues in education become intertwined with the quality of education. However, researchers have explained that although quality and equity are interconnected, T&T has challenges in ensuring quality in the education system because equity issues have been glossed over in the past (De Lisle et al., 2010). The reason equity has been glossed over, according to De Lisle et al. (2010), is equitable education cannot exist in a differentiated education system which is less efficient because there are inherent elements in the education system that foster inequity in achievement contributing to unequal human capital.

Chapter Summary

This chapter reviewed pertinent literature on education reform and the restructuring of education globally. The chapter addressed broad issues on the global policy agenda on equity education by examining globalization, neoliberal globalization, and the influence of international organizations such as the OECD on the education system. The chapter explored the shifting conception of equity in education brought about by neoliberal globalization and addressed the

global social and economic impacts on educational equity policies. The chapter also focused on how the neoliberal agenda on education has led to the commodification of education driven by a market-led model that has shifted the focus of equity education to one that focuses on standardized testing and attaining international standards in education.

Further, the chapter examined the implementation of equity policies in Ontario, their impact on school boards, and the mandate to adopt the procedures for removing systemic barriers and discriminatory practices in Ontario's education system. The discussion also focused on some of the challenges related to making the education system in Ontario equitable because the shifting focus on education has stymied the enactment of equity policies.

The chapter concluded by discussing educational reform in T&T including a focus on developing human capital. It also addressed the symbolic nature of the inclusive education policy and other education strategies and mandates. The final point of discussion is the equity-quality debate in education in T&T and how this has influenced discourse on making the system more equitable.

Chapter 3:

Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate and discuss the interconnectedness between the research problem, research purpose, theoretical framing, and method of inquiry including data collection and analysis strategies. The chapter has four sections. The first section situates the research in theory and method that guided the study. Methodologically, this research was situated within policy sociology and provided four considerations for its use in this study. The second section utilized a general approach to policy analysis that was directed by two concepts proposed by Rizvi and Lingard (2010). However, in this study, only one of the concepts was utilized and that was the analysis of policy. The third section justifies selecting a case study design as an appropriate method of inquiry. Within this discussion, the cross-case analysis was explained to understand its use also in this study for making comparisons between and within cases. The fourth section describes the steps taken in the data analysis for primary and secondary data. The policy document analysis, thematic analysis, and coding strategies were all used to code data. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the strategies used to establish trustworthiness in the study.

Situating the Research in Theory and Method

This study investigated the enactment of educational equity policies in one district school board in Ontario and across eight of its secondary schools. Similarly, in T&T, the same investigation occurred across eight secondary schools in three local school districts (two in Trinidad and one in Tobago). The policy enactment cross-case study explored how guidance counselors enact educational equity policies at secondary schools in Ontario, and T&T. The

research questions were: How do historical antecedents on education in Ontario, and T&T impact educational equity policy mandates and principles in the policy enactment process at secondary schools? How have guidance counselors interpreted and translated educational equity policies at the local secondary school level in Ontario and T&T? How have contextual factors in secondary schools impacted educational equity policy in Ontario, and T&T?

Methodologically, this research was situated within policy sociology and its tenets. Policy sociology as a methodology involves a layered approach to policy analysis based on historical antecedents to understand the relationship between local, national, regional, and global forces that shaped equity work and policy enactment processes. For example, in this case, study conducted in both T&T and Ontario, equity policies are shaped by the colonial influence that helps to define education in both locations. In Canada, the current push for the marketization of education has been influenced by global pressures geared toward new types of neo-liberal globalization rooted in universal testing.

To investigate and understand the enactment of educational equity policy at the local school level, this research drew on the concept *analysis of policy*, which is to investigate and understand "why a particular policy was developed at a particular time, what its analytic assumptions are and what effects it might have" (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 45). Additionally, Taylor et al. (1997) developed a framework to analyze secondary data used in this study to understand how sociopolitical forces impact policy contexts, texts, and consequences. A case study approach helped to inquire about policy enactment within the local school setting. The case study directs the decision-making strategies such as sampling and data collection procedures but also the strategies for data analysis.

Policy Sociology

Methodologically, policy sociology is "rooted in the social science tradition, historically informed and drawing on qualitative and illuminative techniques" (Ozga, 1987, p. 144). Policy sociology seeks to "understand policy content, its related processes, and its effects on educational practice" (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 50). Policy sociology's use in education research is to critically engage with the underlying assumptions of educational policies by understanding the local and global social effects they may produce. Furthermore, policy sociology seeks to understand the influence of power on how and what policy gets enacted into practice (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010).

The literature on policy sociology purports four methodological considerations important for understanding the theory: the historically informed nature of the theory, the relations of power, the tensions between the state and the market, and the researcher's positionality. These four considerations discussed below provide an understanding of policy sociology being a good fit for this study. First, Ozga (1987) and Rizvi (2007) suggested that the cornerstone of policy sociology is its historically informed nature to policy analysis. The historical nature of policy sociology requires "chronological consideration of what policies have preceded any given policy and the extent to which the policy represents an incremental or radical change" (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 48). The informed historical nature of policy sociology makes it particularly compatible with a postcolonial theory which is also used in this research providing a powerful theoretical tandem for critiquing political power structures (Ozga, 2000). Additionally, the historical antecedents of both postcolonial theory and policy sociology are integral to Ball et al. (2012) theory of policy enactment which purports that "policy is not 'done' at one point in time; in our schools, it is always a process of "becoming, changing from the outside in and the inside

58

out. It is reviewed and revised as well as sometimes dispensed with or simply just forgotten" (pp. 3-4).

Second, policy sociology accentuates the effects of the relations of power, which is overtly political, seeking to question the exclusionary nature of policy processes (Rizvi & Lingard, 2009, 2010). Policy sociology can serve as a tool to empower and ratify the interests and interpretations of those in power. Issues of power are present in the education policy analysis to understand "not only whose values are represented in policy, but also how these values become institutionalized" (Prunty, 1985, p. 136). Power issues are central to policy analysis: policy sociology responds to questions such as "in whose interests are the policy made and the analysis conducted" (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 50).

Third, policy sociology also emphasizes the tensions between the state and other policy interests, such as the market (Lingard, 1993; Ozga, 2000). For instance, Lingard (1993) asserted that the relationship between the state and market has become reconfigured, that is the internal structure and operation of the state have changed. Ozga (2000) asserted a dichotomy between the state and the policy cycle regarding the market forces on educational policy. Taylor et al. (1997) suggested that the state is "a set of dynamic, historically located and complex processes rather than simply a set of institutions" (p. 29). However, Crowson and Boyd (1995) emphasized that

> the state is more than just another actor because it performs a significant role in policy analysis such as employing legitimate coercion; shaping other institutional features; defining and enforcing conditions of ownership and control, and fusing the collective will. (p. 205)

Finally, policy sociology asks, "the questions of who is doing the policy analysis and for what purposes, and within what context, are relevant for determining the approach to be taken to policy analysis" (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 46). Policy sociology suggests applying sociological knowledge to decipher the best action policy actors can take to solve problems occurring as they

try to enact educational policies to make social improvements in students' lives (Thibodeaux, 2016). When questioning the roles, positions/actions of policy actors (Ball et al., 2012), they should always be "situated against reflexive consideration of the positionality of the policy researcher" (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 52).

Policy Analysis Approaches

This second section discusses the general approaches to policy analysis that direct the methodology for the study by distinguishing between two concepts proposed by Rizvi and Lingard, 2010, p. 45) These are *analysis of policy* and *analysis for policy*. Analysis for policy is a "practical exercise, aimed at informing policy development and implementation and often commissioned by governments and educational bureaucracies" (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 45; Segeren, 2016, p.86). The analysis of policy explores "why a particular policy was developed at a particular time, what its analytic assumptions are and what effects it might have" (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 45). Furthermore, analysis of policy does not take particular problems that policies construct. Often, analysis of policy begins with the objective of deconstructing the policy problem and the historical context from which it emerged (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010).

This research focused only on the concept *analysis of policy* which is concerned with understanding the reasons why the policy was formulated, its core assumptions, and the effect on policy enactment. As such, policy analysis is initiated "with the objectives of deconstructing the policy problem and the historical context from which it emerged" (Segeren, 2016, p. 87).

This study aimed to understand how policy enactment occurs across local and international spaces. Specifically, this cross-case study examined policy enactment in Ontario, and T&T. Of significance is how the concept of equity education has shifted in Ontario within a neoliberal agenda and how this has shaped the enactment of equity policies at secondary schools.

Likewise, in T&T, the focus on restructuring the education system for increasing human development has perpetuated a segregated and differentiated education system (De Lisle et al., 2010). This study utilized one qualitative orientation to policy analysis in education proposed by Ball et al. (2012) to understand policy enactment at secondary schools in Ontario and T&T.

Policy Enactment Study

This study conceptualized a policy enactment study that examined the dual process of interpretation and translation of policy texts (Braun et al., 2011). Interpretation signals the first reading and sense-making of text or meaning of policy texts. In comparison, the translation of texts is an interactive process of remaking institutional texts by rereading policy, enacting policy in and through talks, school plans, meetings, events, processes, and producing artifacts (Ball et al., 2012). The translation process influences the recontextualization of equity and gives a "symbolic value to policy, as materials, practices, concepts, and subject cultures" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 10). Through the recording process, meanings get translated from one context to another, involving a process of negotiation between policy actors (Singh et al., 2013). Policy actors in the policy enactment processes function as participants, receivers, policy agents, institutions, agencies, and interpretations (Ball et al., 2011, 2012).

Policy enactment studies in education focus on "the context of policy practice and use a variety of methods including interviews, observations, document analysis, and sometimes ethnographic case study work" (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 59). Policy enactment studies are concerned with "the interpretation of, and engagement in policy texts, and the translation of these texts into practice" (Maguire & Ball, 1994, p. 280). According to Maguire et al. (2015) and Ball et al. (2012), enactment is a concept that captures the multi-layered ways policies are read alongside contextual factors by different sets of policy interpreters and translators. This study

relied intensely on Ball et al. (2012) approach to policy enactments and their research in secondary schools and highlighted how policies become interpreted and translated in local school contexts. Policies enacted within a localized context demonstrate the multi-level dynamics of policies (Braun et al., 2010, 2011).

This study also investigated the policy enactment of guidance counselors at secondary schools in Ontario, and T&T. Policy enactment also involves the (re)construction of policy ideas into contextualized practice through a process of 'interpretations of interpretations' (Ball et al., 2012; Rizvi & Kemmis, 1987). As such, policy enactment is theoretically rich for understanding how policies are enacted into practice (Tromp & Datzberger, 2019). Understanding how educational institutions deal with policy demands, specifically how schools and agents within schools interpret and translate policies into practice, is essential to policy enactment practice (Ball et al., 2012).

Policy as Text and Policy as Discourse

According to Ball (1993), policies are written texts, interpreted by their readers and are "representations which are encoded in complex and decoded in complex ways" (p. 11). The encoding process embodies political struggles which are characterized by the production of policy text from problem identification to policy solutions. In contrast, the decoding process involves the "role of actors' histories, experiences, and resources, who interpret texts and attach meaning to texts" (Segeren, 2016, p. 22).

Ball et al.'s (2011) interpretation and translation processes are deemed fertile grounds for examining the meanings guidance counselors placed on policy texts. Further, Ball (1993) argued that policies are "contested and changing, always in a state of 'becoming,' of 'was' and 'never was' and not quite" (p. 11). Accordingly, Ball et al. (2012) noted that policies are not simply

ideational or ideological. As such, "the written policy must be translated from text to action – put into practice – concerning history and context and with the resources available" (Ball et al., p. 3). This research focused on policy-as-text and policy-as-discourse for understanding the myriad of ways guidance counselors enact educational policies at secondary schools in Ontario and T&T.

Policy as discourse, according to Foucault, "are manifold relations of power which permeate, characterize and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation, and functioning of a discourse" (1980, p. 93). Ball (1993) suggested that knowledge becomes truth through discourse, and these truths govern individuals and society through normalization. Discourse is "what is said, thought, and who can speak when, where and with what authority" (Ball, 1993, p. 14). Accordingly, Ball (1994) asserted that policy processes in practice require an appreciation of how policies "exercise power through a production of 'truth' and 'knowledge,' as discourses" (p. 14).

The connection between policy as text and policy as discourse forms the foundation for a fundamental conception and extensive analysis of the policy enactment process and practice (Ball et al., 2012; Singh et al., 2013). In this study, the emphasis was on guidance counselors' enactment or practice of policy. Policy enactment texts are "products and tools of production" (Braun et al., 2011), and school policies and practices "are products articulated within a linear logic" (Buckles, 2010, p. 11). Finally, Ball explained that texts are the products of the education system, which get translated into interactive and sustainable practices that involve productive thought, invention, and adaptation (Ball, 1994).

Research Design

   This study involved two case locations, one in Ontario and the other in T&T. In Ontario, one district school board (known as A) and eight secondary schools served as the case for investigating the enactment of educational equity policies by guidance counselors at secondary schools. In T&T, three school districts (two in Trinidad and one in Tobago) and eight secondary schools served as the cases, across both Islands. In both case locations, the researcher interviewed 16 guidance counselors. Eight were from Ontario and the other eight were from T&T. In the two locations, the researcher analyzed the Ministry of Education policy documents as secondary data. Policy enactment studies are amenable to case study design and guided by case study methodology to investigate the enactment of educational equity policies and strategies, specifically focusing on the role contexts play in policy enactment. Ethical clearances were obtained from Western University's Ethics Board, the school board ethics agency in Ontario, and two external agencies in T&T (Ministry of Education in Trinidad and Tobago House of Assembly).

The Role of Case Study and Cross-Case Analysis in Policy Enactment

   As Yin (2009) proposed, a case study is an empirical inquiry to investigate a contemporary phenomenon in its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are unclear. A case study inquiry relies on multiple data sources to aid in triangulation. As such, the case study adopts a variety of data sources to allow for a multi-faceted analysis of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Using multiple sources allows for an in-depth probe of the phenomena and for generating extensive data (Stake, 2013; Yin, 2009). In this research, multiple data sources such as semi-structured

interviews, examination of organizational policies, and first impression notes were taken during and after interviews constituted the data analysis.

In case study research, the researcher "explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information, and reports a case description and case themes" (Creswell, 2013, p. 97). Additionally, Yin (2009, p. 18) proposed that case study is a preferred research design under four conditions: first, when the focus of the study is to answer "how" and "why" questions; second, when the behavior of those involved in the study cannot become manipulated; third, when the contextual conditions covered are relevant to the phenomenon under study; and finally, when the boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon and context.

This policy enactment case study was analytic and exploratory, and as such, this research sought to understand policy work at secondary schools by positioning guidance counselors as objects. Yin (2003) proposed that a case is considered an object in qualitative research, which includes a person, a program, a policy, a group, an organization, an event, a concept, or a project (Stake, 2013; Yin, 1994). The objects of this study were guidance counselors and the educational equity policies that aided in the clear identification of the phenomena to be studied and the recognition of the units to be analyzed within a specific context (Easton, 2010; Yin, 2009). In this research, the case study approach helped to examine the enactment of educational equity policies across local and global contexts.

The case study approach sought to understand how guidance counselors' educational equity policies become recontextualized in their practice in secondary schools across two geographical settings in Ontario and T&T. Additionally, the cross-case comparisons/analysis of

Ontario and T&T examine themes, similarities, and differences across cases when the unit of

analysis is bounded (Gustafsson, 2017). A bounded unit refers to multiple units that allow for

data analysis within the case analysis and between the case analysis (Gustafsson, 2017). *Cross-*

case analysis "facilitates the comparison of commonalities and differences in the events,

activities, and processes that are the unit of analyses in case studies" (Khan & VanWynsberghe,

2008, p.1), allowing the researcher to examine comparisons across contrasting times or places

where units of analysis are related to each other (Khan & VanWynsberghe, 2008). Additionally,

cross-case analysis enables case study researchers

> to delineate the combination of factors that may have contributed to the outcomes of the
> case, seek or construct an explanation as to why one case is different or the same as
> others, make sense of puzzling or unique findings, or further articulate the concepts,
> hypotheses, or theories discovered or constructed from the original case. (Khan &
> VanWynsberghe, 2008, p. 1)

Therefore, a comparison is made within and between the two cases in Ontario and T&T to

observe how policy enactment at secondary school is similar or different depending on the varied

context policy work occurs within.

According to Goodrick (2014), the case study involves two or more cases that produce

more generalizable knowledge about a phenomenon within and across contexts. The phenomena

of this research are the enactment of policies such as the equity education policy in Ontario and

the T&T education sector's strategic plan and draft education policy to garner an understanding

of the "interaction between diverse actors, texts, talks, technology and objects (artifacts) which

constitute ongoing responses to policy" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 3). For example, this case study

locates two contextual issues that have shaped the philosophy of educational equity policies in

Ontario and T&T. In Ontario, these issues relate to the influence of global conceptions on

education, their impact on educational equity policies, and how they become enacted into

practice (Rezai-Rashti et al., 2017). In T&T, the key contextual issue relates to the mixture of the

country's colonial past within the current education system and the way this has shaped

education governance (London, 2003).

Selecting the Cases

According to Stake (2005), a case could exist in a bounded, patterned system, by both

time and space. In this study, the settings for the cases were in Ontario, and T&T. In this study,

the cases were the enactment of educational equity policies at the secondary school levels.

Within this research design, two different case study locations were selected across 16 secondary

schools, eight in Ontario and eight in T&T. Each school became a case study while focusing on

how educational equity policies get enacted within the context of the district school board and

school districts in Ontario and the Ministry of Education in T&T.

The enactment of educational equity policy situated at the secondary school level of each

participating school was the intended focus of the cross-case study analysis. In the Ontario

district school board, A, equity policy was an important context in which to understand the

specifics of policy enactment at the local level. However, while conducting interviews in

Ontario, policy actors at secondary schools did not focus their practice on documents such as the

PPM No. 119 (2009) that tasked school boards with developing and implementing educational

equity policies. District School board A did develop and implement its equity policy within its

schools but at the school level, other policies were being used for students' well-being and

mental health. Some policy actors revealed they never used these broad policies to direct their

work at secondary school and focus their practice on the values they hold and their life

experiences. Similarly, in T&T, educational equity policy was not an important context as the

Ministry of Education does not have a stand-alone equity policy. However, there is a focus on

equity taken up in the Education Sector Strategic Plan (2011-2015) and the Draft Education Policy Paper (2017-2022; See chapter 4).

Guidance counselors within the education system enacting educational equity policies in their practice were within the bounds of this research. Guidance counselors were the participants in this research and enactors of policies within the school setting. The boundaries of the case settings in Ontario and T&T are precisely one district school board in Ontario and three school districts in T&T. In T&T, two school districts exist in Trinidad under the Ministry of Education, and one school district operates in Tobago under the Tobago House of Assembly. The case settings selected represent similarities and commonalities in Ontario and T&T regarding their multiethnic and diverse population and the signing on to international conventions mandating education for all and inclusive education for students.

Initially, the research proposal for the study utilized a purposeful selection of the case to ensure the selection of a school board currently enacting the provincial equity education policy (Patton, 1990). However, in mid-May 2020, COVID-19 began, and adjustments occurred in how the study was conducted because schools moved from in-person to online learning. Additionally, the global travel restrictions, made it impossible to interview participants face-to-face. Also, the responses from principals to facilitate the recruitment process was slow as more than 30 principals contacted in one district school board in Ontario did not respond to the researcher's emails or could not facilitate the interview process as support staff was busy adjusting to the recent changes caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Two principals agreed for their guidance leads to participate in the research and participated in interviews in December 2020. This was when a snowball sampling technique was employed using the first two participants. Snowball sampling is a non-probability method commonly used in qualitative research where one

interviewee gives the researcher the name of at least one more potential interviewee. That interviewee, in turn, provides the name of at least one more potential interviewee until all participants are interviewees (Kirchherr & Charles, 2018). All other Ontario guidance counselors were interviewed between January 2021 to June 2021.

In T&T, snowball sampling was used after Heads of Units (Student Support Services Divisions) provided a list of 22 potential participants and their email addresses. The Heads of the Unit made the initial engagement with participants, and after they communicated back, the information and recruitment letters were sent to potential participants. Initially, guidance counselors were slow in responding, but once the interviews started, snowball sampling was employed using the first two participants.

In Ontario, the district school board chosen is diverse and of multiethnic composition; is currently enacting equity policies; and has experience with enacting equity initiatives. Upon identifying the district school board in Ontario, the researcher sought ethics approval internally through the Boards Ethics Unit, and once the study was approved, the researcher sent recruitment letters and letters of information to the principal. Likewise, in T&T, the researcher sought for ethics approval to conduct studies in the Ministry of Education and the Tobago House of Assembly. Once the study was approved, the researcher sent recruitment letters and letters of information to heads of units via email to share with potential policy actors in the guidance units. In T&T, the researcher selected participants from a cross-section of secondary schools across the East-West corridor T&T. Some schools existed in urban cities, and others in rural settings where affluence, poverty, and inequalities are prevalent, with a segregated school system.

Textual Analysis of Educational Equity Policies at the Ministry and Board level

Ball (1994) suggested that policy is "text and action, words and deeds, it is what is enacted as well as what is intended" (pp. 10-11). As such, policy text facilitates an understanding of how policies translate abstract ideas and values "into roles and relationships and practices within institutions that enact policy and change what people do and how they think about what they do" (Ball, 2008, p. 6). In this study, the values and intentions of equity policies embedded within policy statements are essential to understand in the enactment of the Ministry of Education and district school board in Ontario and the Ministry of Education in Trinidad and Tobago. According to Segeren (2016), the "policy text study involved a textual analysis …identifying the philosophical and ideological conceptions of equity that are embedded within the text" (p. 95). This is done to observe how neoliberal ideas are impacting equity in practice.

In this study, educational equity policies analyzed as secondary data originated from organizations at the provincial level as the Ontario Ministry of Education. Also, the researcher analyzed local district school board equity policy in Ontario. For T&T, national educational policies analyzed were from the Ministry of Education. The multiple-layered approaches to textual analysis allow for examining the relationships and tensions between and within policies in Ontario and T&T.

Data Collection Methods

Yin (2009) asserted that in case studies, the complexity of the phenomenon under study requires multiple data sources to aid in triangulation. The strength of the case study is its ability to deal with a wide variety of evidence derived from verbatim transcripts, field notes, documents, and artifacts that are vital to critical policy analysis (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). Yin (2009) proposed six familiar sources of evidence that can be collected when doing a case: direct

observations, interviews, archival records, documents, participant observation, and physical artifacts. This qualitative case study relied on two sources of data; primary data were collected from semi-structured interviews and field notes, while secondary data were collected from policy documents from the Ministry of Education in Ontario and T&T.

Semi-Structured Interviews

The researcher collected primary data from 16 guidance counselors in T&T and Ontario collectively using semi-structured interviews. The intent of using semi-structured interviews is to garner the experiences of guidance counselors who play a significant role in adopting and enacting education equity principles as part of their routine work. Semi-structured interviews "allow us to enter into the other person's perspective" (Patton, 2002, p. 341). The researcher interviewed guidance counselors in Ontario and T&T secondary schools. This is because guidance counselors play a significant role in policy enactment at school and can function in various capacities to ensure schools are equitable for all students. At the secondary school level, the researcher interviewed eight guidance counselors in Ontario and eight guidance counselors in T&T.

A recruitment email script was used to make initial contact with potential participants (see Appendix F). Each participant received a letter of information and consent form for Ontario and T&T (see Appendix H & I). Additionally, the researcher sought verbal consent as all interviews were conducted via Zoom Platform (See Appendix G). All interviews lasted approximately 60 to 90 minutes and were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. An interview guide of approximately 22 questions, formulated from the research focus and questions, was used (see Appendix J & K).

The interview guide is divided into three sections; the first section contained essential questions designed to establish rapport and build a relationship between the interviewer and interviewee. This section also contained geographic and demographic information. The second section contained the core question designed to address the research's leading issues and the study's purpose. This section intended to generate in-depth information about the phenomena or experience with probes to elicit rich details. The third section had closing questions used to derive other opinions about the research questions from the participants.

The following tables present the pseudonyms, positions, and years of experience and professional background of each participant in the study. Table 1 below shows the participant for Ontario, their pseudonyms, positions, and professional background.

Table 1

The Participants -Ontario

Name	Position	Years of Experience	Professional Background
Frankie	Curriculum leader/Guidance lead	12	Teacher, an Equity team member with the board
Lavern	Curriculum leader/ Guidance lead	16	Teacher, Guidance Counselor
Mary	Curriculum leader/Guidance Lead	20	Teachers, Guidance Counselors
Jen	Curriculum Leader/Guidance Lead	24	Teacher, Guidance Counselor
Enez	Guidance leader	21	Teacher, Guidance Counselor
Sarah	Guidance Leader	17	Teacher, Guidance Counselor
Judy	Curriculum lead/Guidance lead	14	Teacher, Guidance Counselor
Dora	Assistant curriculum leader	37	Teacher, Guidance Counselor, Liaison

Table 1 shows the eight participants for Ontario, noting their position, the number of

years, and their extensive professional backgrounds. The composition of participants was diverse

with a mixture of participants who worked in the education system in Ontario, Canada, in

varying capacities. In Ontario, guidance counselors must be teachers before they can take

courses to become guidance counselors. In this research, the participants represented a cross-

section of diverse individuals including one person who self-identified as gay in the interview.

Table 2 shows the participants for T&T, their pseudonyms, positions, years of

experience, and professional background.

Table 2

The Participants -Trinidad and Tobago

Name	Position	Years of Experience	Professional Background
Karen	Guidance Officer	13	Government Ministry worker
Donna	Guidance Officer II	22	Government workers, Guidance Officer I
Roland	Guidance Counselor	13	Government Ministry Workers, Guidance Counselor
Laura	Guidance Officer	19	Teacher, Corporate
Nora	Guidance Officer	10	Corporate, Government Workers
Val	Guidance Counselor	6	Clerk, Sales Representative
Devon	Guidance Officer	20	Teachers, Government Workers
Arlene	Guidance Officer	10	Government Workers, Judiciary System Workers

In T&T, guidance counselors are designated as guidance counselors before they become guidance officers I or II. Guidance counselors can be employed on contract for a fixed period. Guidance officers I and II are permanent workers established by the Service Commission. Table 2 shows the eight participants for T&T, noting their position, the number of years worked, and their extensive professional backgrounds. The participants comprised a mixture of diverse individuals who worked in and out of the education system in T&T in varying capacities.

Document Collection

This study collected and analyzed documents including equity policies from the Ontario Ministry of Education and School Board A. Similarly, for T&T, the researcher collected and analyzed the Ministry of Education Sector Strategic plans and education policies. The documents for Ontario and T&T served as secondary data to supplement the primary interview data. Primary data were collected using snowball sampling. Snowball sampling helped to identify "cases of interest from people who knew other people who with information about cased that were information-rich" (Creswell, 2013, p. 158). In this study, cases of interest included guidance counselors who referred their other informed colleagues.

Storage of Data

To ensure the security of data and identities of all Ontario and T&T participants, the researcher stored all data, including the zoom audio files, transcriptions, and first impression notes, in a folder on a desktop with a password. The researcher also uploaded files on a USB drive and stored them in a locked drawer. The researcher also assigned numbers with the year the study was conducted to a master sheet with the analyzed data for Ontario and T&T using a chronological number sequence, making all data easily identifiable and available (Creswell, 2013).

Data Analysis

Data collection and analysis occur concurrently (Baxter & Jack, 2008), meaning the researcher analyzed data as they were collected. This study used different forms of analysis to aid in data triangulation. Data triangulation allows the phenomena to be viewed and explored from multiple perspectives (Bowen, 2009). Two data analysis techniques were utilized in this research. Initially, in the proposal phase, policy document analysis (PDA) was the suggested analysis technique for analyzing secondary data. However, this analysis technique was limited in offering a critical review of the secondary data, so Taylor et al. (1997) framework for analyzing policy documents and texts supported the discourse in this section.

Taylor et al (1997) framework examined the context, text, and consequences of organizational policy documents in the Ministry of Education in Ontario and T&T. The context examines social and political factors and how they impacted the development of equity policies in Ontario and education strategic plans and mandates in T&T. The analysis showed the shifting conception of policies with every changing government and the dismantling of established equity units and policies, especially in the Ontario context. Text is the content of the policy document

and the message that drives analytical activity. This study text was analyzed to observe if the content outline is substantive enough to achieve the goals and objectives in the policy document. Consequences examine how policies become enacted, and the many ways actors interpret them. In this study, the policy's noticeable outcomes depend on implementation strategies and how they become interpreted in the enactment process (Ball et al., 2012; Taylor et al., 1997).

The second form of data analysis was thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is not tied to any epistemological or theoretical perspective and is a flexible method (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Braun and Clarke (2006) suggested that thematic analysis should be a foundational method for qualitative analysis as it provides core skills for conducting many other forms of qualitative analysis. Additionally, Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) explained that thematic analysis is "a form of pattern recognition within the data, where emerging themes become the categories for analysis" (pp. 3-4). In this study, the main goal for conducting thematic analysis was "to identify themes, that is, patterns in the data that are important or interesting, and use these themes to address the research or say something about an issue" (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017, p. 3).

Accordingly, thematic analysis involves more than a summation of the data, it involves interpreting and making sense of the data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). This thematic method analyzes themes and patterns within the data using the inductive approach. According to Patton (1990), an inductive approach is where the themes identified from the data are linked to the collected data set. In the inductive approach to thematic analysis, "the coding process of research data, after its collection via interviews, does not try to fit any pre-existing frame or conception of the researcher" (Majumdar, 2022, p. 200). Therefore, thematic analysis was a good fit for analyzing the interview data and extracting meanings and concepts from the data by pinpointing,

examining, and recording themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Themes are the "subjective meaning and cultural-contextual message of data" (Vaismoradi & Snelgrove, 2019, p. 3), emerging through careful verbatim reading and rereading the transcribed data. In this research, one primary type of theme identified as a good fit for thematic analysis is the latent or interpretive level themes (Boyatziz, 1998). At the latent level, themes are examined for "underlying meaning, idea, content concept, and ideologies of the data set which allows for more deep and rigorous interpretative work" (Majumdar, 2022, p. 202).

Braun and Clarke's (2006) six steps of thematic analysis were adopted and guided the data analysis of this study. The six steps are not linear, and the researchers can move "forward and back between them, perhaps many times, particularly if dealing with a lot of complex data" (p. 4). Nevertheless, Braun and Clarke's (2006) six steps of thematic analysis are one of the most effective approaches in social science research. The six steps offer a clear and useable framework for thematic analysis (Majumdar, 2022). The six steps are helpful for data analysis of interviews using thematic analysis (see Figure 1). Figure 1 shows the six steps of thematic analysis. The six steps are elaborated on below to explain the process of thematic analysis.

Figure 1.

Six-Step Approach to Thematic Analysis
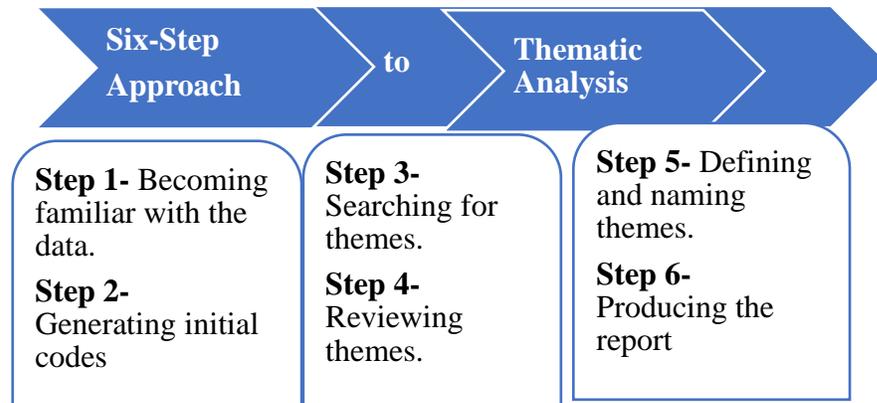
Note. Figure 1 outlines the six steps taken in deriving themes from research data using thematic analysis. Adapted from Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology by Braun V. and Clarke V. (2006). https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

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Data Familiarity. Becoming familiar with interview data is the first step of the analysis which requires spending time transcribing the data verbatim. Reissman (1993) suggested that transcribing data to generate themes is the first step of analysis in the thematic process, helping the researcher identify codes while writing down the extract. However, as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), the first step in their thematic analysis involves becoming immersed in the interview data by reading and rereading the transcriptions repeatedly while noting initial ideas.

First, the researcher organized interviews according to case locations (Ontario and T&T). That is eight transcribed interviews for Ontario and eight transcribed interviews for T&T and placed them into a separate text file. Second, the researcher arranged the transcribed data according to case locations and organized them into another file. Third, a Word spreadsheet was created with questions and responses across the 16 interviews for schools in Ontario and T&T.

This first step required becoming familiar with the data corpus. The researcher intensely read and reread the interview transcriptions to become more familiar the with data and then organized data to make sense of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and to understand how policy enactment occurred at secondary schools in Ontario and T&T.

  Generating Initial Codes. The second step begins after the researcher reads and becomes familiarized with the data; getting an initial idea of what it says and what is in the data. This step involves generating initial codes from the data and then organizing them in a meaningful and systematic way to derive codes. The process of coding reduces data into small chunks of meaning. Open coding is utilized as no pre-set codes are used, but codes are developed and modified as the data goes through the coding process. To facilitate this process the Word spreadsheet was color-coded, with different colors for each code. Braun and Clarke's (2006) second step of thematic analysis was limited in that it did not outline 'how' codes would be generated. Hence, this study adopted aspects of Saldaña's (2015) approach to the first-cycle and second-cycle coding of data to facilitate the coding of the data. (See Table 3 below).

Table 3

Coding Method

Coding Method	
Cycles of Coding	Description of Coding Cycle
First-Cycle Coding	- Descriptive coding (field notes, documents), inductive and/or deductive - Attribute coding (for database structure and overview)
Second -Cycle Coding	- Electic coding (for refining first-cycle choices) - Pattern coding (exploring patterns across first-cycle codes) - Categorization (combining first-cycle codes into -perhaps theoretically informed categories)

	• Exploring patterns in and across codes (for similarities and differences across descriptive and attribute codes)

Note. The table shows the coding method for deriving first-cycle and second-cycle coding and the description of each coding cycle (Adapted from Saldaña, 2015, pp. 59-64). Copyright 2015. SAGE Publishing

The transcriptions were color-coded by assigning the same colors to similar words and phrases across all interviews for Ontario and T&T. Saldaña (2015) explained that codes in qualitative inquiry in which this study is situated are most often "a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (p. 3). After the data were color-coded, words and short text that were the same or conveyed the same meaning were given identical color codes. After this process, an examination of the individual color-coded words and short text was performed. Creswell (2013) suggested using "names that are the exact words used by participants" (p. 185) when coding, as they privilege interpretation and translations by deciphering core meaning from a passage of data, allowing for the decoding, and encoding processes to occur and for determining appropriate codes, labels, and links. Accordingly, coding is not just labeling, "it is linking that leads from the data to the idea, and from idea to all the data about that idea" (Richards & Morse, 2012, p. 137).

The process of immersing oneself in the color-coded data revealed several *first-cycle* codes that generated about 50 first-order descriptive codes. The inductive codes were developed directly from the data allowing for the generation of several codes. The second-cycle coding allowed for higher-level categories and words from the initial color-coded list which allowed for a smaller number of themes and categories (Gioia et al., 2013). The second-order coding allowed for another in-depth engagement with the initial color-coded list which brought the first-

order codes down to 20 codes. The Ontario data were placed in one group with their codes and the T&T in another with their codes. The two sets of data for both cases (Ontario and T&T) then went through another cycle of coding, which allowed for filtering and focusing on salient words and sentences to generate categories, themes, and concepts to grasp meaning (Saldaña, 2015).

Searching for Themes. The third step involves searching for themes is a pattern that captures significant or interesting aspects of the data and the research question. This step involves collating codes into potential themes and requires, "re-focusing the analysis at the broader level of themes" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 20). Collating the data involves sorting the 20 second-cycle into potential themes. In this study, a visual representation like a table was used with each participant placed on the table, after which similar statements were color-coded, grouped, and then given specific codes. This allowed for "thinking about the relationships between codes, themes, and the diverse levels of themes, for example, situating the main overarching themes and sub-themes within them" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 21).

Saldaña (2008) suggested an inductive approach to identifying themes linked to the data. In the inductive approach, data are collected specifically for the research (e.g., via semi-structured interviews). Inductive analysis is, therefore, "a process of coding the data without trying to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame, or the researcher's analytic preconceptions" (Saldaña, 2008, p. 13). The themes presented in this study emerged from the data after the second cycle of coding.

Reviewing Themes. The fourth step examines the initial themes generated in the third step three and reviewed, modified, and developed themes further to fit the context of the study and to observe if the themes were a good fit. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), in this step, it is necessary to think about whether the themes work in the context of the entire data set. This

study reviewed themes to ensure they had enough data as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) who suggested two levels of reviewing and refining themes. Level one involves reviewing the coded data extracts by reading the collated extracts for each theme to observe if they form a coherent pattern. Level two involves examining the entire data set and generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis to consider the validity of the individual themes of the data set. At the end of this step, Braun and Clarke (2006) suggested that one should have "a fairly good idea of what the different themes are, how they fit together, and the overall story they tell about the data" (p. 21).

Defining and Naming Themes. In the fifth step, themes have been defined and further refined with the aim of "identifying the essence of what each theme is about and determining what aspect of the data each theme captures" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 22). Achieving the 'essence' of what each theme is about required going back to the collated data extracts for each theme and organizing them into a coherent and consistent account accompanied by a narrative. In this study, a constant going back to the data was done to ensure the presented theme captured the experiences of guidance counselors' policy enactment at secondary schools in Ontario and T&T. For instance, each theme in this study utilized a detailed analysis by identifying the 'story' each theme told and how it fits the broader context of the data concerning the research questions.

Producing the Report. In the sixth step, Braun and Clarke (2006) suggested that this phase is the final opportunity for analysis which begins when a set of fully worked-out themes are identified. Then, the writing up of the thematic analysis involves "telling the complicated story of the data in a concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive and interesting account of the data within and across themes" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 23). In this study, the write-up is presented within the context of which policy enactment occurred at school using Ball et al. (2012)

typologies for contextual dimension and the policy roles and positions guidance counselors

engaged in at secondary schools in Ontario and T&T.

Finally, in the write-up, themes are discussed and situated within the narratives of

guidance counselors who shared their experiences with policy enactment at secondary schools.

Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that themes need to be "embedded within an analytic narrative

that compelling illustrates the story that the data is telling" (p. 24). Additionally, the analytic

narrative needs to go beyond descriptions of the data and make an argument about the research

questions.

In concluding the thematic analysis discussion, the advantages and disadvantages are

explicitly stated. One of the advantages of thematic analysis is that it provides academic

freedom, but does not require detailed theoretical and technological knowledge, and offers a

more accessible form of analysis, particularly for novice researchers (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The second advantage, as explained by Braun and Clarke (2006) and King (2004), is that

"thematic analysis is a useful method for examining the perspectives of different research

participants, highlighting similarities and differences, and generating unanticipated insights" (p.

2). However, some disadvantages researchers have warned against is the flexibility of thematic

analysis can lead to inconsistencies and a lack of coherence when developing themes derived

from the research data (Holloway & Todres, 2003). To achieve consistency and cohesion in

thematic analysis, researchers have suggested: "applying and making explicit an epistemological

position that can underpin the study's empirical claims" (Holloway & Todres, 2003, p. 2). In this

research, the epistemological positions adopted clarified how the thematic analysis was a good fit

for this study and how the theoretical assumptions outlined here and above as postcolonial

theory, policy sociology, and policy enactment and its variants (policy for text and policy of text) all laid the foundation on which this data analysis emerged.

Establishing Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research

Trustworthiness is often used in qualitative research to refer to the overall quality of the research as opposed to validity or reliability. Creswell (2004) suggested several procedures for establishing trustworthiness or credibility in research; these include triangulation, thick and rich descriptions, audit trail, peer debriefing, prolonged engagement, member checking, and techniques to enhance reflexivity (field journal). This study used three main procedures proposed by Creswell (2009, 2004): triangulation, thick descriptions, and audit trail.

First, triangulation involves using multiple methods of data sources to develop a thorough understanding of the phenomena or experience (Patton, 1999). In this study, both semi-structured interviews and policy documents, along with first impression notes and jottings, were utilized in the data collection. Triangulation of data helps to "reduce bias, as it cross-examines the integrity of participants' responses" (Patton, 1999, p. 277) about the same phenomenon (Pilot & Beck, 2012).

Creswell (2004) proposed the second procedure involving thick and rich descriptions requiring the researchers to describe an action and interpret the action (Devanga et al., 2014). Thick descriptions "enable judgment about how well the research context fits other contexts, allowing for thick descriptive data, and rich and extensive set of details concerning methodology and context in the research report" (Li, 2004, p. 305). In this study, thick descriptions of the case locations, participants, data collection method, and data analysis procedures were all outlined to add credibility and accuracy to the research findings (Anfara et al., 2002). Accordingly, a thick description helps other researchers to replicate the study with similar conditions in other settings

(Anney, 2014). Shenton (2004) argued that "without this insight [thick description], it is difficult for the reader of the final account to determine the extent to which the overall findings ring true" (p. 69).

The third and last procedure used to establish credibility in this study was audit trials, which involve "an examination of the inquiry process… to validate the data, whereby a researcher accounts for all the research decisions and activities to show how the data were collected, recorded, and analyzed" (Bowen, 2009, p. 310). Guba and Lincoln (1982) suggested that raw data, interviews and observation notes, documents, and records collected from the field should be kept for cross-checking for a thorough audit trail. Therefore, an audit trial aims to establish the study's confirmability (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). Confirmability is the degree to which the results of an inquiry could be confirmed or corroborated by other researchers (Baxter & Eyles, 1997). As such, Tobin and Begley (2004) explained that confirmability is "concerned with establishing that data and interpretations of the findings are not figments of the inquirer's imagination but are derived from the data" (p. 392). In this study, to establish confirmability, quotations from the transcripts were used to augment the subjective interpretations which emerged directly from the data.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the methodological approaches that guided this study's data collection and analysis. This study was situated within theories of postcolonial theory and policy sociology domains. Both theories serve to situate this study's ontological and methodological assumptions. The ontological assumption was situated within a critical realism paradigm to understand the realities of individuals and how they experience a single phenomenon. Epistemologically, this research supported a theoretically informed empiricism connecting

theory, research, and social action and the constant dialogue between research and the data it generates. Methodologically, this study drew on policy analysis approaches to investigate policy enactment in Ontario and T&T secondary schools. In this analysis, two concepts were mentioned, analysis for policy and analysis of policy. However only analysis of policy was utilized to understand policy implementation, the reasons policies get developed, and the analytic purpose it is intended to serve.

Conceptualizing the research as a policy enactment study considers the dual process of interpretation and translation of policy texts and how it changes from one context to another through negotiation between policy actors. Policy enactment studies are concerned with the engagement in policy texts and how they become interpreted and translated into practice. Within the policy enactment study, it is essential to interrogate policies as written text and policy as discourse and how they become encoded and decoded in policy work. Furthermore, the influence of such policy enactment study captures the multi-layered way policies become aligned with contextual factors.

The case study design was the most appropriate research design for this study as it allowed for an empirical inquiry into investigating the policy enactment practices of guidance counselors at secondary schools. In addition, the case study allowed multiple data sources, such as semi-structured interviews and policy document analysis, which permitted a multi-faceted analysis of the phenomena. Yin (2009) proposed four conditions that must be satisfied when using the case study research design that allows for an analytic and exploratory type of research and outlines the fit in the use of the case study methodology. Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step approach to data analysis supported by Saldana's (2015) strategies for qualitative coding interviews were theoretically feasible for situating this study.

Chapter 4:

Context of Equity Policy in Ontario and Trinidad and Tobago

Introduction

The chapter constitutes the secondary data analysis of educational equity policies and strategies for Ontario and T&T. The purpose of this analysis is to examine the educational values embedded with broad equity policies such as Ontario's Equity Strategy and T&T Education Sector Strategic Plan and the Draft Education Policy Paper and other educational policies. In these policies especially in Ontario, issues of equity are redefined and identified with a broader neoliberal discourse focusing on the marketization of education and the reform and restructuring of education as in the case of T&T.

The first section examines Ontario's educational equity policies from 1993 to 2009. It discusses the political and social contexts that impacted and influenced the formulation and enactment of these policies at secondary schools. The second section examines T&T's educational equity strategic plans, policies, and mandates dating back to 1993-2017 with the same political and social contexts to understand how these two contexts influenced policy enactment in schools. The section ends with a summary of both cases highlighting the main ideas that emerged from the analysis of the contexts of equity policy development in both locations.

A policy refers to a "process and product, which involves an ongoing production of the text itself… ongoing modifications to the text and processes of implementation into practice" (Taylor et al., 1997, p. 25). When analyzed in their historical context, policies "trace how 'problems' become constructed and defined by particular issues and get to be on the policy agenda" (Taylor et al., 1997, p. 7). Additionally, policies are "dynamic and interactive, and not merely a set of instructions or intentions" (p. 15). Policies should not be analyzed in terms of the

"words written in formal documents but should consider the nuances and subtleties of the contexts which give the text meaning and significance" (Taylor et al., 1997, p. 15). Taylor et al. (1997) assert,

> policies exist in context and do not operate in isolation but materialize historically out of a significant event within a particular ideology and political climate as well as social and economic context by influencing and shaping the timing of policies, including their evolution and outcome. (p. 16)

Additionally, policies framed in specific ways reflect the different contexts (economic, social, political, and cultural) that shape the content and language of policy documents (Taylor et al., 1997). Consequently, equity issues taken up in policies are "highly malleable and change over time according to the political context" (p. 7). In understanding equity policy discourse in Ontario and, to a lesser extent, in T&T, Taylor et al. (1997) considered it as "a symbolic language where terms as 'equity' act as 'condensation symbols' within the cultural context of policies" (p. 7).

This chapter explores equity policies' social and political contexts to understand their impact on policy enactment in Ontario and T&T. Three components proposed by Taylor et al. (1997) situate the discussion. These three components are contexts, texts, and consequences used in analyzing policy documents and texts (Taylor et al., 1997). Contexts examine the forces or factors and values that led to the development of the policy, that is, the social and political factors that influence the policies (Bell & Stevenson, 2006; Taylor et al., 1997). Texts refer to the content of the policy document itself and the careful examination of the verbal message that drives analytical activity (Taylor et al., 1997). Consequences refer to how policy is implemented and considers the diverse ways they are interpreted (Bell & Stevenson, 2006; Cardno, 2018; Taylor et al., 1997).

In Ontario, four educational equity policy documents from the Ministry of Education and School Board A policy were selected and reviewed in this secondary data analysis (see table 4). In addition, the political party governing the Ontario Ministry of Education shows the political influence/impact on the various educational equity policies, by looking at how they emerged, and the purpose they intended to fulfill. For Ontario, no district school board is identified for ethical reasons. Table 4 highlights all the policies reviewed for Ontario's Ministry of Education.

Table 4

Ontario's Ministry of Education and School Board Policy

Agencies	Policy Documents Name	Ontario Political Party during policy formulation
Ontario Ministry of Education		
Ontario Ministry of Education policy	Policy/Program Memorandum No. 119 (1993): Development and Implementation of School Board Policies on Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity.	New Democratic Party (NDP)
Ontario Ministry of Education policy	Realizing the Promise of Diversity: Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy (2009a)	NDP
Ontario Ministry of Education policy	Policy/Program Memorandum No. 119 (2009b): Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Policies in Ontario Schools.	NDP
Ontario Ministry of Education Policy	Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools: Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation (2009c)	Liberal
School Board Policies	School Board A	

The process of the policy document analysis involves carefully reading the text in each policy document to locate issues of equity. Content from the text was extracted systematically from the Ontario Ministry of Education policy documents starting in 1993 and culminating in 2009. The extracted data guides the extended analysis using Taylor et al. (1997) three components as contexts, texts, and consequences. The data analysis in this chapter highlights the intersection between changing socio-political ideologies and situating equity within these contexts to examine how contextual conditions help shape equity policies' implementation in Ontario.

Education Equity Policies in Ontario: Contexts, Texts, and Consequences

The analysis of secondary data, which involves educational equity policies in Ontario, requires an understanding of the background and contexts of policies considering the historical antecedents and how they relate to texts and their consequences to policies in practice (Taylor et al., 1997, p. 44). Educational equity policies in Ontario are a long-standing issue that dates to 1993. In 1993, the Ontario Education Act was amended through a Policy Program Memorandum No, 119: Development and Implementation of School Board policies on Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity. The PPM No. 119 (1993) was passed legislatively in 1992 under the leadership of New Democratic Party (NDP) leader Bob Rae. This policy was one of the more prominent provincial policies developed for Ontario school boards to formulate and implement antiracism and ethnocultural equity policies in their schools by September 1, 1995 (Young, 1995).

The antecedents and pressures observed in Ontario after the implementation of the PPM (119; 1993) were social and political. The increased pressure to address the demographic changes within the Ontario education system, that is, the growth in diverse racial groups and

Indigenous peoples. There were also pressures for removing a Eurocentric curriculum that was perceived to be perpetuating a colonial education model. As such, the government was forced to respond through the articulation of the antiracism and ethnocultural equity policies in Ontario's schools aimed at removing discriminatory policies and procedures that historically disadvantaged and marginalized certain groups of students, for example, Aboriginals and racial and cultural minorities (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1993).

In considering the contexts or the historical antecedents, it is crucial to understand the "historical background of a policy, including the developments and initiatives upon which the policy is built" (Taylor et al., 1997, p. 45). For example, the antiracism and ethnocultural equity policy proposed "an approach to education that considered the perspectives of Aboriginal and racial minority groups into the educational system and its practices" (Davidson, 2009, p. 2). This has led to the commitment of the Ministry of Education in Ontario to provide school boards with the necessary resources to formulate and develop procedures so that "all students are provided with a learning environment that is free of biases, discrimination, and which is equitable" (Davidson, 2009, p. 2). As a result, the Ministry of Education in Ontario adopted a system-wide approach to achieving equity in the education system by removing existing policies, procedures, and practices in the school system that were racist in their impact and intent and which limited student opportunities (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1993). According to Taylor et al. (1997) contexts affect policy production, often distort policy goals in various ways, and impact policy implementation/enactment (p. 50).

At the provincial level, the complexity of enacting federally mandated school policies needs as much direction as possible while allowing for flexibility for school boards and schools to develop their priorities (Taylor et al., 1997). To achieve the level of flexibility school boards

and schools need to address institutional and functional issues such as "curriculum, learning materials, student assessment, and placement, hiring and staffing, race relations, and community relations" (Jaafar & Anderson, 2007, p. 9) an Equity Unit was established. The Equity Unit was intended to "support the work of school boards to make them accountable for their work on equity issues" (Rezai-Rashti, 2003, p. 5). This Equity Unit developed and implemented several strategies, one of the main strategies is the removal of racial and ethnocultural harassment in the Ontario education system (Ontario Ministry of Education, 1993). However, the implementation of the strategies for removing barriers and discriminatory policies suffered setbacks because the school boards at the time did not find a systematic way to implement policies related to equity, antiracism, and ethnocultural practices (Agyepong, 2010). The New Democratic Party government could not fully commission the antiracism and ethnocultural equity policy before they demitted office in 1995 (Parekh et al., 2011). As a result, the policy was perceived a material policy.

When considering the consequences of provincial policies within a federal political structure in which the province has responsibility for running schools, Taylor et al. (1997) suggested that "there is a real potential for distortions and gaps in policy implementation or policy refraction" (p. 50). Additionally, Taylor et al. (1997) asserted that "even without any obvious ambiguities in a policy text resulting from competing interests, as there will be no single interpretation of a policy document which means predicting the effects of policy is never easy" (p. 50). Additionally, when considering measurable consequences/outcomes, Taylor et al. (1997) postulated that "a policy may have all sorts of less tangible impacts or effects on school practice" (p. 51) as such consequences of policies "must consider many levels of the policy process,

interactive top-down and bottom-up relationships, as well as the short and long term of policies" (p. 52).

This system-wide approach for schools and school boards to adopt equity policies brought about the formulation of the *Ontario Equity Strategy*. The formulation of the Ontario Equity Strategy includes three Ministry of Education policies: Realizing the Promise of Diversity: Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy (2009a); Policy/Program Memorandum 119: Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Education Policies in Ontario Schools (2009b); and Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario Schools: Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation (2009c). The first document was released on April 6, 2009 -*Realizing the Promise of Diversity: Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy (2009a),* which presents the Ministry's vision of equity policy and strategies for achieving equity and inclusive education through increasing academic achievement and closing the achievement gap, and increased public faith in the education system.

The historical context that brought about this policy of Ontario Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy (2009a) is intended to empower boards and schools to continue to uphold the standards set out in the Provincial Code of Conduct (PCC), based on the overarching principle of respect for all. The Ontario Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy was also to be implemented within the context of the Education Act of Ontario, and respect for Aboriginal and treaty rights was recognized by the Constitution Act, 1982 (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009a).

The policy text laid out in the PPM No. 119 (2009) was "a vision for an equitable and inclusive education system in Ontario on the basis that: (1) all students, parents, and other members of the school community should feel welcome and respected; (2) every student is supported and inspired to succeed in a culture of high expectations for learning" (Ontario

Ministry of Education, 2009a, p. 12). The policy text also outlines how student achievement is in the Ontario Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy as a policy mechanism for:

> Embracing diversity and moving beyond tolerance to acceptance and respect will help us reach our goal of making Ontario's education system the most inclusive in the world. We believe – and research confirms – those students will feel welcome and accepted in their schools are more likely to succeed academically. (p. 2)

To make the education system equitable and inclusive, the Ontario Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy encourages that "every student is supported and inspired to succeed in a culture of high expectations for learning" (p. 10). This narrative by the Ontario Ministry of Education purports a culture in schools that support equity and excellence. This drive for excellence has shifted the focus of equity outcomes by closing the achievement gap to one that promotes competition and achieving goal standards in global tests as the Programme for International Student Assessment PISA. However, Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy (2009a) proposed several guiding principles for achieving equitable and inclusive education through a foundation of excellence. PPM 119 (2009) focuses on meeting individual needs; identifying and eliminating barriers, promoting a sense of belonging; involving the broad community, and building on and enhancing previous and existing initiatives. The measurable outcome of the Ontario Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy is shared and committed leadership, which ensures that boards and schools play a critical role in eliminating discrimination by identifying and removing bias and barriers. This required commitment from all education stakeholders (Ontario Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy, 2009a).

Another measurable outcome is the establishment of equity and inclusive education policies and practices, supporting learning environments so that all students can feel engaged and empowered by what they are learning from teachers and staff. The goal is for students to feel welcome in the environment in which they are learning. Students, teachers, and staff will learn

and work in a respectful, supportive, and welcoming environment (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009). The last measurable outcome is accountability and transparency, demonstrated through precise success measures (based on established indicators) and communication to the public about student progress toward achieving equity (Ontario Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy, 2009a).

Ontario Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy (2009a) was implemented against the backdrop of more than a decade of neoliberal education policies in Ontario, where issues of accountability and transparency had taken center stage in public and policy discourse on education and had become the symbol of good governance (Hazelkorn et al., 2018). However, Hazelkorn et al. (2018) noted that accountability and transparency have been tied to a neoliberalism agenda in education anchored in global rankings, standardized testing, market and competitive principles, and the excessive valorization of education and how it has become self-serving focusing on (global) reputations rather than providing quality education. The valorization brought about a new directive for student achievement established in Ontario Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy (2009a) through adopting strategies and programs to close the achievement gap across the education system.

However, the implementation of the Ontario Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy (2009a) was accompanied by several challenges primarily because it was seen as containing ambitious implementation strategies with limited resources (Segeren, 2016). It was also perceived as a symbolic policy and political response to pressure for change with abstract goal statements (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). As such, Ontario Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy (2009a) was identified as focusing too narrowly on improving achievement in the form of test scores without, at the same time, addressing the contextual conditions that created

underachievement in the first place, that is the conditions of student life outside of school that impede student success.

The *Policy/Program Memorandum No 119 - Developing and implementing Equity and Inclusive Education Policies in Ontario's Schools (2009b),* was released on June 24, 2009. The context of the PPM No. 119 was that the Ontario Ministry of Education (OME) would develop and implement an equity policy for their schools and the practices for more significant educational equity. The context of the PPM No. 119 (2009b) required that "all publicly funded school boards will review and/or develop, implement, and monitor an equity and inclusive education policy in accordance with the requirements set out in this memorandum and the strategy" (OME, 2009b, p. 3). The document also provided directions to school boards in the way they should develop their equity policy. The goal of the PPM No. 119 (2009) was on "identifying and eliminating discriminatory biases, systemic barriers, and power dynamics that limit the students' learning, growth, and contribution to society" (p. 2).

In addressing this goal, PPM No. 119 has some legislative requirements for replacing the Ministry of Ontario's antiracism and ethnocultural policy by expanding its reach to address factors that can discriminate against students such as "race, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, gender, and class" and how these factors "intersect to create additional barriers for some students" (p. 2). PPM No. 119 also had requirements for school boards to adopt a system-wide approach to equity and inclusive education. The Ontario Ministry of Education proposed eight areas of focus for an equitable and inclusive education system that must be addressed: Board policies, programs, guidelines, and practices; shared and committed leadership; school-community relations; inclusive curriculum and assessment practices; religious accommodation; school climate and the prevention of discrimination and harassment; professional learning; and

accountability and transparency (OME, 2009b). The adoption of "a system-wide approach to identifying and removing discriminatory biases and systemic barriers to help ensure that all students feel welcomed and accepted in school life" (OME, 2009b, p. 3). However, achieving this system-wide approach had challenges due to limited resources from the Ontario Ministry of Education to launch this type of initiative.

The *Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation (2009c),* released in 2009, includes the implementation process, timelines, and resources for school boards (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009c). The context of the guidelines was providing actionable items and implementation timelines for different stakeholders including school boards, schools, and educational stakeholders to assist with policy implementation. In the text of the policy, the overarching goals were to provide "direction, support, and guidance", school boards are required to "develop and implement an equity and inclusive education policy" and each school is required to "create and support a positive school climate that fosters and promotes equity, inclusive education, and diversity" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009a, p. 14).

The Ontario Ministry of Education also established a four-year timeline to allow the development of equity policy and its implementation to occur. This timeline was intended to give school boards adequate time to develop and implement an equity and inclusive education policy and to encourage school boards to meet the Ministry's deadline of September 2009 for policy development and 2010 for policy implementation. Several projects and policies were developed and enacted over those four years. One such program was the Managing Information for Student Achievement (MISA), and boards were to have their equity policy developed. The MISA initiative was created to "increase both provincial and local capacity to use data and information for evidence-informed decision-making to improve student achievement" (Ontario Ministry of

97

Education, 2016, p. n/d). Consequently, a major challenge in developing and implementing such a policy over the four years was the lack of resources and the demand placed on school boards leading to them having to find the existing capacities within their school board to push the work they had to do forward.

The Changing Face of Equity Education in Ontario

Considering the changing face of equity in Ontario, the New Democratic Party (NDP) government could not fulfill the antiracism and ethnocultural policies at school. A change in government from NDP to Conservatives in 1995-2003, run by a Conservative government and Harris, had a significant impact on the development and Implementation of PPM No. 119 (1993). Harris's government "eliminated the Ministry's Antiracism, Equity and Access Division that was established to develop antiracism and diversity programming within Ontario's schools" (Parekh et al., 2011, p. 5). A period within this new government, commonly referred to as the 'Common Sense Revolution, from 1995 to 2003 "was marked by tax cuts, less spending on education, educational reform, and an end to policies such as employment equity" (Joshee, 2007, p. 171).

The Common Sense Revolution reversed all the policies the NDP government would have previously implemented. The focus on equity was put on the back burner by the Conservative government and overhauled as elements of PPM No. 119 (1993), such as "the monitoring of the board's implementation of the policy on Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity 'just died'" (Rezai-Rashti, 2003, p. 6). Additionally, the Conservative government: "Shut down an Anti-Racism Secretariat created by the NDP, and its counterpart in the Ministry of Education abandoned policies aimed at increasing gender equity in educational administrative posts and deleted references to pro-equity goals from future curriculum policy documents" (Jaafar & Anderson, 2007, p. 14)

The new Conservative government focused its agenda on "implementing policies to increase accountability, standardization, and austerity in Ontario's education system" (Campbell, 2021, p. 6; Rezai-Rashti et al., 2017). Consequently, this brought about an ideological shift in education forged by a neoliberal agenda in Ontario (Winton & Pollock., 2013). The ideological shift "reflected market values while prioritizing standardized testing, central governmental control over curriculum, reduced funding, and new forms of public governance that affected how the public valued teachers and education" (Winton & Pollock, 2013, p. 21). This new focus on education by the Conservative government had a pronounced effect on disadvantaged and low-performing students. It resulted in a decline in achievement for marginalized groups, including English Language Learners and students with Special Educational Needs (Leithwood et al., 2003). The change also led to "the emergence of boys as the new disadvantaged group in Ontario, and the erasure of racialized minority students who were replaced by the category of recent immigrant" (Rezai-Rashti et al., 2017, p. 161).

The new focus and adoption of neoliberal strategies into Ontario's education system by the Conservative government from 1995-2003 brought about a "(re)introduction and expansion of academic streaming" (Campbell, 2021, p. 6), negatively impacting racialized students. Minority students were affected by academic streaming that determines the courses a student could choose and the pathways available to them in and beyond school (Parekh et al., 2011). As such, the negative impact of academic streaming "systematically moved students from minority groups and those with disabilities away from obtaining academic opportunities, as the bar for academic success was continually on the rise" (Parekh et al., 2011, p. 6).

Consequently, Ontario's education system re-defined the conception of equity as outlined in PPM No. 119 (1993) to one that was more concerned about new performative standards

related to accountability with a focus on measurements and numbers (Rezai-Rashti et al., 2017).

This focus on new performative standards based on accountability was driven by a neoliberal agenda,

> as comparative performance measures constructed as central to a vertical, one-way, top-down, one-dimensional form of accountability with restrictive and reductive effects on the work of principals and teachers, and on the school experiences of students and their parents. (Lingard et al., 2013, p. 544)

This new orientation shifted the focus in the education system toward high-stake testing and other achievement indicators to analyze student performance measures (Winton & Pollock, 2013).

Energizing Equity Education in Ontario

In 2003, the political climate changed again in Ontario, with the Liberal government assuming office. The Liberal government committed to making education its number one priority. It signaled a new direction for education reform in Ontario by reversing some of the aggressive actions of the previous Conservative government (Sattler, 2012). However, Rezai-Rashti (2009) noted that while many thought the Liberal government would work overtime to reverse the drastic restructuring of Ontario's education system, they reinforced the neoliberal agenda by continuing the same neoliberal values and practices as the Conservatives. Instead, this Liberal government focused its energies on improving the publicly funded education system by partnering with stakeholders in the public and the education sector (Ministry of Education, 2008).

This partnering with stakeholders was for developing and implementing actions to address the new commitment centered around three core priorities: (a) high levels of student achievement, (b) closing the gaps in student achievement, and (c) building public confidence in

publicly funded education (Gallagher et al., 2016). The focus on these three core priorities

proposed by the Student Success Strategy is to make secondary schools more engaging and

relevant by supporting students achieving high levels of skills and understanding across a broad

curriculum. The Student Success Strategy also provided extensive support by funding Student

Success Teams to give extra support to students transitioning from elementary to secondary, and

innovations at the secondary school level that encouraged adults (in their twenties or well into

their working life) to return to school to continue their education (Ministry of Education, 2008).

School Board (A) Adoption of Equity Policy

In adherence to PPM No. 119 (2009), *Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive*

Education Policies in Ontario Schools which required school boards to address discrimination

issues per Ontario Human Right Codes, School Board A adopted such a policy. This school

board was committed to providing a safe school environment that was nurturing and positive for

learning, working, and free of harassment and discrimination, and where students are treated

with dignity and respect (Human Rights Policy Revised Version, 2021). Policy P031 (Toronto

Human Rights Code) and the School Board equity policy were designed to operate in tandem to

remove issues of discrimination and harassment in Ontario schools.

School Board A equity policy is considered all-inclusive. It engages a diverse community

by providing equitable opportunities and access to all students through its programs, services,

and resources, which is crucial for achieving successful educational outcomes at school (Ontario

Ministry of Education, 2009b). The proposed equity policy by this school board was committed

to the goal of the Ministry of Education in the elimination of institutional discrimination by

promoting fairness, equity, acceptance, and inclusion (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009b). As

such, the inclusivity of School Board A reflects the engagement of all stakeholders in removing

discriminatory practices and harassment but also has the mandate to raise student achievement

and reduce achievement gaps. To achieve this goal, School Board A acknowledges that certain

groups in the education system are prone to inequitable treatment as a result of,

> individual and systemic biases, barriers, oppression, and discrimination based on factors
> such as race, color, creed, culture ethnicity, linguistic origin, disability, level of ability
> socioeconomic class, religion, sex, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation,
> citizenship immigration status, family status, and marital status. (Ontario Ministry of
> Education, 2009b, p. 2)

Hence, School Board A problematized inequity in how students are treated and attributed this as

a significant contributing factor to their lack of achievement and total contribution to society.

However, in Ontario, Carr (2008) noted "there remains a plethora of problems and issues

related to equity, diversity, and human rights" (p. 4); especially for students with disabilities who

face significant barriers getting, into, and around schools (Stephens et al., 2015). Other

challenges faced by students with prevalent medical conditions (e.g., anaphylaxis) reported

feeling stigmatized in school settings when they disclose their condition (Dean et al., 2016). As

such, the question remains regarding Ontario's schools mitigating the barriers students face in the

education system.

Trinidad and Tobago Educational Policy and the Education System

T&T is a twin-island republic with a population of 1.399 million (United Nations,

Department of Economic and Social Affairs., 2020). Trinidad is the more oversized island and

Tobago is the smaller island with only a population of 60,000 people. Trinidad has seven school

districts, while Tobago has only one school district (Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Education,

n/d). The researcher analyzed six government Ministry of Education policy documents for T&T.

These policy documents were analyzed using Taylor et al. (1997) framework for critical policy

analysis that examines the policy's contexts, texts, and consequences.

As stated previously, T&T does not have a stand-alone equity policy as in Ontario. However, in T&T, educational strategies and policies that embody equity mandates and strategies are utilized for the analysis in the section. The secondary data analysis for T&T also considers Taylor et al. (1997) three components to understand the contexts, texts, and consequences for the conduct of policy analysis. As mentioned above for the Ontario data, contexts are the political forces influencing the policy process. Texts are the written content of the policy documents, and consequences are how policies are enacted into practice and how they produce outcomes. Policy documents "constitute the official discourse of the state…and are produced by and for the state and serve a political purpose… constructing particular meaning" (Taylor et al., 1997, p. 28). Therefore, policy documents produce communal effects through the production and maintenance of consent.

The education policies reviewed as secondary data originated from the Government of T&T Ministry of Education portal. The Ministry of Education is responsible for formulating and implementing education policies/strategies for the entire country of T&T. However, in Tobago, the Tobago House of Assembly (THA), a subnational level of government, governs the island of Tobago. No THA education policy was reviewed as they were not accessible online to facilitate this process. However, the THA is responsible for education in Tobago, including curriculum development. This responsibility is outlined in the Fifth Schedule of the Tobago House of Assembly (THA) ACT 40:96. The THA Act 40:96 is an act of the Parliament of T&T that gives Tobago executive authority for several areas, including Education and curriculum development.

Table 5 shows the government of T&T Ministry of Education policies (papers and strategic plans) for the period 1993-2017 used in the secondary data analysis. The inclusion of

the names of different political parties in power during the framing of the policies is for understanding the influence of politics on policy formulation in T&T.

Table 5

Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Education Policies

Documents Selected	Policy Documents	Political Party
Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Education		
Government of Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Education	Ministry of Education Policy Paper (1993-2003)	Peoples National Movement (PNM -1991-1995); United National Congress UNC-National Alliance for Reconstruction NAR (1995-2001) PNM (2001-2003)
Government of Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Education	Education Strategic Plan (2002-2006)	PNM
Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Education	Inclusive Education Policy Ministry of Education (2009)	PNM
Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago	Education Sector Strategic Plan (2011-2015)	UNC
Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago	Draft Education Policy Paper (2017-2022)	PNM

Analyzing policy documents considers the contexts of policies in T&T, historically linked to colonial antecedents and political influences. T&T has a long history of developing and implementing education policies and strategies. However, while Ontario has specific equity education policies, this is not the case in T&T. The contexts of education equity policies in T&T are subsumed within more general education policies and strategies. The current epoch of educational policies and strategies in T&T has been shaped by decades of political philosophies based on the changing political landscape, especially in the post-independence period from 1962 and onwards (Blair, 2014; London, 2003). Education policies during this period were primarily shaped by the political party of the People's National Movement (PNM) which governed T&T

continuously for 30 years from 1956 to 1986, led by Prime Minister Dr. Eric Williams for 25 of those years and, upon his death in 1981, George Chambers became the new Prime Minister.

Educational Policy Reforms and Restructuring of Schools

Historically, the context of education in T&T is situated in reforms and restructuring of education and schools from 1980-1985. This period brought about massive reforms in the education system, beginning with expanding the number of schools, especially at the secondary level. This expansion in the number of schools increased schools in rural areas. The political party praised for the development of education is the PNM government, which also expanded the academic curriculum to include technical-vocational studies. Technical education is essential to the need for skilled labor in an expanding local economy (James, 2010). Technical education was geared at giving all students the same opportunities at school and led to the rapid growth and broadening of the education system from one that focused on academic subjects to one that included technical-vocational studies (James, 2013). The curriculum expansion, which included technical-vocational studies at the junior and senior secondary, increased student enrollment from different social and economic backgrounds and ethnic and cultural persuasions.

While the diversification of the education system achieved its primary goal of increasing access to new students, some consequences brought about changes in the academic curriculum, leading to unintended outcomes (Fullan, 1991, 2009). James (2013) noted that the expansion in the curriculum failed to deliver because it did not engender positive academic outcomes for junior and senior secondary school students. Consequently, Fullan (1991) believed that the philosophy underlying educational change in T&T between 1980 to 1985 was complex, as education reform focused on the wrong type of variables (expanded curriculum and school expansion) to engender change in student achievement. However, Fullan (1991) believed that the

105

focus should have been on removing the socioeconomic factors that prevent students from accessing free education and achieving their full potential.

In T&T, the periods between 1991-2003 brought about four changes in government and political ideologies that had significant educational reforms and transformation on the Islands. First, from 1986-1991, the National Alliance for Reconstruction (NAR) took political control of the country after 30 years of PNM governance. The NAR represented a coalition of political parties opposed to the PNM and its ideas. The coalition government began reforms in the education system in the early 1990s led by Prime Minister Arthur Napoleon Robinson. Borrowing elements from a 15-year plan developed by the previous PNM government (1968-1983), the NAR government created a new education plan (1985-1990) focusing on the secondary level of education. The plan laid the groundwork for a secondary school building program to ensure that students, 14 years and older, attending Junior Secondary Schools are accommodated at the upper level of the secondary school system (National Alliance for Reconstruction Manifesto, 1996). However, the NAR government realized they had to continue the educational development on the PNM policy terms because they were locked into the path of education growth and continued expansion at the secondary school levels (National Alliance for Reconstruction Manifesto, 1996).

Consequently, for a second term in office, the NAR government promised a new education plan from 1992-1995 but failed to get the support of the society and lost the election at the polls in 1991 to the PNM. Nevertheless, a significant development in education and its development occurred during this political part reign and the development of an education policy paper that would pave the way for the restructuring of education with a focus on quality or equity in the context of every child having the same opportunity to access education (De Lisle et al.,

2010). However, these researchers explain that quality and equity cannot exist in a postcolonial elitist system that is out of sync with modern education systems with targets of achieving the Millennium Development Goals (De Lisle, 2012). Equity has become a critical concern even for high-quality Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) systems.

The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) suggests that equity issues are even more important for an ambitious state like T&T, where equity becomes intertwined with quality (UNESCO, 2003). T&T faced the challenge of ensuring quality had system expansion, and equity issues have been glossed over despite some promising evidence in the past (Alleyne, 1995; World Bank, 1993, 1995). T&T has attempted to enact a few equity policies in the past decades, but many developed low fidelities. For instance, one of the most successful equity policies is early childhood care and education (ECCE), which led to the establishment of ECCE in many disadvantaged areas in T&T. However, one example of an equity policy with poor implementation strategies is the inclusive education policy which lagged what was proposed in the 1993-2003 Education Policy Paper (Lavia, 2007; Williams, 2007).

Education Policy Paper and Reform in Schools

The context of the Education Policy Paper 1993-2003 was about reform in education after the change of government in 1991 with the PNM forming the government in T&T. This period brought about education policies that focused on enhancing education quality for all students (James, 2010). Education policies during the early period occurred within the context of decreasing educational budgetary allocation as T&T grappled with the effects of reduced revenues due to the global downturn in the price of petrochemicals on the world market (James, 2010). However, using a loan facility from the World Bank, the government of T&T sought to

move the education system into the 21st century (James, 2010) by focusing on restructuring

education planning aligned with a broader vision for society in the 1990s and beyond.

The Education Policy Paper (White Paper) articulates a comprehensive strategy for

restructuring education in T&T. This strategy espouses a philosophy that underscored the

following beliefs:

> That every child has an inherent right to an education that will enhance the development
> of maximum capability regardless of gender, ethnic, economic, social, and religious
> background; that every child can learn and that the education system must build on this
> positive assumption; that children vary in natural ability and that schools, therefore,
> should provide for all students, with programs that adapt to the varying abilities of
> students and which provide opportunities to develop differing and socially useful talents.
> (UNESCO, 2007, p. 6)

The philosophical commitment to every child being provided with the opportunity to

education was driven by the understanding that "the socioeconomic realities … placed a

heightened responsibility on the state to ensure that an efficient and equitable system of basic

education was established and maintained in T&T" (Ministry of Education, 1993, p. 1). The

significant implication of this commitment was a focus on sustainable human resources

development. Accordingly, the Education Policy Paper acknowledged that human resources were

essential to T&T's development and that education was an "urgent, pressing and ongoing need

that required meaningful participation of all" (Ministry of Education, 1993, p. 1).

The text of the Ministry of Education's (1993) Policy Paper proposed a strategy for

human development and made education the focal point of socioeconomic development, as

such, it "placed the education sector at the heart of the development process" (p. 62). For

instance, qualitative changes occurred in the curriculum to establish and maintain the ethical and

moral values necessary for interpersonal and intergroup relationships in an education system that

was multicultural, multiethnic, multireligious, and multiclass (Ministry of Education, 1993). The

intent was to bring about changes in the curriculum, with commitments made in the policy for

the provision of special needs students and early childhood education and development. The change was facilitated by adopting an inclusive education strategy for special needs students, and integrating early childhood care and education services (ECCE) for children three and four years old in the population. To facilitate the inclusion of special needs into the education system, the Ministry of Education (1994), in their Education Policy Paper of 1993-2003, proposed an action plan for the delivery of timely and professional services through,

> mainstreaming of children with special needs, except for severe cases, will be the norm; establishment of diagnostic prescriptive centers to provide the necessary support services to schools, to educate the public at large about their responsibilities, and to provide central administration with information about the training needs for the system; encouraging all schools to develop and articulate plans and programs for children with special needs; enable special schools with financial and technical assistance to continue providing specialized services to students with special needs, and provide schools with access to training programs mounted by the state. (Education Policy Paper, 1993, p. 1)

To facilitate mainstreaming of students with special needs and ECCE into the education system, the Ministry of Education proposed a plan to formulate an Inclusive Education Policy (2009), geared toward the inclusion of students with special needs. The Inclusive Education Plan outlined strategies for developing, formulating, implementing, evaluating, and monitoring the policy. To facilitate the integration of children into the education system, a National Council for Early Childhood Care and Education task force was appointed by Cabinet. This resulted from a proposal in the Education Policy Paper (1993-2003). However, in 2005, a Draft White Paper on the National Policy on Early Childhood Care and Education was published, which included standards for regulating Early Childhood Services to facilitate the integration of children into the education system (Ministry of Education, 2005). In addition, the White Paper was designed to institute onsite management, exceptional education management, decentralization, and school improvement (De Lisle et al., 2010, p. 2).

The Education Policy Paper (1993-2003) was not without criticism, as London (2003) noted that the vision of the White Paper illustrates a significant shortfall expected in educational planning. London (2003) asserted that the paper was a symbolic gesture rather than a reliable instrument for guiding academic development and socioeconomic transformation. Additionally, the White Paper's vision "…was grounded in lessons drawn from past experiences and not current realities" (Ministry of Education Policy Paper 1993-2003, p. 2). Miller (2019), however, argued that the philosophical direction outlined in the Education Policy Paper 1993-2003 was laudable as the government "envisioned an education system that "demarginalizes all and makes the issue of equity a central theme in meeting the educational needs of the student population" (p. 51).

The Ministry of Education Strategic Plan

The Education Sector Strategic Plan (2002-2006) is a policy formulated under PNM with a mandate to continue education reform. The context of the Strategic Plan focused on the "development of every individual through an education system that enabled meaningful contribution within the global context" (Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 32). The intention of the Ministry of Education in formulating the Strategic Plan was "to create a comprehensive and modern education system that is well equipped to provide training and knowledge as well as skills and aptitudes relevant to the development needs of T&T" (p. 40). The text of the policy focused on the development needs with broad approaches to human resources growth as established by the Education Policy Paper 1993-2003. Achieving this goal required rapid changes to the education system and training to " implement education reform for life-long learning, universal secondary education, and greater access to post-secondary education" (De Lisle et al., 2010, p. 3).

The issue of accessibility in T&T had been addressed by De Lisle et al. (2010). De Lisle et al. (2010) argued that the education system in T&T continues to be unequal and uneven because of an "inherited differentiated system" (p. 2) that is overly concerned with the top 20% of high-achieving students. However, to facilitate the delivery of quality education to all citizens, the Ministry of Education should be committed to a seamless transition throughout the education system at every level, not just for high-achieving students (De Lisle et al., 2010). For instance, Vision 2020's operational plan aims to create a seamless, self-renewing, high-quality education system for creating innovative people. Fundamental to the development of innovative people is a seamless education system:

> This ensures that every citizen, regardless of age, experience, or social status, is allowed to access education and thereby become prepared to participate in the development of a modern skills-based economy. Through this system, students at any level can transition smoothly through the education continuum. Pre-primary, primary, secondary, tertiary, technical, and adult education is, therefore, part of a continuous and integrated process. (Trinidad and Tobago Vision 2020 Operational Plan, Section 1, p. 23)

The context, text, and consequences of a seamless education system are pinned to integration and efficiency and removing barriers to learning, which makes the education system equitable. However, this cannot be facilitated in the education system without structures for the inclusion of all students and the support for students at risk and those with special education needs (De Lisle et al., 2010). Therefore, seamlessness embodies linkages and transitions between different levels in the education system that can be horizontal and vertical (De Lisle et al., 2010). Horizontal seamlessness implies equal opportunities for all learners, that is, exposure to the same core curriculum (De Lisle et al., 2010). However, this is not the case in T&T; an education system exists where students are placed into different tracks within the same school or in different schools that reflect their ability groups. Vertical seamlessness suggests that different

transition points provide opportunities for recovery from challenges while moving through the system, from early childhood to primary, primary to secondary, and secondary to post-secondary.

A seamless transition is essential because efficiency and equity issues can hinder progress. A vertical seamless education system is built upon interlocking phases in transition points that foster collaboration on issues and challenges (De Lisle et al., 2010). This suggests that learning is not static or linear; it occurs anywhere and at any time in private and public learning spaces at both the individual and collective levels across different contexts such as in school and outside of school (Kuh, 1996).

Inclusive (Special) Education Policy in Trinidad and Tobago

To facilitate the rights of every child to education (as proposed in both the Education Policy Paper 1993-2003 and the seamless education as presented in Education Strategic Plan 2002-2006), the PNM Ministry of Education formulated and implemented an Inclusive Education Policy (2009). This policy was motivated by UNESCO's proclamation of "Education for All" learners, ratified in 2000 and signed by many countries worldwide (Johnstone, 2010). The Ministry of Education in T&T's adherence to UNESCO's definition of inclusion was seen as progress in addressing and responding to the diverse needs of all learners.

The Inclusive Education Policy was adopted in 2009. It formed the philosophical and legislative basis for providing inclusive education to all students with diverse learning needs in T&T (Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Education, 2009). However, this policy's purpose was geared toward students with disabilities of varying types despite the Ministry of Education suggesting that the Inclusive Education Policy applies to:

> all learners; all educational organizations offering early childhood and secondary education; parents, guardians, and other caregivers; all school administrators and school supervisors, teaching and non-teaching personnel; all divisions, units, and departments

within the T&T Ministry of Education. (Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 3)

The Inclusive Education Policy text was not focused on equity as proposed above; the emphasis was on "those groups of learners who may be at risk of marginalization, exclusion or underachievement (e.g., dropouts, students with learning or other disabilities, gifted and talented students, and students affected or infected with HIV" (Ministry of Education Inclusive Education Policy, 2009, p. 6). However, the philosophy of inclusive education proposed by the Ministry of Education in 2009 has not materialized. The focus on inclusive education in T&T seemed to be designed only for students with special education needs (Johnstone, 2010). Johnstone (2010) further suggested that adopting the inclusive education strategy into the education system did not factor in students with learning challenges associated with cognitive or sensory impairments. As such, Johnstone (2010) explained that although the Ministry of Education was aware that students may have sensory, learning, psychological, and behavioral challenges, the focus on the inclusive education strategy was not on removing or minimizing barriers to learning for all students.

The fundamental principle of inclusive education is that "all children should learn together, wherever possible, regardless of any difficulties and differences they may have" (Eleweke & Rodda, 2002, p. 113). The principle also supports "the integration and education of most students with disabilities in general education classrooms" (Eleweke & Rodda, 2002, p. 113). However, the consequences of implementing inclusive education practices in T&T have been minimal (Pedro & Conrad, 2006), with challenges identified as hindering the total inclusion of all students with or without disabilities in the education system. Other challenges were insufficient resources, inadequate facilities, and a lack of teachers with special education training to facilitate the inclusion mandates (Bergsma, 2000).

The challenges identified by Pedro and Conrad (2006) and Bergsma (2000) are not unique to small island states like T&T. Ainscow and Sandhill (2010) explained that implementing inclusion as a mandate in schools has been a significant global difficulty for education systems. As a result, countries with developing economies, specifically in the Caribbean, experience limitations and frustrations regarding adopting inclusive practices (Tsang et al., 2002). In addition, the lack of appropriate educational support services contributes to students with special needs exiting the school system prematurely, impacting their ability to be productive and engaged citizens (Barton & Armstrong, 2007).

The marginalization of learners with special needs in T&T is a social justice issue that requires the system to cater to these types of learners. Modifications and adaptions in teaching methods, curriculum, strategies, and structures are needed to facilitate the inclusion of special needs in T&T (Williams, 2007). However, adopting these measures can be costly, hindering the integration of exceptional needs learners into the mainstream education system. In addition, the social justice issue is linked to the unequal access of certain groups to resources, activities or agencies, and services to help exceptional learners' needs become incorporated into society (Nakhid et al., 2014).

Since the drafting of the Inclusive Education Policy of 2009 in practice, inclusion has not become attainable (Johnstone, 2010). This is because the Inclusive Education Policy in T&T implementation was problematic (De Lisle et al., 2010). Additionally, the failure of the Inclusive Education Policy in T&T resulted from the lack of accountability and monitoring of the implementation processes (De Lisle et al., 2010). As a result, children in the education system with special needs and disabilities become excluded and marginalized.

Miller et al. (2013) suggested that the main challenge to achieving inclusive education is the ineffective implementation of policies that integrate special education services into the mainstream education system. Likewise, Brown and Lavia (2013) explained that the inclusion of students with special needs into the education system in T&T is not possible "in the absence of specially designed instruction and support facilitating the success and optimum functioning of all students" (p. 52).

In line with this thinking, an Inclusive School Project launched in 2020 by the Student Support Services Division of the Ministry of Education in T&T intended to deliver safe, inclusive, and effective learning environments for all students, regardless of physical, intellectual, social, emotional, or other needs. The Inclusive School Project was implemented in 21 schools across seven educational districts in T&T (Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Education, 2020). The success of this new initiative is not yet ascertained at the time of this study as there is no report made accessible to the public from my Google search.

Gaps in Inclusive Education

In T&T and the Caribbean, by extension, there is limited research concerning the state of inclusive education (Armstrong et al., 2005; Blackman et al., 2012; Charran, 2016, 2018; Johnstone, 2010; Pedro & Conrad, 2006). This gap in Caribbean-specific research on inclusive education is a significant issue, as current studies do not account for the abundance of barriers that the Caribbean faces (Armstrong et al., 2005). Therefore, implementing inclusive strategies and proposed frameworks remains inadequate for developing economies (Hardy & Woodcock, 2015). This inadequacy in the implementation of the inclusive education policy was a poorly executed equity policy and the inclusive education policy priorities as proposed in the 1993-2003 White Paper (Lavia, 2007; Williams, 2007) were never implemented.

Consequently, in 2021, there are still barriers to access and inclusion in the education system for students with diverse types of disabilities in T&T; hence, these children attend special schools (Cambridge et al., 2006). Given these barriers, Charran (2016) labeled the inclusive education strategy by the Ministry of Education in T&T a 'dream in progress' (p. 1), which might be attainable in years to come. Johnstone (2010) and Lavia (2007) echoed similar sentiments about the inclusive education strategy as proposed by the T&T Ministry of Education, i.e., it was emblematic as it did not achieve its intended outcome, which was to provide a seamless education system from early childhood to post-secondary, accessible to all students, including students with disabilities (Johnstone, 2010).

Education Development Agenda

The development of the T&T Education Sector Strategic Plan (2011-2015) emerged under the tenure of the United National Congress (UNC) government. The Education Sector Strategic Plan was a mid-term agenda covering October 2011- September 2015. The Education Sector Strategic Plan reflected "the national education development plan and commitments to regional and international prerogatives in the achievement of the Education for all (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG)" (p. xiii). Adopting the MDGs is significant as it enables T&T to align itself with regional and global initiatives in pursuing a common goal of equitable education for all. The Education Sector Strategic Plan is premised on the idea that "every child has an inherent right to access education regardless of gender, ethnicity, social, economic and religious backgrounds" (Education Sector Strategic Plan, 2011-2015, p. ix). The purpose of the Education Sector Strategic Plan (2011-2015) was to "educate and develop children who can fulfill their full potential; which are healthy and growing normally;

116

academically balanced; well-adjusted socially and culturally; and emotionally mature and happy" (Ministry of Education, 2011-2015, p. ix).

The commitment to make the education system equitable for all citizens despite their gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic, and religious backgrounds is an essential tenet to the T&T society, given that it is multiethnic, multicultural, and multireligious. The philosophy of equity emphasizes the centrality of ethics and moral values. The focus on ethics and moral values is embedded in the curriculum and relates to how students learn to become good citizens (Ellis, 2002). The Education Sector Strategic Plan values-based policy is constructed so students can understand why values are necessary for facilitating an education system in a society that produces spiritually, morally, and emotionally sound individuals who can contribute holistically to the development of society (Subran, 2007).

The Education Sector Strategic Plan outlines 12 guiding principles predicated on the belief that education must include the following areas: student-centered; engaged communities; inclusivity; proactivity; shared responsibility; innovation; flexibility, equitability; accountability; transformative leadership; quality and teachers' empowerment (Education Sector Strategic Plan 2011-2015, p. 3). Some of the principles focus, specifically on students. Principle one states that the education sector must be student-centered and that students should be at the center of everything. Principle three states that the education sector must be inclusive and that all students should learn in a welcoming environment, regardless of place, culture, or learning needs. Principle eight states that the education sector must be equitable by ensuring that every student benefits from high-quality learning opportunities. According to the Ministry of Education, these student-driven principles are deemed necessary for equitable education in T&T so that all students will have the same access to quality education (Education Sector Strategic Plan, 2011-

2015, p. 3). This strategic plan set the stage along with the foundation education policy paper of 1993 to usher in a new focus for achieving quality and equity education in Trinidad and Tobago.

Draft Education Policy Paper

The Draft Education Policy Paper (DEPP; 2017-2022) was proposed by the Peoples National Movement after they replaced the United National Congress in government in 2015. The Draft Education paper was released in September 2018 by the Ministry of Education in T&T. The Draft Education Policy Paper 2017-2022 and the Education Sector Strategic Plan 2011-2015 have similar overarching missions for education in T&T: to educate all learners to achieve their fullest potential and be productive contributors to society. In addition, both the Draft Education Policy Paper and the Education Sector Strategic Plan focus on the previous Education Policy Paper 1993-2003 White Paper on the philosophy of education in T&T.

The purpose of the Draft Education Policy Paper texts is to guide the "policy direction and strategic actions in the formulation of programs, projects and action plans for early childhood care and education (ECCE), and the primary, secondary, technical/vocational and tertiary education sub-sectors" (p. 13). The Draft Education Policy Paper "articulates clear, comprehensive and wide-ranging policy recommendations and initiatives intended to provide the strategic direction necessary to guide our programs, projects, and action plans for five years" (p. 1; Trinidad and Tobago Draft Education Policy Paper 2017-2022). The consequences of the Ministry of Education Policy Paper 2017-2022 are "to educate learners to achieve their full potential so that they can become productive citizens who are imbued with the characteristics of resilience, goodwill, honesty, respect, tolerance, integrity, benevolence, civic pride, social justice, and community spirit" (Draft Education Policy Paper 2017-2022, p. 11).

Section 4 (p. 67) of the Draft Education Policy Paper 2017-2022 outlines the policy context in which the Ministry of Education in T&T wants secondary schools to address equity issues in the classroom, that is, ensuring access to formal education for all students with the focus on providing quality education. The main areas in achieving quality and equitable education, as outlined in the Draft Education Policy Paper 2017-2022, are based on removing inequity in the standard of education delivered across public schools throughout T&T: "Inequity in the system of placing students leads to stratification throughout the system; and lack of inclusivity, equity, and learning for special needs education and gifted students" (Ministry of Education, n/d, p. 4)

Removing the barriers listed above is vital for achieving the Millennium Developmental Goals on education established by OECD (Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Education, 2017). Therefore, the Draft Education Policy Paper 2017-2022 intention is to guide the actions of the Ministry of Education to advance educational development in T&T and to deal with issues of inequity in the education system.

Chapter Summary

This chapter focused on equity policies in Ontario and education sector strategic plans and policy papers in T&T. The policy document analysis followed Taylor et al. (1997) framework that includes three major components: context, text, and consequences. The components were used to address both the macro and micro levels of policymaking. At the macro level, in Ontario and T&T, policymaking is managed at the provincial and national government levels respectively, while at the micro-levels, policies are enacted at the point of secondary schools and in the classroom (Taylor et al., 1997). Analysis of policy documents

formulated at the macro level focused on the broader social and political aspects of policy and how they impact the micro level of enactment at schools and the classroom.

The context, text, and consequences of policy document analysis in this chapter for Ontario and T&T were framed within issues of neoliberal globalization, educational reform, school reconstruction, human development, and quality/equity debate. The intent of examining policy documents using Taylor et al. (1997) is to understand how contexts affect policy production and how it can "distort policy goals in various ways thereby having a genuine impact on policy implementation" (p. 50). The analysis of policy text/content focused on "answering the how and what questions of the policy" (p. 47). This involves addressing the values and principles of the policy and the goals it intended to achieve. The consequences focused on the impact of these policies and the potential outcomes of policies in achieving their goals.

Ontario's educational equity policies were formulated and enacted to fulfill a more prominent role in making the education system equitable for all students, through the signing on and adoption of system-wide equity policies such as the Ontario Equity Strategy (2009). Such policies aim to help schools and policy actors remove discriminatory bias and systemic barriers to facilitate the achievement and well-being of all students (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009). Systemic barriers related to racism, sexism, homophobia, and other forms of discrimination may prevent students from achieving their full potential.

In T&T, policies are symbolic, and the intention of policy texts is not always considered. One such policy is the Inclusive Education Policy (2009), which promises that all students are expected to learn together regardless of difficulties and differences. However, integrating most students with disabilities into regular classrooms is impossible in T&T. Hence, students with special needs attend segregated 'special schools' (Eleweke & Rodda, 2002, p. 113) because

inclusive education practices in T&T are not amenable to the inclusion of all students with or without disabilities.

To conclude, the analysis of educational policies using Taylor et al. (1997) provided the opportunity to understand the influence of politics and the social impact on educational policies, particularly how the longevity of policies is based on political party ideology, because every new successive government has a new plan to fulfill. However, one of the challenges in analyzing educational policy documents is the lack of actionable items and accountability measures to gauge successful implementation. This challenge is particularly acute in T&T. Notwithstanding this challenge, Taylor et al. (1997) noted that symbolic policies are never unimportant as they have "a strategic function in legitimizing the views of certain groups and altering the political climate in which issues are discussed" (p. 34).

Chapter 5:

Educational Equity Policy Enactment in Ontario Secondary Schools

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of a cross-case policy enactment study at secondary schools in Ontario. The chapter has two sections. The *first section* discusses the contextual factors that facilitate the enactment of educational equity policies at secondary schools. The discussion draws on Ball et al. (2012) typology of policy enactment. The contexts discussed within this chapter include situated contexts, professional cultures, material contexts, and external contexts. The *second section* discusses the types of policy actors or positions that guidance counselors assumed in the policy enactment process at school.

Policy enactments focus on how policies become 'live' and get enacted (or not) in secondary schools (Ball et al., 2012, p. 1). This enactment occurs through "jumbled, messy, contested creative, and mundane social interactions called the 'policy activity' of negotiations and coalition building that somehow links text to practice" (Colebatch, 2002, p. 2).

In this cross-case policy enactment study, the units of analysis were secondary schools because they function as "precarious networks of different and overlapping groups of people, artefacts and practices" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 144). Secondary schools were chosen as the units of analysis to understand the complex nature of this "single system that comprises multiple interacting parts" (Ball et al., 2011, p. 144). As such, schools are "organic organizations that are, in part at least, the product of their contexts" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 145). Therefore, what occurs in schools is the way policy is "configured and reconfigured" (p. 637) to extend the durability of the institution in the face of destabilizing effects of context, change, and policy (Ball et al., 2011).

The Context of Policy Enactment in Ontario

The contextual conditions that shape policy within schools act as "constraints, pressures, and enablers of policy enactment" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 19). Positioning contexts in policy enactment is an analytic device for making decisions (Singh et al., 2014). Examining the context in which policy is enacted into practice is necessary for understanding what facilitates or constrains enactment (Braun et al., 2011). The contextual dimensions allow researchers to understand the complex ways educational equity policies are enacted within and across schools (Bernstein, 2000). Consequently, a focus on the contextual dimensions is necessary for theorizing enactment and understanding the inter-relatedness and inter-connectedness between policy actors, policies, and the context that influences the enactment process (Ball et al., 2012). The typology presented by Ball et al. (2012) "systemically collates and maps different aspects of the context under the following headings: situated contexts, professional contexts, material contexts, and external contexts" (p. 19).

Situated Context

The situated contexts "historically and locationally links boards and schools which considers the school setting, its history, and intake" (Braun et al., 2011, p. 588). Accordingly, in this research, it was necessary to understand the historical context in which equity policies in Ontario become formulated and linked to schools impacting their history, setting, and intake (Ball et al., 2012). In Ontario, policy enactment in secondary schools derives from the Ministry of Education, Policy/Program Memorandum (PPM) No. 119: Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Policies in Ontario Schools (2009b). PPM No. 119 (2009b) is a system-wide approach for identifying and removing systemic barriers and discriminatory practices in Ontario's education system (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009). In addition, PPM No. 119

(2009) and the Ontario Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy (2009a) mandate that all 72

school boards create and implement their equity policies and administrative procedures. As a

result, school boards should have the tools to remove biases and barriers that limit students'

learning at secondary schools (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009).

Equity policies in Ontario serve as "guiding principles that set direction within school

boards while administrative procedures allow schools to implement Equity and Inclusive

Education strategies" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009, p. n/d). One school board that

adopted the measures and procedures for Equity and Inclusive Education in Ontario is the

Toronto District School Board premised on:

> Equality of opportunities and outcomes for all by responding fair and proportionally to the needs of individuals. Equity is not the same as equal treatment because it recognizes a social-cultural power imbalance that unfairly privileges some while oppressing others and therefore focuses on redressing disparity, meeting individual needs to ensure fair access, outcomes, and participation that results in equality, while acknowledging historical and present systemic discrimination against identified groups and removing barriers, eliminating discrimination and remedying the impact of past discrimination and current oppression. (Equity Policy, P037, 2018, p. 30; Appendix A)

The excerpt above encapsulates what school boards in Ontario must do to facilitate

Equity and Inclusive Education in their schools. The institutional history embodies longstanding

issues of equity in Ontario school boards and schools. The school board was purposefully

selected in this study because of its legacy with equity work and policies in the Ontario education

system.

Historical Antecedents of Schools. The history of Ontario's schools is the fabric of the

education system, thus, impacting equity and the policy process in diverse ways (Parekh et al.,

2011), "causing school histories to become 'alive' within the collective consciousness" (Ball et

al., 2012, p. 26). In this collective consciousness, guidance counselors explain that equity has

become: "a buzzword as all schools are doing it and putting more effort into it, but it has become

124

somewhat of a slogan" (Judy, p. 10; Jen, p. 12). However, participants in this study discussed the symbolic nature of equity policy in Ontario which has led to the slow pace at which equity is practiced at school as: "aligned to the schooling model that existed within a colonial approach to schooling operating in the past" (Dawn, p. 10; Judy, p. 8). According to Lavern "It is a colonial model, on which schools are built upon, because the schooling model, you know, has stayed the same for a significant period, even though many other things within our society have shifted" (Lavern, p. 7). This anecdote addresses the influence of school histories operating within a lingering colonial model impacting education and formal schooling in Canada that dates to Indigenous Education (Neeganagwedgin, 2013).

These colonial values and beliefs played a decisive role in schooling through "the impact of real and present colonial policies in Canadian schools" (Neeganagwedgin, 2013, p. 2). According to Smith (1999), many education institutions still function as if they were operating within the era of colonialism, now packaged as modern colonialism. Schools are, therefore, perceived as "places of multiple identities, interconnected histories, shifting and diverse material conditions" and a place "in which new oppressions are formed" (McConaghy, 1998, p. 121) in education systems. The *new colonialism* (McConaghy, 1998); observed in the modern-day education system is disguised within schools as "discriminatory biases and systemic barriers" (Ontario Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy, 2009a, p. 7), and experienced by specific diverse student populations. Given these concerns, the Ontario Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy (2009a) proposed that the promise of diversity must respect and value differences, along with removing discriminatory practices and barriers. Considering the goal of the Ontario Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy (2009a), guidance counselors pointed to the work being done in Ontario to date with the promise of diversity. As Lavern explains:

We still have much work to do; we still do anti-Black racism work and anti-indigenous racism work within our building and build it into the curriculum and the community events and build it into our staff meeting agenda. However, there is still a huge responsibility and a substantial learning piece for people that identify as white or believe themselves to be white. (p. 8)

The view advanced suggests that there is the need for a continued commitment by the

school boards to ensure that "school systems built on the principles of anti-oppression, anti-

racism, non-discrimination, equitable and inclusive education" (Equity Policy, P037, p. 3).

However, guidance counselors are skeptical about whether an equitable and inclusive education

system is possible in Ontario. As explained by a guidance counselor:

We are focusing a little more on anti-racism, anti-Asian hate, and anti-oppression. We are focusing on those three issues because these are dominant in the media right now, and we are open to starting these conversations, as this is just a start. (Enez, p. 5)

This commitment by policy actors and schools within the Board in Ontario toward the

removal of anti-racism, anti-Asian hate, and anti-oppression in the education system is essential

as the demography of students is changing because of exponential growth in the diversity of the

student population. The influx of refugees and other permanent residents to Canada has also

contributed to this diverse population growth. The population growth has implications for equity

practice within secondary schools. Frankie expresses his views about equity at his school:

We are getting by mediocrely [with equity work]. Right now, it is about Indigenous; two years ago, it was all about Black Lives Matter. It is like waves, and we are not solving the issue, but how do we cover it up? How do we make it look like we are doing something? However, we keep coming back to the same problems. So, you are not solving the problem right. I do not think they [school administration] are doing a good job. I also do not think it is enough to say we will pass a few more Black or Native students, or we will give them some jobs and make them teachers. Not just making these little blanket statements into learning, but looking at the community, bringing in role models as representation matters, and helping people from those communities get involved in the schools is essential. (p. 15)

The views expressed above by Frankie provided insights into how school history

influences equity work within institutions where the student population and the population of

stakeholders are not diverse. For example, a guidance counselor spoke about how school facilitates equity:

> Within my school, I would say that they are not doing enough, it is an ongoing conversation, and they are certainly on a journey, and it is a good journey. However, they are doing an excellent job and do not know if anyone will ever finish with the vital work that is equity. (Laura, p. 19)

Examining the situated context of a school is crucial because it links the historical and locational contexts of schools to the work of school boards while considering its setting and student intake (Braun et al., 2011, p. 588). The situated context examined antecedents that have historically impacted education and linked them to present-day happenings while advancing the same challenges of the past in the education system now re-packaged in new ways and perpetuated in present-day professional cultures in schools.

Professional Cultures

The professional culture examines teachers' [guidance counselors] "values, commitments and experiences and policy management within schools, asking whether and how they feed into policy enactments" (Ball et al., 2011, p. 591). Schools have "distinct sets of professional outlook and attitudes that make certain policy responses more or less possible" (Ball et al., 2011, p. 591) by examining the "ethos, teachers' values and commitments within schools; shape policy enactment" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 26). As such, professional cultures at the school level mediate the value and commitment of policy actors. For example, some guidance counselors highlight the issue of professional culture in schools within the context of teacher hesitancy and how it contributes to the lack of commitment to facilitating equity work.

Hesitancy in Policy Enactment. Hesitancy in policy enactment occurs from the complex relationship between policy and practice at sites of "contestation or struggle" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 2) contributing to the complex ways policies get enacted into practice through the messiness and

fragmentation process of policy work (Ball, 1993). In addition, schools have a "distinct set of

professional cultures, outlooks, and attitudes that inflect policy responses in particular ways"

(Ball et al., 2012, p. 27). Thereby, contributing to teacher hesitancy and broader conversation

about why some teachers do not engage in equity work in their practice. Enez explains:

> Teachers are hesitant in approaching equity topics because they do not want to offend or
> say the wrong thing. Although they want to take up the conversation, [teachers], do not
> think they are competent enough in talking about equity and do not want to make any
> mistakes around it. (p. 6)

As observed in the narrative, teacher hesitancy results from the lack of interest in

facilitating equity work at secondary school. The hesitancy/reluctance in adopting equity work

has "bedeviled education policy enactment…and at the same time reproduced and legitimized

complex social divisions and inequalities in schools." (Ball, 2018, p. 1). Hesitancy with moving

[equity] conversations forward in schools brings about discomfort. According to a guidance

counselor: "Many teachers are uncomfortable talking about equity questions, so we had some

situations where teachers will not get involved." (Jen, p. 9). Jen further explains:

> I was on the equity committee, and we were doing workshops with kids in the classroom.
> So, I ensured I went into the classes where teachers were uncomfortable talking about
> equity to understand how they were talking about it [equity] to kids. (p. 10)

Teachers' hesitancy to engage with equity work can stem from a professional culture that

does not value broader "socio-cultural and linguistically diverse issues" (Lee, 2003., p. 475).

This hesitancy might be because students from diverse languages and cultures bring their

previously constructed knowledge and cultural values to the classroom; therefore, providing

equitable learning opportunities can be challenging (Lee, 2003). One way to counter this

challenge is to place equity rather than the culture of schools at the center of the sociocultural

and linguistically diverse issues (Gorski & Swalwell, 2015). A guidance counselor explains:

If I am working with a student and trying to be equitable and present what the student wants to do. However, the student does not want to go into math and sciences, but their parents say they must, despite the student's passion for going into trades. (Dora, p. 14)

The issue explained by Dora points to the tensions in professional culture within schools with "educational values and philosophy, and how policies are pursued" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 27). The narrative also addresses the challenge for guidance counselors in navigating the dissonance in expectations between students' aspirations and parents' expectations. The solutions to these issues that guidance counselors navigate are "not necessarily coherent nor do they go uncontested within schools" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 37). Therefore, there is a struggle to meet students' needs simultaneously with policy positions and parents' intentions at school. To move equity work forward and address the hesitancy of some teachers, collective decision-making with the involvement of teachers and other stakeholders is required. Some schools have achieved this through the formation of Equity Committees. Enez explains:

So, we are an equity committee of about 20 staff, but we split into subgroups. We have one group that is focusing on equity. My group is focusing more on what the staff needs to help teachers in the classroom discuss equity issues. (pp. 4-5)

The professional cultures where schools put Equity Committees in place to manage equity discourse are essential as it drives equity work. A guidance counselor explains how equity work is moving at her school:

You have individuals willing to move equity forward and are trying to understand, but then you have others who are not trying because they are still in a place where they feel you are blaming them. So, they are saying they are blaming me for this, but I did not do it. So, there is that sense of that? So, it is slowly moving forward, very slowly. However, moving forward depends on who is teaching it [equity] in the building. (Dora p. 7)

The anecdotes from Enez and Dora provide insights into how collective decision-making could contribute to school policy work. First, collective action might play a critical role in policy enactment because policies do not come into schools as finished products; policies need to be interpreted and translated by local actors (Ball et al., 2012). Second, collective action moves

129

equity work forward through Equity Committees by providing internal training for policy actors within schools to manage policy enactment practices. Third, the training facilitated through professional development (PD) sessions outlines strategies for engaging with equity work and enacting equity policy into practice. As Lavern explains: "I find that the training that goes alongside [equity] policies, or the memorandum, are more integral, and we have the professional development that helps turn those policies into valuable, you know, meaningful conversations to help our students" (p. 9).

Professional development is important to professional cultures at school because it supports policy management (Ball et al., 2012) and ensures that policy actors such as teachers and guidance counselors receive the necessary training. The intent of the training would bring about outcomes reflected in their "assessment, evaluation, and placement practices" (Equity Policy, P037, p. 13). Continuous professional training improves the "knowledge, attitudes, and skills of teachers and other support staff on an individual level," so they can, in turn, influence the learning outcomes of students (Guskey, 2002, p. 382). For example, a guidance counselor with a long career as a teacher and guidance counselor stretching over three decades shared her thoughts about the evolution of the ethos of her school and how it shaped policy enactment, which occurred through professional development training. Dora explains:

> In my teaching, I have had years and years of PD on equity. Moreover, the focus has changed from just making sure everybody has what they need to now look at personal bias and history and see where their own life story is being placed on students. (p. 6)

The anecdote spoke of the evolution of training on equity and how the focus has shifted over the years away from meeting the needs of students to biases and imposing the same on students. However, schools' professional cultures have limitations, as there can be "potential dissonance between embedded institutional values and national policy trends" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 27). This disconnection between institutional values and what policy gets taken up into

130

practice. Lavern laments that the Board "craft PD sessions based on the policies, and then we

[guidance counselors and teachers] put them into practice." (p.12). Lavern further explains,

> I have noticed that you self-select into professional development training. So, if I am
> interested in that learning [equity] I sign up to participate. In addition to the issue of self-
> selecting, scheduling, funding, and time constraints, lack of training has contributed to
> attendance in PD sessions. (p. 12)

Lavern continues "when PD sessions are scheduled during the day and you (guidance

counselors and teachers) are tasked to be in the classroom, you can not be in two places at

once."(p. 18). So, when scheduling PD training, "administrators need to facilitate release time

and provide occasional teachers to cover classes, so teachers can go do professional

development." (Lavern, p. 18). Another critical issue in scheduling professional development

training is the funding to put this measure in place.

> I think these sessions should be offered at different times of the day, so interested people
> can take part. This will ensure that there is funding because it is hard to teach and be at a
> professional development session if they are both happening simultaneously.
> (Lavern, p. 18)

The issues raised above by the guidance counselors speak to the benefits and challenges

of professional development training. Some issues are individual, like teachers' reluctance and

unwillingness, and other issues are administrative. If these issues are included in professional

development training for staff, all facilitators in the classroom might be comfortable addressing

topics such as "racism, discrimination, human rights in a culturally responsive and socially

sensitive manner" (Equity Policy, P037, p. 13). This will ensure that all students receive the

necessary and timely information that supports their well-being and achievements at school.

Acknowledging Biases in Professional Cultures. Drawing on the professional culture,

commitment, and experiences at school (Ball et al., 2012) requires that teachers [guidance

counselors] be introspective in their practice and acknowledge that they are operating from a

position of power and privilege. Teachers also need to understand the biases they bring to policy

work at school. Jen explains:

> So, we are working in a system [Education], and people are in positions of power and boards, principals, teachers, and they do not want to give up any of their power or control because it works well for them. However, if they must relinquish that control, that is not easy. That is where the biases exist and the challenging work of confronting their biases so systemic changes can occur. (p. 9)

The narrative above addresses broader institutional issues that point to how power is

framed within policy discourse and taken up within policy enactment (Maguire et al., 2015). The

decision to implement a particular policy issue is influenced by those who hold power and

authority (Tamtik & Guenter, 2019). Acknowledging bias exists in the education system that

people operate within is necessary so that it is checked and not imposed upon others. Dora (p.5)

explains: "Bias exists in the system, and it is important that as a guidance counselor, I do not

impose it [my bias] on students that I work with." Accordingly, acknowledging bias requires

recognition of one's biases in policy work and enactment at school. Mary explains further about

the bias people hold:

> Being aware first of [their] own bias, I try (sic) to check in with the bias by being aware of my identity, and my privilege. I must try as I can only do what I can do. So, I try to be aware of my bias all the time when I am working with students and colleagues. So, for me, it means trying harder. (pp. 9-10)

The anecdote above captures the dichotomous relationship between power and privilege

and how it fosters biases in the student population, especially people of color. Acknowledging

biases allows "policy actors to recognize how policies are seen and understood and how policy

enactment is dependent on 'where' you are figuratively and literally" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 28).

Acknowledging biases is also closely connected to reflexivity. Reflexivity is "a self-monitoring

of, and a self-responding to, our thoughts, feelings, and actions" (Corlett & Mavin, 2018, p. 4).

By allowing a person to reflect on their unconscious or conscious biases within the education

system and to also think about what they bring to their school policy enactment practice. Jen explains: "I just think if you do not even realize the harm that you've caused, then you do not realize how your bias has affected those kids" (p. 17).

The sentiment expressed by Jen supports the call for teachers [guidance counselors] to be cognizant of their positions of power, the biases they bring to the classroom, and the problems they can create for students. Jen laments:

> It is infuriating to have teachers do things to kids, and kids do not even realize that they are doing it. They [teachers] do not realize that their intent and impact [on students] are entirely different. If we are in a [education] system and talking about equity, we must challenge the system [so all students will have the same opportunities]. (p. 18)

The narrative address broader issues in the education system that address issues of discriminatory practices that marginalizes certain groups of students. The narrative also points to the lack of measures in place to ensure students get the same opportunities as their counterparts at school. The narrative also addresses accountability by teachers for their practice and how they treat diverse student populations.

The discussion on acknowledging biases also suggests that policy actors should reflect on their actions at school and become more aware of their practices or how personal bias contributes to their enactment of equity policies. Dora explains:

> My experience is very different from that of some students I am dealing with. So, I need to understand where they are coming from so that I do not put my bias on them because if I put my bias on them, then I am making assumptions, conclusions, and judgments, and it is not my place to judge anything at all. (p.4)

Dora's quote above provides an entry point for understanding how guidance counselors' awareness of their lived experience can impact students through their practice. It also provides insight into the struggle some guidance counselors face in setting these lived experiences aside to approach issues affecting students in the system with a new lens. Jen, another guidance counselor explains,

It is like challenging the biases of teachers towards students because I have many kids come in [my office] and they will be upset about something that happened in their classroom. Students feel like they have been unjustly treated [by teachers], and that kind of stuff.
(p. 3)

Changing teachers' biases towards students in the classroom requires a more broad-based approach at the Board and school levels. This approach could inform the bigger conversation that calls for removing discriminatory practices and biases at schools (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009). Teachers are considered reflective professionals in their practice (Ryan & Bourke, 2013), but this is not always the case. Mary explains:

Teachers are trying to set up equitable situations [in the classroom]. They are trying and questioning their practice to a certain extent. However, teachers must build stronger family relationships and try to understand the kids. I think many of the teachers we have do not understand the complexity of students' lives. Our teachers are very academic-focused, so honestly, sometimes they do not get to know the kids. But why can't they sit at the table? There are so many assumptions [about equity], but we can educate them [teachers who are unaware]. (pp. 11-12)

The anecdote above highlights the need for teachers to be critical in their practice and question their assumptions about reality, their actions, and their ethics to understand how this impact their ongoing practices (Cunliffe, 2004). In addition, this critical approach will allow policy actors to reflect on their biases and how it influences how they act to develop knowledge about their actions (Cunliffe, 2004).

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy. In the professional culture of policy actors (teachers and guidance counselors), culture emerged as a point of discussion. Acknowledging the multicultural demographics of Ontario schools and the challenges of meeting the varied needs of the diverse student population requires the creation of a culturally responsive pedagogy that can level the playing field for all students. Culturally responsive pedagogy promotes the value of understanding the cultural frames of reference for diverse student populations so proper

engagement of students can occur in a meaningful way so that learning can change educational conditions (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2001).

According to Frankie, "the cultural frame of reference allows for the creation of an even playing field, so marginalized and disadvantaged students, will have the same opportunity to learn in an environment that is accommodating and sensitive to their multicultural learning needs" (p. 7). Similar sentiments expressed by another guidance counselor Mary who alluded to the creation of: "a positive learning school environment that is inclusive of diverse pedagogy that creates the opportunity for balancing the playing field [for students] because, there are privileges out there in the system, and the job is to help [students] manage the inequalities. However, I also must step back and listen because what I think is inequity, they do not think it is inequity" (p. 10).

A culturally responsive pedagogy will also enable teachers to acquire a basic understanding of students' cultures and histories (Nicol & Korteweg, 2010). This understanding is essential for helping teachers develop "a socio-cultural consciousness toward educational transformation" (Nicol & Korteweg, 2010, p. 183). As noted by guidance counselor Dora "the cultural background of students and their lived experiences is crucial and needs to be understood by teachers" (p. 3).

Within the professional culture of teachers and other policy actors at secondary schools, particularly within the context of equity, culturally responsive pedagogy "facilitates and supports the achievement of all students in the classroom, promotes effective teaching and learning in a culturally supported, learner-centered context" (Richards et al., 2007, p. 1). Hence Dora explains: "It is essential that students' cultural background be considered in how they are taught and engaged within schools" (p. 4).

The multicultural demographics in which schools in Ontario exist require school boards to incorporate the cultural considerations of their student population. The cultural considerations include students' expectations of themselves and parents' expectations of their children. Judy (p. 7) explains:

> I know that if I have a brown kid in front of me, and they're doing crappy in science, their parents are likely disappointed in them beyond how I could ever understand. So, there is some cultural understanding there as well and helping them [students] sort of maneuver and help them figure out how to get where they want to go with either too many expectations or not enough expectations that they bring into the school. (p. 7)

Mary (p. 11), another guidance counselor explains: "So, I think we have high expectations of our kids, and teachers are quite traditional in their expectations; and historically [this] school does move the kids unto secondary school." Accordingly, teaching students based on their cultural context or background can build on their capabilities resulting in academic success (Gay, 2010). One way of managing the academic expectations of students, parents, and teachers is by offering appropriate support through scaffolding. Scaffolds function as strategies through which parents, teachers, and guidance counselors help students build upon their learning (Pentimonti & Justice, 2010). Sally (p. 4), another guidance counselor suggests, "Students come into the education system with different kinds of disadvantages and advantages and schools must provide scaffolds to help students who feel marginalized and disadvantaged to achieve their goals" (p. 4).

Addressing the appropriate support for adopting culturally responsive pedagogy requires the act of scaffolding at school to incorporate technology in the work of the guidance counselor or teacher as this allows for a wider contingency of learning schema (Belland et al., 2013). Having culturally responsive pedagogy in schools also entails reshaping the curriculum, building on student knowledge, and establishing relationships with students and their homes (Gay, 2010). However, if adopted superficially, culturally responsive pedagogy can perpetuate stereotypes: Frankie (p. 10) explains:

136

We had all these books from our school in Africa. I do not know where they found these books and, in our English, as Second language classes. We get to this school, and they read books about AIDS in Africa, and they [students] are made to read pamphlets written by White people. However, for some kids who just immigrated to Canada, this notion of Africa is not their notion of Africa. We are making them learn about Africa from White authors. How is this? I would not want to read this shit. Like, if this is my culture, I do not want to read this. It is not my culture. (p. 10)

Hence, addressing culturally responsive pedagogy in the curriculum by increasing diversity training in schools is essential. However, this training cannot be facilitated by White teachers as they may be unable to build bridges between students and the curriculum (Sleeter, 2008). Diverse representation in school is needed by different ethnic groups so students can see themselves in what knowledge is transmitted. According to Judy,

You know, you look in most guidance meetings, and not that I want to see myself out of a job, but it is you know…it is primarily White. I have a counselor now who is from the islands, a Brown guy, and he has eased with students, and he is pretty good at his job. However, kids naturally need to see that. So, I am glad he is in the department. You know, we need that representation and not to look so institutional. (p. 5)

The absence of diversity within the Board and secondary schools in Ontario according to guidance counselor Jen (p. 4): "Calls for representation in these spaces which is necessary to advocate equity for diverse students." For example, Jen shared about her high school experience, where one teacher told her she would never get into a particular career or university because her grades were not excellent. However, with her resilience and her parents' support, she could deal with negative stereotyping from her teacher and go on to university.

Situations like the one outlined by Jen highlight some students' issues in the education system and "how much trauma is caused when kids do not have people that look like them and represent them in these spaces and are advocating for them" (Jen, p. 4). Consequently, this points to the concerns of teachers' cultural expectations not aligning with students' cultural needs and how this impact the academic outcomes of students (Lee, 2012). There is also the sentiment expressed that racialized students rarely see themselves and their cultural experiences reflected in

137

the curriculum (Parhar & Sensoy, 2011). Therefore, developing a culturally responsive pedagogy

is necessary to help diverse students have a voice and think critically about their learning,

including locating themselves within the education process at school (Sleeter, 2011).

Valuing Students' Voice in Pedagogy. Giving students a *voice* is well-recognized within

education pedagogy (Keddie, 2015). Therefore, there is value in professional culture for

involving students in school decision-making, which is a feature of democratic action where

students, teachers, and other support staff collaborate to improve the quality of schooling

(Keddie, 2015). Student voices in a focus group setting can help co-create courses and activities.

As Frankie explains:

> I created some of the courses I did in the past by having focus groups, having students
> speak about their ideas, their needs, and wants, and then coming back to the table and co-
> creating a course that reflected what they wanted. So, these focus groups were not only
> done for my courses, and the ideas from these focus groups went back to the staff. (p. 9)

Students' voice has not been present in curricula design, teaching approaches, and course

delivery; as such, student voice should function as co-creators within a democratic community

(Bovill et al., 2011). Frankie further explains:

> Student voices should be in what we teach, creating a pedagogy that is student and
> community-led and especially not making decisions for communities and where suddenly
> we have the experts in the room, or we make our students the experts. So, bringing in the
> real experts, and bringing in proper resources for equity and practice. (p. 9)

The anecdote provided by the guidance counselor addresses the dialogic engagement

with students and how the voice given to pedagogy helps improve learning and teaching

pedagogy (Lodge, 2008). Additionally, a student's voice enables and empowers other students to

have the opportunity to participate meaningfully and collaboratively in school improvement

work. Jen (p. 10) explains: "I can think of teachers in our school that co-create the curriculum

with kids; together they work and learn. However, many teachers are not comfortable."

Allowing for the co-creation of the curriculum with students gives them a voice in their learning. Mary (p. 13), a guidance counselor, supports this by suggesting that: "Student voice in pedagogy is necessary for integrating their voices like we are supposed to listen to the kids. If they say they want something, we do it."

Student voice in pedagogy facilitates what some researchers conceive as 'pedagogic voice'; that is, a space where active engagement, participation, and voice create teaching, learning, and the curriculum (Baroutsis et al., 2016). Helping students find their pedagogic voice is a way schools can actively engage their capacity through civic participation (Ranson, 2000). As noted by Judy (p. 10), "I think trying to incorporate more student voice in how we do programs or deliver programming, helps you to know and find out what are their needs." Mary (p. 10) explains: "Integrating student's voice is also an equitable way of building "institutional knowledge."

Building institutional knowledge involves listening to and valuing students' views regarding their learning experiences; communicating their views to decision-makers; treating students as equal partners in the evaluation of teaching and learning processes, and empowering students to take a more active role in shaping or changing their learning (Walker & Logan, 2008). As Mary (p. 10) further explains: "Giving students a more active voice in learning involves constantly checking in allowing students to decide their own needs and wants."

This democratic stance towards promoting students' voices allows for the inclusion of students and their lived experiences so teachers and other support staff can learn from them and improve their practice (Mansfield, 2014). As noted by Dawn (p. 4), "Students' voice drives change, and consideration should be given to their perspectives." Consequently, utilizing students' voices yields richer and more authentic results in a democratic learning space, fostering

positive student outcomes (Fielding, 2004), as improving student outcomes reduces achievement

gaps which is an equity priority in Ontario. Accordingly, Mary explains:

> I think it [equity] is significant to our school community, but I do not think we are doing
> enough. I think it [equity] should be more of a priority…I do not know if that is realistic.
> I think it [equity] needs to get more precedence. Can I explain that? If people put their
> minds to it, and if a critical mass of people [the staff] put their minds to it and made it a
> priority, I think it could be even more powerful. (p.11).

In the anecdote, prioritizing equity is significant at school to direct and support student

learning. However, this prioritizing requires more involvement from the school community and

should be given more precedence by staff to move it forward. Mary (p. 13) asked: "Is the

[equity] policy meeting the needs of the student population? To a certain extent it is, but I do not

know. It is vague". Well, it is a top-down approach written by politicians and their executives.

However, in secondary schools, principals and administrative personnel often facilitate the top-

down approach to policy enactment. Several guidance counselors spoke of their principals' and

superintendent involvement in facilitating policy enactment:

> Well, the Principals would have a meeting with the Superintendent. I think the
> Superintendent would say, these are the concerns, and this is what we are going to focus
> on right now. I am hearing this from the government, and this is what I hear from the
> Board. Then the principal and vice-principals bring it to the leadership team; they will
> say, guys, this is what we need to do, and we will sit down and form groups and divide
> the work. Then we go off, look at this extensive plan, break it down into goals, review the
> goals, and you have a week to come back to the principal and Superintendent, present to
> the staff what we are going to do, and get their feedback, and we pound it out, and we
> come up with a school improvement plan. (Mary, p. 16; Jen, p. 18; Laura, p. 17)

The top-down approach to policy formation within professional cultures impacts

enactment as policies often arrive with some measure of vagueness and is open to further

negotiations as varied interpretations impact the practice of policy actors (Ball et al., 2012).

Policy enactment is often problematic when no accountability measures are in place to ensure

compliance (Harris et al., 2020). Mary (p. 16) explains: So, we are told we must do it. So, what

we do is that we produce these great ideas, these great charts, these beautiful plans, but there is

no accountability, really because "*It kind of lacks teet*h" (p. 16). The anecdote by the guidance

counselor points to the lack of accountability measures in schools to ensure equity work is

moving forward. Mary, a guidance counselor explains the lack of accountabilities succinctly:

> I do not think there are multiple accountabilities to tell you the truth. We are supposed to review and assess our policies, procedures, and practices to ensure that they promote equity and inclusion. However, we cannot review our work. So, we reflect and revisit, you know, our programming. So, I will say the important thing is that we have the policy; it is like a law that gives us backup to support the kids. However, at the same time, we did not have this before. So, it is good that we have it because it directs how we do things at our school, and if someone does not agree with it, I do not know if there is anything they can do. I do not know how they would. (pp. 14-15)

The concerns raised by guidance counselors above point to the need for more robust

indicator-based accountability mechanisms that could serve to evaluate the impact of equity

policies over time (Gregg, 2019). However, a guidance counselor laments the lack of

accountability at the Board level as Jen notes:

> The Board is supposed to be known for its equity policies, but from what I see, there is no follow-through. How it looks to the outside world and what happens daily are very different; that is how I feel anyway. It is my opinion, but I know my principal walks the walk and is expecting us to do stuff as well. (p. 5)

> Additionally, this same guidance counselor explains: "there should be rules and

regulations that should guide what we [guidance counselors, teachers] can do, something akin to

a *checklist*". Because "sometimes the policy intentions are positive, but the impact may not be,

and it is more about checking off a box because no mechanism is in place, there is no guarantee

that the equity work gets done." (Jen p. 11). The lack of accountability of equity work in

secondary schools is considered in other ways. Enez (p. 14) shared how she viewed equity work:

> Equity work functions as a *band-aid solution* to help students be more successful at school. Then you look at the data, and they are still not more successful. Well, guess what? Because of society, the systemic racism that exists is causing those statistics to continue to go on. So, it is one thing to have a policy, but if not (Sic), everybody is doing the work that we are doing in our school and unpacking biases and looking at teaching practices and trying to do culturally relevant lessons that are responsive. Like those are all but buzzwords. But unless you are doing it in your class, it is not making a difference.

As I said, I can close my door and do whatever I want, and no one knows until they [students] come to guidance, and they can tell me what is going on.

The lack of accountability in professional cultures at the school level is challenging in the absence of enforcement measures for ensuring that equity policies are implemented in a meaningful way with clear performance measures. Jen (p. 12) further laments:

Listen, there are teacher performance appraisals, and I can be good for those ten minutes. You are in my class. It is all a show. If you think about it, it is just a show, a performance. However, when it comes down to it, what are they doing? Do you see it in their practice? Can you tell? What words are they saying? Sometimes people have just all the words to say, but what they are doing, they are not practicing. So, it just depends.

The anecdotes above describe a professional culture of some teachers performing merely to give the assurance to authority that they are engaging with equity policies. Teachers' work in the classroom is not a reflection of engaging with equity, as students are still experiencing inequities in their access to services and resources to move their learning forward. For instance, Ball et al. (2012) discussed professional cultures as commitments within schools by teachers and how it impacts equity work. A guidance counselor spoke of using a data-driven approach to identifying students who are falling behind. A data-driven approach is about using data to inform practice and influence 'buy-in' (Yoon, 2016) by others. Data provides policy actors with the information required to focus policy practices on achieving specific outcomes. Lavern noted:

So, you know, most of the time we [guidance counselors] start with data, sometimes we start with an anecdotal conversation with the student. However, it is always data-informed. Thus, whether we are pulling the achievement data or working with demographic data, we sort through data and organize it to figure out which students are falling behind. (p. 12)

Dora suggests that it is important to understand the data and not just use it to drive equity work but to improve student success:

142

I think it's going to sound very strange; we need to stop looking at that data. It is great to look at the data, but we need to understand what the data is telling us and then do something with it. Because we have all this data about this success, that success, and whatever, it is time to do something with that data. (p. 16)

In the anecdotes above, Lavern and Dora believe that data are being collected without proper analysis as they are not moving equity work forward. However, for Lavern, buy-in to data is manifested in how she and her colleagues use data to rework policies in their practice and to support students learning needs through a nomination system. Lavern (p. 13) explains:

So, there is a nomination system where staff works through Google Forms, and we nominate students we feel need more support and have conversations through an in-school team, a learning coach, and our special education itinerant resource teacher. So that the data is where we start and know (Sic) teacher concerns, student concerns, or anecdotal conversations.

The strategic data-driven work discussed in the narratives above addressed the need for data to inform equity work but buy-in by other actors is not always easy. For instance, Within the Ontario education system, data can contribute to reducing the student gap as the challenges in learning can be easily identified by examining the data. However, managing this data requires understanding the material context in which equity work is facilitated and supported in policy enactment.

Material Contexts

A school's material contexts "consider buildings and budgets, levels of staffing, information technologies, and infrastructure" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 29). The material contexts of schools examine how schools are structured and how they are "equipped internally impacting on teaching and learning activities and thus on policy enactment" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 33). Regarding the material contexts of a school building, Ball et al. (2012) suggested that they present constraints that limit equity work and the reach of this work within schools. Several themes emerged for material contexts: *lack of space, inadequate funding and budgetary*

143

allocations, scheduling, and staffing issues. For example, Judy, a guidance counselor with

several years of experience, spoke of a lack of space to facilitate guidance programs as an equity

issue because it limits who came to seek services as some student populations do not come

because of the physical setup of the office. Judy (p. 4) explains this *lack of space* to facilitate her

work:

> When I came into guidance, it was only white kids who accessed the services, or kids I
> would say maybe did not even need guidance. I mean, everybody needs guidance.
> However, like a few Brown kids were there, it was not racially diverse at all, and that had
> to do with the physical setup of the room and the previous folks that worked there. So,
> the principal brought me in to address that and changed stuff there. Our first order of
> business was to increase student intake and access to services for everyone. So, for us, it
> meant moving into the hallways and becoming a staple, running specific initiatives to
> bring all kids into guidance.

 In the anecdote policy initiatives such as redesigning the guidance counseling office's

layout could expand access to services related to equity work at school (Braun et al., 2011).

However, achieving the right contextual conditions in which to conduct policy work at school is

impossible. In addition, *funding* for crucial programs can often be inadequate, leading to a

numbers game that impacts what policy gets enacted. Frankie (p. 17) explains the funding

process:

> You get a budget based on how many students are in your school. So, you get X amount
> of money for X full-time students and X for halftime students in your school. I used to
> push my students to expedite (Sic) their education for grade 12. So that they would take a
> half-year off. So instead of taking a class all day, take a class in the morning so that you
> can work in the afternoon to start saving up for your college or university and start
> learning how to work- education balance.

> In the anecdote, the guidance counselor explains how schools are funded and

how schools get funding based on the number of students in full-time or part-time

schedules. However, the anecdote also demonstrates the strategies used to help students to get on

an even path with other students by thinking about saving for their education and learning about

balancing work and school at the same time. Frankie explains how he would get into trouble with

staff for giving students strategies and alternative routes to becoming successful:

> I [would] always get in trouble because the school wanted that entire budget, and some guidance counselors support this as it is more money for the school. But for the student, you know, a student only needs 30 credits to graduate. They do not need 32. However, that goes against what guidance [and the school] want. [They would tell me] If you want to make those changes, you must talk to your administrator. Why did you make all these students halftime students? We just lost X amount of money because of your decision. How do you justify that? (p. 17)

The dilemma presented in the anecdotes above address *budgetary allocations* where

"school funding is primarily calculated by student numbers, differences in school size, local

authority subsidies and location" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 34), which produces considerable

differences in the allocated budget to school. The issue of school budgets and how monies are

allocated based on numbers have shifted the school administrators' focus on how much money

schools can attract based on how many students pass prescribed exams. In this environment,

teachers feel pressured to show positive numbers of graduates passing through the school, which

then pushes teachers to pass students (Carpenter et al., 2012). This issue of just passing students

has resulted in the movement of students from grade to grade without attaining adequate training,

inevitably leading to "unequal student outcomes across individual schools" (Ball et al., 2012, p.

31). Enez discussed the programs that the school she works adopts for improving students'

outcomes:

> My schools do things like credit rescue, where a student who is not achieving at the end of the year receives a package of work they have not finished. The student spends intensive time in a room with a supportive teacher who helps them finish their work. I have two minds about that because you get the credit on one level and might be able to move on to the next grade, but how prepared are you? (p. 12)

The narrative above points to strategies to move students who need credit to the next

grade. The school's commitment to moving students up the grade provides opportunities to earn

credit functions as a number game within the education system to derive more funding rather

than preparing students for the real world (Carpenter et al., 2012). School funding is "calculated

by student numbers, differences in school size, and location." (Ball et al., 2012, p. 34). Sarah also

explains the situation at her school with funding:

> In terms of inner-city situations, schools that do not have the population they need for
> increased funding do not receive the funding necessary to serve the more underserved
> students. So that is where you see this kind of inequity emerging. Since the nineties and
> persisting to this day, further budget cuts have meant that we have been less able to
> financially serve those more underserved populations, and it all comes down to finances
> with these populations. (p. 7)

The anecdote provided by the guidance counselor highlighted broader issues related to

school infrastructure and budgetary allocation that enable or constrain equity work at school.

School infrastructure and budgets support and drive educational equity work by building the

capacities of school leaders and teaching practices (Hopkins & Woulfin, 2015). *Staffing and*

scheduling also serve a similar purpose (Ball et al., 2012). However, schedules need to be

appropriate to facilitate the attendance of teachers and other support staff as they may have other

commitments in the classroom to meet. Scheduling professional development (PD) training

requires "staffing and the facilitation of occasional teachers to support these training sessions and

the funding to put measures in place so teachers can attend PD training are necessary" (Lavern,

p. 18). Additionally,

> offering PD sessions at different times of the day will facilitate interest and attendance as
> this will ensure that there is funding because it is tough to teach and be at a professional
> development session if they are both happening simultaneously. (Lavern, p. 18)

The consideration of school budgets to facilitate PD training, scheduling, and the

provision of staff to support equity work and policy enactment at secondary schools is important.

The material contexts are critical to the functionality of schools, policy work, and policy

enactment (Ball et al., 2012). The material context considers physical layout, built infrastructure,

146

budgets, staffing, and technology, all necessary for moving equity work and policy enactment at the school forward. Additionally, recruiting quality staff at school should not be considered "just a cost; as the staff is in the first- and last- instance, the main school asset" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 35). Providing the necessary resources to teachers to facilitate their work is required through professional training as staff needs to upgrade their skill set to serve the students better. Ball et al. (2012) believed that staffing plays a significant role in attracting and keeping good teachers for moving policy work forward in schools.

External Contexts

External contexts relate to the pressures and expectations from broader local and national policy matters (Braun et al., 2011). The broader community within schools exerts influences on the policy enactment process. Schools often try to meet the external demands of school boards and the Ministry of Education to influence members of the local community, e.g., parents who consume their product offerings rather than trying to adapt education policies to meet the specific needs of the students (Herbert, 2020). For example, during this research, many guidance counselors highlighted the external pressures for mitigating the present-day challenges of the *COVID-19 pandemic*, particularly student achievement and learning. Lavern (p. 6) said:

> So, we are in the COVID-19 education model, which the Ministry of Education developed for the province of Ontario. The Ministry had consultations with the school board and unions. The new education model is a four-day cycle where the students only attend classes in the mornings. So, every afternoon, they are doing virtual learning from home. These are the in-person students who were selected to participate in in-person school. So, I am not sure precisely the perfect ratio, but I would argue that 60% of the learning happens at home. And then 40% is happening in person, and although virtual learning at home does have a teacher, it is an asynchronous learning model.

The issue raised by Lavern addresses broader external pressures affecting education systems globally and at the local and national levels. The anecdote explains potential scenarios for schooling to continue in Ontario, involving an adapted delivery model of alternated days and

147

at-home learning, including remote/synchronous and asynchronous learning (Ontario Ministry of

Education, 2020). Jen (p. 15) explains how the process of synchronous and asynchronous

learning in her work:

> I have met with students and parents online and in various settings. So, I have learned more about students and their homes. My work has increased for me, and the amount of work I must do. We are quad-mastered, and because of being online, it is like I have started school four times and am sending it four times. So, everything that starts with the timetable changes. You now must get students settled and get the marks they have done. This work must finish in the nine and a half weeks of school. Then start again, do another nine and a half weeks, and then do it again. So, our work is continuous.

> The narrative above addresses the external pressures to meet the *demands of online*

schooling and the increased workload guidance counselors are engaged in to ensure students

achieve their goals. Mary (p. 6) explains:

> For kids who are doing virtual secondary school and for whom we hold their Ontario student record, we are helping them if they need help. We also reached out to the failing students, like those who failed the last quad, and suggested eLearning day school. We must put like six or seven kids in eLearning day school, and we need to support them and help them be successful.

> The challenges of virtual secondary school and the kind of support guidance counselors

can provide to students who are failing are important for student achievement. Student

achievement has been Ontario's Ministry of Education and school boards' priority (Ontario

Ministry of Education, 2009). Thus, student achievement and learning during the pandemic were

impacted significantly which began in May 2020 and forced school closures in Ontario, leading

to disruptions in student academic achievement (Gallagher-Mackay et al., 2021). Enez (p. 15)

explains the challenges she has observed with online learning:

> Many staff is caught up in COVID-19, and then there is fear. Being at home and teaching has been, you know, a lot. I will be honest with you; many students are not showing up for a class because they are overwhelmed at home. It is hard, and online learning has not benefited many students. So, you know, they have that challenge that they are facing.

Managing education during the pandemic has led to different responses to schooling as explained in the narrative above. COVID-19 impacted schools in such a way leading to "emergency remote learning, virtual school, blended learning cohorts, moves to quad semester, have limited students in-school activities and have disrupted their educational experiences" (Gallagher-Mackay et al., 2021, p. 5). As such Enez (p. 15) explained the pressures of dealing with the pandemic and online learning have contributed to a reduction in student's course load:

> Some students have even gone down to one subject instead of two. So, we are looking at how we can accommodate them with their timetable to ensure they are okay. But, on the other hand, some students were demitted because they are not able to handle the course load and, you know, things that are happening at home and all of that, and we are working with the social worker this year to help support students.

The discussion above points to the challenges experienced by guidance counselors and students due to the global pandemic and its effects on education and student achievement in Ontario.

In conclusion, the various contexts act as "mediating factors in the policy enactment work done in schools and are unique to each school" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 42). Contexts are always specific and are considered dynamic and shifting both within and outside of schools. The four different contexts discussed sought to demonstrate how policies become interpreted and enacted into practice when mediated by determined institutional factors (Braun et al., 2011). Contextual factors and their operation in schools are mandated by the degree particular policies 'fit' with the school's culture (Braun et al., 2011). Additionally, the work and role of guidance counselors align with specific contextual conditions operating at the local school level, engaging in a complex interaction with school boards (Braun et al., 2010), and impacting how equity and educational policies are enacted in schools by guidance counselors in their practices.

149

Actions of Guidance Counselors in Policy Enactment at Secondary Schools

The actions of policy actors are a set of "complex and differentiated activities which involves both creative and disciplinary relations, infused with power" (Ball et al., 2011, p. 625). However, these complex and differentiated activities and their policy responses are often obscured and distorted. Policy actors must focus on the various roles and positions they engage with to decide which policies get enacted (Ball et al., 2011). In this study, guidance counselors function in several capacities, as both receivers and agents of policy (Saunders, 1987) and as policy subjects and actors (Ball et al., 2012).

A heuristic technique was employed to unpack the policy work that guidance counselors engage with and to understand their experiences in policy enactment at secondary schools. Additionally, the technique helps identify guidance counselors' roles and actions in interpreting and translating equity policies into practice. Ball et al. (2012) typology of policy actors and the forms of policy work identify the different types of actors involved in policy enactment at secondary schools. The typology structures the policy work of guidance counselors as revealed by the interview data (Ball et al., 2012). Guidance counselors assume multiple roles and positions concerning policy enactment in secondary schools. Paisley and McMahon (2001) suggested that the roles of school counselors are "ambiguous and attending to all demands for time and programming can place counselors in the unrealistic position of trying to be all things to all people" (p. 107).

The findings revealed several policy positions that guidance counselors assume in their practice at secondary school, including narrators, entrepreneurs, enthusiasts, and translators. In addition, guidance counselors in this study functioned in different roles. For example, Frankie

functioned as a narrator when he was a member of the Equity Committee and later as both an entrepreneur and translator of policy across different schools.

Narrators

The task of policy narrators involves "interpretations, selection and enforcement of meanings" by "constructing an institutional narrative that will inform policy work, thus, creating an institutional vision to guide other members of the institution" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 49.) As such, narrators functioned as "interpreters, selectors, and enforcers of meanings" (Ball et al., 2011, p. 626). In addition, narrators decipher policy text into action (Ball et al., 2011). Guidance counselors who engage in policy narration construct equity narratives to guide and inform how policies get enacted into practice (Ball et al., 2011). An example of a narrator is Frankie, who is considered a *program initiator*.

> I was one of the heads at a particular school for three years, and the school population was the Blackest on the school board. It was a school with the least funding, the lowest literacy rates, the highest Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test (OSSLT) failure rates, and one of the largest Muslim populations. In short, very underserved. I was shocked at the perspective of educators, who believed that the students could not read because they come from poor neighborhoods. So, I brought in hybrid coaches and started a whole program where we took our poorest readers in grade nine and assessed every Black or White student; finding the lowest students to teach them how to read. (p. 3)

Frankie's narrative explains the program he initiated to bring about success in reading: "Students had one on one with teachers. They [teachers] were working with these students to bring them from their grade three and four levels because they were not passing the literacy test." (p. 3). The program was successful, as he saw improvement in students reading for the time he was at the school. Frankie asserts "luckily, today, a legacy of my work remains. I do not know if COVID-19 killed it, but that program continued [after I left], and they hired a full-time teacher to facilitate this reading recovery with students." (p. 3).

The narratives also address a "selective focusing that is a crucial aspect of policy interpretation involving explaining policy and deciding and then announcing the actions" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 50). In addition, this narrative describes the balance between making policy workable and making it happen (Ball et al., 2012). For example, the narrative above discusses bringing in hybrid coaches and enlisting teachers to help facilitate students' learning and achievement goals, suggesting that "some policies in schools can only be 'brought off' by including outsiders in the policy process" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 50).

Frankie's role as a program initiator provides insights into how a guidance counselor can influence school programs to ensure students receive extracurricular support. Frankie's work involved constructing an institutional narrative that informed policy work while creating an institutional vision for future intervention (Ball et al., 2012). This vision articulates a collective idea of what schools want to become as his policy work involved assessing the literacy levels of racialized students and providing the necessary personal support to students to improve test scores.

Guidance counselors like Frankie function as "institutional policy entrepreneurs" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 51) whose interpretation and meaning-making abilities are critical because it influences practice and a process involving policy recontextualization. In policy enactment, recontextualization "is the relational process of selecting and moving knowledge from one context to another" (Singh et al., 2013, p. 50). Recontextualization, therefore, impacts the enactment of the educational equity policy enactment process at secondary schools.

Entrepreneurs

Entrepreneurs function as policy advocates who "champion and represent particular policies or principles of integration" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 53). These policy actors rework and

recombine aspects of policies to produce something original and translate this onto a set of

positions and roles during the enactment process (Ball et al., 2011). In addition, entrepreneurs

can "translate good practices and other resources into a set of positions and roles and

organizational relationships" (Ball et al., 2011, p. 628). Finally, entrepreneurs can also play

essential roles in repacking and presenting equity-related problems in novel ways. Frankie

reflects on how he brought awareness to staff in his school about equity issues as a *student*

advocate:

> I remember one event in the coffee room, where we put these messages up, and we just
> had staff and children walk around and read some of these messages, which they believed
> were from other schools. Staff reading this was like, this is horrible. Like, what school is
> this? What school is this, and we even let them[staff] put the sticky notes on what school
> they thought the messages were [written]? However, these were all student voices at our
> school, and once they [teachers] found that out, the mood in the room changed, and the
> coffee and doughnuts sort of chill vibe disappeared. (p. 9)

An interesting point about entrepreneurs speaks to the lack of awareness of the problems

in this school. Even when it became known, the staff did not recognize this was their school's

reality and how students saw their relationships with staff within the school. Frankie's approach

as a policy entrepreneur exemplifies that of a "forceful agent of change, who [is] personally

invested in and identified with policy ideas and their enactment" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 53). Using

these approaches, policy entrepreneurs enact equity policies through structures, roles, tactics, and

techniques based on very sophisticated and novel processes (Ball et al., 2012).

As entrepreneurs in secondary schools, guidance counselors, whose role/s are often

ambiguous (McGowan, 2017), have the responsibility of an *advocate*. One guidance counselor

spoke about advocating on behalf of students at her school. Jen (p. 5) explains, "guidance

counselors function as a *gatekeeper to opportunities* for students, especially students of color and

students who self-identify as being from a marginalized group." Jen (p. 5) explained the

gatekeeper role she assumes at school for Black students:

> Some kids are unaware of these things and are often stereotyped for whatever reason. I just see it as everybody should have the same opportunity. I tell everybody about the opportunities, and then I go out of my way for Black students. I will show them where to access scholarships and tell them to apply. They [Black students] need that tap on the shoulder to know that somebody believes in them and that they should be doing these things. If I am not there representing that in a guidance role, then who will?

Black students are often stereotyped and discouraged from pursuing school curricula that

may lead them to their aspired careers (Shizha et al., 2020). Therefore, for Black students,

advocacy and gatekeeping serve as necessary buffers against entrenched inequities in the

education system. For example, often, there are "preconceived negative, racist and prejudicial

stereotypes about African students and their abilities for educational performance and success"

(Shizha et al., 2020, p. 1). As a result, Black students may face disadvantages that lead to

unfavorable education outcomes. For such students, gatekeeping then becomes an essential

component of equity practice.

Advocating for students requires encouraging student success by setting up programs and

activities to facilitate positive outcomes, including activities that help students achieve their

goals and to move them into post-secondary school. As Sarah (p. 5) explains:

> I was fortunate to work at a school that, for the most part, had an equity-focused stance because there were multiple programs to enhance student achievement. Such things as credit rescue allow teachers to give students a pass at the end of the semester for work, they have not finished. The student spends time with a supportive teacher who helps them get their work done so they can achieve the credit, and then there is credit recovery, which allows a student who has failed a course to recover the credit the following semester. So, they can do a sort of accelerated program to recover a credit they previously failed. (p. 5)

The programs highlighted by Sarah in the narrative are essential for reducing

achievement gaps and helping students transition through the education system. Some concerns

are raised about the implications for how a student who benefits from credit rescue and credit

recovery goes on to function in post-secondary schools. Sarah (p. 5) explains:

> So, I always have kind of in my mind this kind of mental conflict and desire to see
> students move on and get through to whatever is next. Because I do see students who
> finally graduate high school and are doing fantastic, because they have finally done this
> thing, and some of them go on to post-secondary, and they excel right, and some do not.
> So, it is always a bit of a conflict with me, like how much do your credit recover
> students? Furthermore, how much do you credit rescue students? Because are you
> preparing them for the future? We do not know this.

The narrative Sarah outlined could influence how guidance counselors treat students who

need additional curricular support to be promoted in the education system and to have equitable

access to post-secondary opportunities. There is evidence in Ontario that curricular support

improves student performance (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009a). However, there have

been concerns that such support does not fully address other demographic factors that reinforce

inequality (Campbell, 2021). Jen (p. 3) explains: "There are also non-curricular support programs

in the Ontario education system for fostering self-advocacy among students and parents so that

they can feel a sense of accomplishment, success, and confidence in dealing with challenges they

might encounter." (Jen, p. 3). Accordingly, these non-curricular programs equip students and

parents to advocate for themselves. Frankie (p. 8) suggests further that:

> Advocacy teaches students how to be resourceful so that when they leave this place
> [school], they will know how to find the tools and resources they need to compete and
> still make up for all this [shit] the system put on them.

> Advocating for students in practice also requires the involvement of parents because they

need to understand the education system and how it facilitates the process. However, all parents

may not be equipped with the necessary information or have the time to advocate for their

children. As such, Jen (p. 3) explained:

> I am just talking about the process. Parents do not know the educational system, and
> depending on a student's background or culture, parents send their kids to school.
> Whatever the school says, they agree with it because that is their cultural background.

You do not question teachers. Unfortunately, in our system, you sometimes must question teachers because not everybody is doing the right thing, depending on the student. (p. 3)

Jen's concern highlighted how some cultures operate; they do not question things that occur in the education system because they expect it to be equitable for all students. Jen (p. 4) further elaborated on her reasoning for getting into guidance:

With the kids that I am dealing with, the parents are busy. They are working and care about education, but they assume that they send their kids to school and that the education system teachers will do right by them. However, unfortunately, they do not. So, to me, I feel like it is my job. That is why I became a guidance counselor because I wanted to have a positive influence on all kids, not just kids of color. However, I am more passionate about kids of color because I reflect and represent those kids.

Jen's assertions above and the sentiments expressed by Sally and Frankie suggested that many issues contribute to student success. Advocacy work improves outcomes because teachers, guidance counselors, parents, and students work together towards a common goal. Advocacy work situates guidance counselors as change agents and proactive advocates for student success (Ball et al., 2012). Consequently, policy entrepreneurs engage in individual and collective action toward improving situations at school for students (Bemunk & Chang, 2005). However, because entrepreneurs engage in a "dynamic and unstable process" (p. 54), where policies in schools are unfinished and in flux, Ball et al. (2012) asserted that they have to "join up crisscrossing sites, scales, and spaces" (p. 54), that might not be in every school. As such, the entrepreneur's role and work are specific to school issues and school policy work is continuous and ongoing.

Enthusiasts and Translators

Enthusiasts are translators who "plan and produce the events and processes and institutional texts of policy with others are thus inducted into the 'discursive patterns' of policy" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 59). Enthusiasts translate and enact policies simultaneously through their practice (Ball et al., 2012). Further, these actors function as policy activists in any school and

"recruit others to the possibility of policy; they speak policy to practice and join roles and responsibilities to make enactment a collective process" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 60). Guidance counselors function as *policy activists* who took initiative and engaged in activities within the equity committee in the school system, where programs are an indirect pathway to equity work. Enez (p. 4) described the equity committee:

> We have an equity committee trying to do various programs to help students express themselves through art and poetry. We have another program called Specialist High Skills Major, where we are trying to tie in horticulture and landscaping. So, it is incredible. We try to do different things, and, you know, we look for what the school needs and try our best every year to bring changes.

> The anecdote by Enez highlights the measures her school took to meet the diverse needs

of the student population and the programs they implemented to bring about change. Another guidance counselor spoke of the *collaborative role* within equity work as an equity committee member that sought to draw on the experiences of other members and apply those experiences to push equity work. Frankie (p. 12) explains:

> So, working in that equity program with the Board, I met different people and principals who worked with different student populations, such as Latino and African students. Then we started talking, comparing, and contrasting what other communities were going through, only to realize that, you know, Latino, Portuguese, and Black people were the same shade [marginalized peoples], and their problems were the same. It was the people above us who were making decisions for us. We were not learning what we had to be learning. We were not getting the needed skills nor were given access to the same resources.

> Enez and Frankie's anecdotes address the extent to which cooperation and collaboration

in policy work occur and how "ideals of policy exhortations or dry texts are translated into actions" in a meaningful and doable way (Ball et al., 2012, p. 60). Frankie's anecdote also addresses guidance counselors' various policy roles and positions. Advanced in the section is how roles and positions are combined to make policy happen and point to the reality of equity in practice at secondary schools (Ball et al., 2011). The varied and multiple roles guidance

157

counselors assume as enthusiasts and translators position them as creative and sophisticated managers, who are engaged and situated in the complexity and the context of policy enactment (Ball et al., 2011), thereby, influencing their equity work at school.

Chapter Summary

In chapter five, the researcher situated and discussed equity work in secondary schools within the broad context of education equity policies in Ontario. The Policy Program Memorandum PPM 119 (2009) was selected because the policy called for eliminating discriminatory barriers and structures that impact specific minority student populations in the secondary school system. In addition, the Ontario Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy (2009a) and the Equity and Inclusive Education for Ontario schools (2009b) encourage school boards to formulate equity policies to increase student achievement and reduce the gap between students in secondary schools. This chapter discussed how equity operates within the situated context, professional cultures, material context, and external contexts at secondary schools.

The situated contexts discuss themes regarding school histories, intake, location, how these impact equity work, and the challenges of moving equity work forward in institutions embedded in a specific type of school culture. The professional culture considers the commitment of teachers and guidance counselors and how professional development training can mitigate any hesitancy to move equity work forward. Additionally, professional culture address issues of bias and culturally responsive pedagogy for giving students a voice in equity work at school through advocacy while prioritizing equity and addressing the lack of accountability. The material context address issues of funding, staff arrangements, and scheduling and how these are important for moving equity work forward at school. In comparison, the external pressures of

school boards and the Ministry of Education help to situate the additional pressures and expectations on policy actors in equity work at school.

Discussing the varied contextual conditions in which policy work and enactment occurred at schools was necessary to understand how these conditions act as mediating factors in the policy enactment process. Utilizing the typology proposed by Ball et al. (2012) to discuss the findings in this research structures the work performed by guidance counselors within the varied contexts in secondary schools.

The second section discussed guidance counselors' specific actions and roles in the policy enactment process in secondary schools within the context of Ball et al. (2011) typology of positions of policy actors. The varied role of guidance counselors can overlap and they can assume several positions in their school policy work and practice. The roles and positions guidance counselors assume make policy enactment happen. In these roles and positions, guidance counselors are not "naïve actors, they are creative and sophisticated, and they manage" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 68). Additionally, "policy actors are positioned differently with policy" in the enactment process at school (Ball et al., 2012, p. 69). In this chapter, the roles and positions of guidance counselors are also different and dependent on their careers and accumulated experiences, responsibilities, and values. In conclusion, the chapter presents the various contexts, roles, and positions of guidance counselors. Consequently, contexts mediate enacting equity policies at school to examine how the roles and positions guidance counselors assume influence their equity work.

Chapter 6:

Educational Policies Enactment in Secondary Schools in Trinidad and Tobago

Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of a cross-case policy enactment study at secondary schools in Trinidad and Tobago (T&T). Utilizing Ball et al. (2012) typology of contextual dimensions, the first section discusses the contextual factors that shape policy enactment at secondary school. Using Ball's typology for policy actors and policy work, the second section situates and examines the roles and positions of guidance counselors in the policy enactment process at school.

In this policy enactment case study, policy enactment focuses on policies at the secondary school level and guidance counselors as the primary policy actors. Like Ontario, the focus on policy enactment in schools in T&T centers around "how schools 'do' policies and how they get enacted or not get enacted into schools" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 1). Policy "done in schools is 'written' by the government, their agencies, or other influential stakeholders, making policy work at all levels sites of negotiation, contestation, and struggle between diverse groups outside of the formal machinery of official policymaking" (Ozga, 2000, p. 113).

In this study, contexts functions as an analytic device to understand policy enactment as "a grounded account of the diverse variables and factors (what), as well as the dynamics of context (how) that shape enactment" (p. 20). Consequently, "theorizing, interpretative, material and contextual dimensions of the policy process" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 20) all to understand policy enactment.

The Contexts of Policy Enactment in Secondary Schools in Trinidad and Tobago

Policies are often "shaped and influenced by school-specific factors that act to constrain, pressure or enable policy enactment" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 19). Positioning contexts help to understand the "processes of policy enactment and how they allow researchers to attend to the complex ways in which official policies get enacted within and across schools" (Ball, 2005, p. 9). A typology of contextual dimensions developed by Ball et al. (2012) is adopted to "systemically collates and map different aspects of context" (p. 19). The typology utilizes four overlapping and interrelated contextual dimensions of policy enactments, that is, situated contexts, professional cultures, material contexts, and external contexts. In this research, the typology examines how contexts impact the practice of policy enactment at secondary schools in T&T (Ball et al., 2012, p. 21).

Situated Contexts

Schools and their location, history, and intake play a significant role in understanding how contexts impact policy enactment (Ball et al., 2012). In T&T, like Ontario, the situated contexts in schools are linked "historically and locationally to school settings, its history and its intake" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 21). Education in T&T is highly polarized and shaped by an epoch dominated by colonialism (De Lisle, 2012; London, 2003).

Unlike Canada, T&T does not have a policy that directly addresses equity, that is, it does not have a standalone educational equity policy as is the case in Ontario. Matters related to equity are taken up within broad education strategic plans and mandates formulated by the Ministry of Education (see chapter 4). In T&T, educational policies direct the management of schools and drive toward inclusive education for all students. Two such policy positions were premised on the idea of "every child has an inherent right to access education regardless of

gender, ethnicity, social, economic or religious backgrounds" (Education Sector Strategic Plan 2011-2015, p. ix). The Education Sector Strategic Plan and the Draft Education Policy Paper (DEPP) are two such policies committed to promoting student-centered teaching and learning and fighting against the lack of inclusivity, equity, and opportunities for all students, including those with special education needs and gifted students (Ministry of Education, p.4), Section 4 (p. 67). Additionally, the DEPP accepts that,

> Inequity [exists] in the system of placing students at secondary schools, and the system of placement leads to stratification throughout the system. The system of placing students also leads to a lack of inclusivity and equity for all students particularly inequity in learning for special needs education and gifted students. (Ministry of Education, n/d, p. 4)

Historical Antecedents of Schooling in Trinidad and Tobago. Education in T&T during the period of British colonizers became institutionalized as white missionaries received permission to engage enslaved people in some measure of schooling (London, 2003). As such, the lingering coloniality continues to persist in the education system even in the post-independence era (from 1962 forward to the present time). (Williams, 2016). The lingering coloniality relates to inherited mechanisms from the colonial-era school system impacting school quality, culture, and student success (Williams, 2016).

Like Canada, this lingering colonial model of Education in T&T has contributed to a type of new colonialism that disguises itself in discriminatory and biased practices in the education system (Williams, 2016). The discriminatory and biased practices have resulted in institutionalized segregation in government-assisted denominational/religious schools and government/state schools (Williams, 2016). Considering the new forms of colonialization in T&T, the situated contexts involve "school histories, bound up in their reputations are aspects of contexts that are 'alive' within the collective consciousness of schools" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 26). According to Laura (p. 17):

In this school, it is mostly about passing exams. So, you will find that if I ask a teacher for a session to talk about managing stress with students, the teacher might have a problem with that because the teacher wants to finish the syllabus, you know, that sort of thing. So, the academic would always take preference over the counseling aspect or the psychological aspect, and what teachers do not realize is that if you have the emotional and social issues down pack, if you have it under control, will get more learning and more success. However, I think teachers are yet to understand the solid social-emotional aspect of learning in our culture. I think this is happening because teachers and the school place the academics first and the social-emotional last when it should be another way around.

The above narrative addresses Ball et al. (2012) observation of the "inter-relationships and movements between different aspects of context" (p. 26); and the "intersections of external policy drivers (schools' reputation, teachers' expectation, students' emotional and social well-being), and internal factors and institutional policy dynamics and foci (school syllabus, passing exams, academics) considering policy values and the valuing given to different students' population" (p. 26).

T&T's education system consists of public and private schools (Education Act of 1966). Public schools entail government-assisted denominational and government schools (De Lisle, 2012). Whereas, private schools are managed by private institutions/organizations that follow the curriculum of the public schools (Education Act of 1966). Similarly, the education system classifications in Ontario are public-funded, private, and homeschooling. The publicly funded schools in Ontario are managed by district school boards and function independently of the Ontario Ministry of Education. Likewise, in T&T, there are local school boards, but they do not function independently as school boards in Ontario do. In T&T, the duties and power of local school boards are strategic planning, building community relationships, and maintaining and upgrading the school's physical facilities (Ministry of Education-Local School Board Regulations, 2005).

163

Differentiated School System. T&T's education system operates as a differentiated school system that is "noticeably elitist; designed to filter, segregate and retain students based on meritocracy" (De Lisle et al., 2010, p.). In addition, the differentiated education system is characterized as "selective, stratified, and segregated" (De Lisle et al., 2010, p. 9). These characterizations of the education system place students into distinct types of secondary schools leading to unequal learning outcomes (De Lisle, 2022). As Nora (p. 5) explains:

> Every child deserves the opportunity, and by the opportunity, I mean what it takes to help them to achieve their learning goals and provide them with the opportunity to succeed. We have a responsibility to our youths in our country to make them the kind of adults they will become, you know what that future means. So, on an individual level, children deserve to go to a school where they have that foundation, and they really deserve a chance to be successful in life and to be content and happy and provide for themselves and their families, and so we must try our best to provide that for them.

The anecdote by Nora addresses equity in opportunity for all students in a differentiated education system in T&T. Nora believes that the education system is a right that all students should have access to and for their holistic development.

De Lisle et al. (2010) asserted that despite the government's commitment to a seamless education system, the differentiated system continues to gain legitimacy among the populace. Nora's narrative is an ideal education system in that every child would have the same opportunity to achieve their goals at school. However, despite education being free from kindergarten to secondary school, there is a concern that the differentiated education system is not serving all students' needs (De Lisle, 2012). This same research questioned whether the current design of the education system is efficient and equitable for all students.

Institutionalized Segregation in Schools. In T&T, schools are differentiated in the education system as government-assisted denominational and government schools. Government-assisted denominational schools are schools that the government partly funds and denominational boards also provide funding. State or government schools are public schools

funded entirely by the government. The 1960 Concordat outlines the governance arrangements for government-assisted denominational schools. The Concordat is "a memorandum of assurances for the preservation and character of denominational schools in T&T" (Ministry of Education, n/d). Based on arrangements established in the 1960 Concordat, the government pays teachers' salaries in these government-assisted denominational schools. The government also provides part of the capital costs for the administration of these schools (Jules, 1994). One of the most controversial areas in the 1960 Concordat is the *right of selection*.

Right of selection allows government-assisted denominational primary schools to select 20% of their student intake regardless of their performance in the Secondary Entrance Assessment (SEA). The SEA "is a test-based selection and placement system positioned at the transition between primary and secondary schooling. The SEA functions as a gatekeeper by determining entry and placement into what was once considered a cherished pathway" (De Lisle, 2012, p. 112).

Apart from the 20% selection criteria stipulated by the 1960 Concordat, in both government schools and government-assisted denominational schools, student placement in secondary school is based on the test scores attained in the SEA. This selection system ensures that some schools always receive the top-performing students and others the low-performing students (De Lisle, 2012). This selection process by test scores has led to a system of institutionalized segregation and the perennial concentration of underperformance and inequity in some schools.

Arlene (p. 11) explains:

So, when we say education for all, we use the same exam, but I cannot see how it is equitable. Because as a Catholic, I can go to a priest, and because he has the Concordat, he has the (20%) rule of selection, so the church has the power to send anyone to the denominational secondary schools that are known as 'prestige schools.

165

Arlene's concerns are valid in that all students do not have the same opportunity to attend government-assisted denominational secondary schools in T&T as the religious bodies/boards have the prerogative to select any student despite their test scores.

The Concordat and the Twenty Percent Rule. The power of the 1960 Concordat and the right to select 20% of new students entering government-assisted/denominational secondary schools, has become contentious every year around the release of the SEA examination results. The preferential treatment given to students based on religious affiliation is a "mixture of religion and privilege" (Mendes-Franco, 2019, p. 1). Arlene (p. 11) further explains the power of religion and the privilege of having religious affiliation:

> Now imagine if that child is not cognitively efficient or successful [at the exam], but he is now going to a prestige school. That is doing him a disservice because the child will not be able to function, and the person who could function and could have gotten into that school did not because of this 20% rule, which took away that other child's spot by putting this person [who is not cognitively efficient].

The issues raised again by Arlene of the power given to the denominational/religious school boards to place any student in their denominational schools offer another layer to the capacities of students who attend these schools who got in on the 20% rule and whose score alone would not have given them that opportunity to attend. Donna (p. 10) addressed the challenges she has observed among students assigned under the 20% rule, a provision of the 1960 Concordat:

> So even in the elite schools, which are your convents and colleges, the [religious] board schools, we still have children failing there because remember some students would have been placed there under the 20% rule, facilitated by the 1960 Concordat.

> Donna (p. 10) further explains:

> So, they[students] are failing, so we go through the roll at the end of December every school term, and we pick up those who are failing. Then in small study groups, we focus on academic development and intervention with these students.

Donna's narrative illuminates the challenges posed by sending students to 'elite/prestige schools' because of religious affiliation and not high-test schools. The narrative also points to the process she adopts to make the education system at elite schools equitable for all students.

The education system in T&T unofficially functions as a tier system (Worrell & Noguera, 2011). The government-assisted denominational schools are perceived as Tier I schools and are considered 'prestige schools' providing seven years of secondary schooling to students who score the highest marks in SEA (Worrell & Noguera, 2011). Prestige schools in T&T are primarily single-sex schools managed by religious or denominational boards. Prestige schools derive from a "lingering tacit desire to approximate the culture, status, and cachet of the former British colonizers" in a new education system (Frederick-Clarke, 2020, p. 33).

The other non-religious government secondary schools are classified as Tier II and Tier III and provide five years of education to students (Worrell & Noguera, 2011). Tier II and III schools are the junior secondary, senior secondary, and composite schools. Students who score under 50% or less are assigned to these schools (Worrell & Noguera, 2011). These students also have the option of rewriting the SEA examination the following year. Arlene (p. 11) describes one of these types of schools where she works:

> My school is not considered a prestige school by any means. It is a secondary school where we have average-performing children. Our school has outliers where the poor performing, and the well-performing students operate. We also have many differences in socioeconomic status, all the differences one could find in a school. The location of the secondary school is another issue. So, this is just an opinion or fact, but the school's area has many challenges and events that do not facilitate learning and equity. So, is there equality, a fair chance for the students to attend classes, and have the equipment, and everything they need to attend online classes? That would be a resounding no.

The anecdote by Arlene and the discussion on Tier II or Tier III school as described by Worrell and Noguera (2011) above highlights significant challenges for some students. These

challenges also point to the inter-related and inter-connectedness of socioeconomic issues, the

location, and the events that occur around the school (Ball et al., 2012).

Another guidance counselor, Devon (p. 12) shared a similar experience in her school:

I am working at what they consider a high-risk school…because of the area. So, we are starting at a disadvantage, and I have tried to get them [students] to understand that they may be starting at a disadvantage, but if they work hard, they could succeed at anything.

The issue of location and intake is also addressed in this narrative and speaks to the

reality that some schools in T&T put students at a disadvantage, leading to inequity in learning

outcomes and student achievement (De Lisle, 2012; UNESCO, 2017).

According to Laura:

Learning [outcomes] depend on the school because if I go back to my teaching days in the country, school equity was a no, no. I have met some impoverished children, impoverished poverty-stricken students, where some of them did not even have the basic resources at home. No lights, no water, you know. Then they come into school with, you know, unkempt uniforms. So, there was not any equity there. In the town school, the differences were apparent between students. But in the town school, it was not so much poverty, but it was more class [of people], because then we had the upper class, and then you had the regular class. However, equity existed in terms of whom I belonged to or where I belong. (p. 6)

In Laura's narrative, the terms *country* and *town* school refer to schools located

geographically in rural and urban areas, respectively. In these types of schools in T&T, equity

issues are situated more around social class, rural-urban issues, and the culture of schools.

School Culture. School culture is "a dominant pattern of behavior and beliefs held by

school members that function as a frame of reference for the way they interact, and the way

things are done at the school" (Schoen & Teddlie, 2008, p. 6). Historically, school culture

"transmits ceremonies, rituals, traditions, and myths understood, in varying degrees, by members

of the school community" (Cleveland et al., 2012, p. 35), thus, establishing a thriving learning

environment (Cleveland et al., 2012). Hence, school culture acts as a "frame of reference for the

way school interacts and the way things are done at the school" (Schoen & Teddlie, 2008, p. 6).

Karen (p. 4) explains school culture:

> What we do is culture. Our school has a solid female cultural background of influential persons in politics, religion, arts, music, and entertainment. So, you are looking at ladies who have led and continue to lead in various fields. We belong to different groups that are part of the school, stepping up to the plate and offering [help] whether it is financial support, whether it is that psychological support, whether it is that 'Meals on Wheels or other support, whatever it may be, they step up, and they do it quietly, and effectively.

Karen's narrative describes a school culture supported by a vibrant alum of prominent women in positions of power in T&T alum, who includes parents, professionals, and other stakeholders, are involved in fostering a safe and orderly school environment; and provide collegial and professional input. In these schools, culture serves as a powerful vehicle for driving academic success for all students (Cleveland et al., 2012). Also in such settings, academic success is distinguished by its culture, which has "a structure, process, and climate of values and norms that channel staff and students in the direction of excellence in teaching and learning" (Cleveland et al., 2012, p. 36). Karen (p. 3) further explains:

> Our students are not afraid to go after that excellence. So, they are encouraged to put in the extra time, lunchtime, the time after school, special arts groups, and work as a team, Be responsible for that leadership role from as early as the second term of the lower six years. And we scout out or recruit those students that best fit the prefect roles, and then we try to partner with 'Big Sisters' to provide students with the support needed and give students opportunities to mesh with them and model their success stories.

The school culture in this narrative illustrates "an active force, which initiates and activates policy processes and choices which are continuously constructed and developed both from within and without in response to policy imperatives and expectations" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 24) of students. The narrative also explains a school culture that encourages students to pursue excellence by being productive with their time and using the opportunities and tools to facilitate

their success at school. Similarly, another guidance counselor shared her views about the school culture where she works:

> There is a brotherhood at [this school], supporting your brothers, supporting the other, and that is equity. What I recognized there, which I liked, from the time I reached, I saw that family unit, where the teachers would reach out to the students. A student would approach the teachers anywhere on the compound. However, of course, they are the one or two who will always not be as friendly or accommodating. However, most teachers were very accommodating to students, and very few felt they could not reach out to teachers at any time. (Laura, p. 8)

The narratives provided by Karen and Laura also speak to a school culture that is reflective of a dominant feature of single-sex government-assisted denominational schools in T&T. Students at these types of schools are socialized differently. They are engaged in diverse activities that stimulate their growth and development. Also, single-sex government-assisted denominational have the right to determine their curriculum as per the 1960 Concordat (Mendes-Franco, 2019). As a result, the diverse activities at government-assisted denominational schools embody a school culture supported by a professional-oriented organizational structure with a student-centered approach (Schoen & Teddlie, 2008) for academic achievement. Laura further discusses her experience and approach to completing her guidance program in a school where the culture does not allow for flexibility. Laura (p. 4) explains:

> So, when I got there [at single-sex school], you know whenever you are new to anywhere, it is like if you go through that probation period. So, they [administration] monitored me. I was doing the same, observing, taking my notes, and so on. However, I maneuvered my way as the school culture was different. I did not hesitate to tell them I needed to get into the classroom. So, I would always ask to be on schedule, even though they never did, because I am a person who works better with a schedule. The other option was for me to take a class once the teachers were absent. I would now take their period and do my guidance session. So, I would ask for a supervision period and do my lesson with students. So, they thought I took the initiative and was proactive. So, I did that for the year, and the [administration], seeing my dedication, placed me on the school schedule.

Laura's narrative discusses an organizational culture with shared norms and assumptions (Zahed-Babelan et al., 2019) where new employees at the school get thoroughly vetted to

ascertain their competence and ability to work within the organization and to know if they will

be a valuable addition to the school. According to Laura (p. 4):

> The principal is even more forthcoming now. They will then reach out to me and ask
> what I think, so they accept my assessments. So, they look to me for my point of view
> because this is one thing we learn. We must accept that when some things are beyond us,
> we ask for help as something always comes up. So, you just must be prepared that you
> may have to juggle your schedule for the day, and you may not get to do what you want
> because you may have to respond to something else. (Laura, p. 4)

Laura's anecdote speaks to a type of leadership where the principals' effectiveness in

managing the school culture is dependent on the engagement of other actors in situations that

may materialize at school (Bedarkar & Pandita, 2014). The engagement of other actors is

necessary for the "positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind characterized by vigor,

dedication, and absorption" (Zahed-Babelan et al., 2019, p. 4).

Laura also spoke about a school culture that empowers students through their learning.

Laura (p. 7) explains:

> Concerning learning, I would say it depends on the school. At this school, students are
> encouraged and empowered, supported by the guidance counselor and the teachers. I
> would teach the students what it means to be confident and what it means to be
> supportive, even not just looking at self, but you know, supporting your brothers
> [brotherhood culture of the school], supporting the other people in the classroom by
> looking out for them.

This further explanation by Laura points to a type of organization structure at specific schools in

T&T that is high functioning and on top of student learning by facilitating avenues and fostering

a school culture to help students grow and achieve their goals.

Hence, school culture facilitates student-centered learning. Student-centered learning is

schooling that places students at the center (Kaput, 2018). This type of learning considers

"students' interests, learning styles, cultural identities, life experiences and personal challenges."

(Kaput, 2018, p. 7). For example, one guidance counselor explains how a student-centered

approach drives the culture at her school. Nora (p. 8) explains:

171

So, these are some things I would do in class. I will do many self-identity sessions with the class. Teach them about what it is to be confident and what it means to be supportive. Not just looking at yourself but supporting fellow students and helping others in the classroom by looking out for them. You know, I always tell my students, if they are not seeing their classmates, you give them a call and find out what is going on. Because we all need people, we need motivation, we need empowerment, and we need someone to remind us that we need affirmation. So, along that line, equity is significant because we do not want anybody to be left behind. We want to ensure that all students have the resources to learn; that is why we would reach out. I also called a couple of parents to find out what was happening with the students. I still did not reach a couple because their phone was not working, but we do not want anybody left behind.

The approach taken by Nora explains how she positions students at the center of the activities in her classes and how this fosters a caring school culture. School culture shapes how teachers facilitate student learning, and some teachers are dedicated more than others. Some see this as their job, a vocation, and those are the ones who will take the time and go over and beyond. Arlene (p. 6), another participant, explains:

The pandemic has impacted teachers as they have online work to mark for students who are attending, but they also have extra work for students who do not have connectivity and are doing their work by school packages. So, teachers must go to school and collect packages from students, correct the work, and return them to the school for students to pick up and collect their new work. So, it is a bit tedious, and teachers are getting weary in the process.

The narratives address broader school issues that influence the organization's culture by examining how things get done. In the narrative above, the collective actions of varied stakeholders, all working together to distinguish one school from another, drive school culture. The collaborative school culture creates the optimal learning setting that fosters comradery among students to make the classroom equitable leading to more excellent performance, student achievement, and pedagogy (Gruenert, 2005).

Equity in Pedagogy. Pedagogy is "the interactions between the teacher, pupils, the learning environment, and tasks they perform" (Gipps, 2003, p. 2). Equity pedagogy is "teaching strategies in a classroom environment that help students from diverse racial, ethnic and cultural

groups attain the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to function efficiently within, a democratic

society" (Banks & Banks, 2008, p. 152). Situating equity pedagogy in the differentiated type of

school system in Trinidad and Tobago is challenging because students attending schools based

on their test scores is problematic. High-performing students get placed in one type of school

while underperforming students are in another type of school.

A guidance counselor spoke of the Student Transition and Remediation Support

(STARS) program in schools for students who are academically slow and underperforming in the

classroom. The program is intended to reduce the achievement gap between underperforming

students. Donna (p.7) describes the STARS program in the following way:

> The STARS, whom we call the stars students, are the ones who perform under 30% in the Secondary Entrance Assessment examination. Many people comment on the assessments, but an assessment is an exam [and students are failing]. Many schools exist in marginalized areas, crime hot spots in the country, and in communities where people tend to look down upon because of their circumstances. So, we advocate for STARS on several levels because they are the most at risk. After all, they are, first, slow academically, and second, there is no funding to hire remedial teachers in school. So, the teachers or staff must facilitate the process.

The STARS program facilitates the students placed at both government-assisted

denominational schools and government schools who perform below 30% in the SEA

examination.

Another guidance counselor spoke about how she works with the underperforming

students at her school and the strategies to help them achieve their goals in the trades. Val (p. 4)

explains:

> So, I did a short course on adult literacy training to help students in that aspect. So, I would give them a simple document like a form to fill out, and then I realized they could not read the information. So, I started to do the essential reading with them, which is how I will deal with the remedial students.

In T&T, the remedial students are those placed at this school because students scored

below the 30% in the SEA examination. Remedial programs such as those articulated by Donna

and Val highlight the challenges for equity pedagogy (Banks & Banks, 2008). Situating equity pedagogy in the context of the publicly funded school system of government-assisted denominational schools and government schools in T&T is vital because students attend schools based on their scores in the SEA examination. The students who score below 30% on the exam normally go to government secondary schools with a remedial program (De Lisle et al., 2010). However, not all schools have remedial teachers to facilitate this learning. Val (p. 6) explains:

> In my school district, there is one remedial teacher to service all the secondary schools. Because of the lack of staff, remedial screening and teaching take a long time to happen at my school. So that is why I did the extra training to help the students.

The lack of remedial support in the education system means that teachers must be equipped with the requisite training and resources to support students in developing the necessary skills and attitudes to improve their learning and academic outcomes.

The situated contexts in which equity work occurs in T&T vary and depend on different factors in the school system. T&T education systems are also diverse and segregated (De Lisle et al., 2010), leading to unequal outcomes among the diverse groups in the education system. Notwithstanding this diversity, similarities exist between T&T and Ontario according to the data. The data in both case sites support the historical influence of colonialism on education in terms of how it perpetuates inequalities in the education system (McConaghy, 1998; Neeganagwedgin, 2013; Williams, 2016). Additionally, similarities exist in the locations of some schools in T&T and Ontario. For example, Ontario's high immigrant and refugee population contribute to lower socioeconomic living standards for this population, and schools in these areas are faced with challenges of low student achievement. Likewise, some schools in T&T operate within areas with many social issues like poverty and crime, thereby, influencing student outcomes and impacting the professional cultures of teachers and guidance counselors.

Professional Cultures

Like Ontario, the professional culture of guidance counselors in T&T is influenced by

the "values, commitments, experiences and policy management within schools, asking whether

and how they feed into policy enactments" (Braun et al., 2011, p. 591). Professional contexts are

not necessarily "coherent and uncontested within schools" (p. 27), they operate in myriad ways

within this setting (Ball et al., 2012). Schools in Ontario and Trinidad and Tobago have distinct

professional cultures, outlooks, and attitudes (Ball et al., 2012) that set them apart. In both

locations, the distinctive cultures help differentiate the types of schools. In Ontario, the study

was conducted with publicly funded provincial district school board-run secondary schools. In

Trinidad and Tobago publicly funded government schools and government-assisted

denominational schools were utilized in this study.

Some of the themes addressed below are a *diverse school, professional cultures*, and *student

advocacy*.

Diverse Professional School Culture. In T&T, the types of schools allow for a diverse

professional culture to exist. Consequently, government-assisted denominational secondary

schools and government schools' cultures differ (Brown & Conrad, 2007; Connerley & Pedersen,

2005). Karen (p. 3) discusses the embedded diverse professional culture at her school:

> While working at a single-sex school, I would have met a distinct culture and had to
> maintain it. I came from a school culture that borders coed (boys and girls), and I had to
> balance the culture. We do talk equity, but there are certain things we know girls or
> young ladies, or men or boys would prefer to do like specific careers, and certain types of
> studies. So, we encourage our students that they can be on the same plateau as young men
> and vice versa. We also encourage our young men that they can acquire the same
> academic excellence and everything as our young girls. However, in these schools, there
> is a difference in socialization. There is a difference in the things students are attracted to
> at school. There is a difference in how these schools get marketed. Then there is a push in
> the academic direction for girls and boys. In a nutshell, there is a difference in equality.
> There is a difference in equity between the studies for girls and boys.

This professional culture at single-sex government-assisted denominational schools in Trinidad and Tobago embodies the differences in "educational values, school philosophy, school intakes and what and how policies get pursued" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 22). The narrative highlights a diverse professional culture driven by institutional values and commitments of teachers (Ball et al., 2012) and other support staff and their influence on policy enactment.

In government schools, teachers' values and commitment may differ in how schools get managed, and policies get enacted by guidance counselors who "inflict policy responses in particular ways" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 27). Donna (p. 17) explains:

> A particular teacher in one of the low-performing schools recognized that his students were coming into school at 15 and 16 years because they would have repeated every standard in primary school twice. So, when these students entered secondary school, they were placed in form one. These kids entered form one when their peers were entering at age 11 and were frustrated with low self-esteem and angry because they [students] wanted to be with their big friends in the higher forms. So, the teacher realized these older kids were in form one, just getting into trouble. So, he moved all the 15- and 16-year-old students in form one into form four and kept them in form four for four and five years. He had them do exams one by one and as a result, the students began to thrive and succeed at school.

The anecdote above speaks to a peculiar professional culture at one government school in T&T, where teachers who are committed to student outcomes will adjust school philosophies to meet the varied needs of students in 'incoherent and uncontested' ways within schools (Ball et al., 2012, p. 27). The different ways professional cultures are manifested and experienced at the two main types of public-funded schools in T&T are important for equity work if Guidance Counselors are to meet the varied needs of students. Guidance counselors are an essential component of policy work and can function as advocates in the context of equity (Chan et al., 2019).

Student Advocacy. Guidance counselors assume *advocacy* roles in their professional cultures at secondary schools as they usually act as the 'middleman' or the 'go-between' for

176

mediating issues with principals and students, teachers, and students. Guidance counselors are

always able to move policies at school forward as student advocates (Ball et al., 2012). Val

explains:

> Well, my job is to advocate for the students. I let them know that I am in their corner. So,
> I mean, it will be times when students are not doing the right thing and are getting into
> trouble with teachers. So, I must try and liaise with teachers to understand the issue from
> their perspective so I can mediate the problem. Then I will go to the students and let them
> know that I went to the teacher on their behalf, and I beg for them, and they cannot let me
> down. So that is how I tried to mesh the child's wrongdoing to still put them onto the
> right path, which is the path the teacher wants them on. So, I still must advocate for them,
> even when they continuously do the wrong thing. (pp. 4-5)

> Val's narrative describes guidance counselors' commitment to their professional practice.

This commitment is crucial because it drives actions and shapes how schools treat students who

are not following the rules. Guidance counselors who drive actions through their values and

commitment to policy enactment often function as policy entrepreneurs as they devise

meaningful actions to shape policy responses (Ball et al., 2012). According to Donna (p. 14):

> I believe there has been a concerted effort over the years to increase equity. We now
> bring in special needs and address the unique need of students. We have several 'On the
> Job' Trainees (OJT) working as special education aids to students with special needs.
> That is one of the things we do, advocating, employing, and ensuring that children who
> need the most help get it. That might be children with cerebral palsy, visually impaired
> children who cannot write for themselves and need writers, and who may have congenital
> diseases and therefore cannot walk. We have aides working along with them. Right now,
> there is a committee developing and working the advocate for the unique needs project in
> the Ministry to include these students and have an inclusive education. So, that is
> inclusivity at all levels within the system that is happening now in our schools in
> Trinidad.

 The narrative explains how the Ministry of Education tries to make the education system

equitable by including and supporting students with special needs. Students with special

education needs have more difficulty with learning than many of their peers and have

characteristics that affect their ability to learn (Williams, 2007); as such, equity consideration by

the Ministry of Education needs to facilitate these students' unique ways of learning and support

the diverse characteristics they possess. Unfortunately, inclusive education has failed students

with special needs in T&T and continues to segregate them into special schools as they are not

educated in mainstream schools (De Lisle et al., 2010). Inclusive education in T&T can create

access and participation in quality education while acknowledging and appreciating the

differences and advancing the cause of marginalized groups in the education system (Waitoller

& Artiles, 2013). However, some researchers believe that inclusive education is a dream in

progress (Charran, 2018); as the government struggles to enact educational strategies to cater to

the diverse needs of all students (Ainscow & Sandhill, 2010).

> Donna (p. 5) describes how advocacy for students with special needs occurs:
>
> We are advocates for the students. We are a voice for the students and their advocates. So, therefore, we are fighting for equity at all levels. We advocate for the rights of the marginalized, disenfranchised, and those with special needs. The whole thing with people with their sexuality and trying to figure out who they are. We recognize that students have diverse needs, accept them, and advocate on their behalf. We also work with parents and give them strategies because many parents did not go to school to be parents, and many feel helpless and do not know what else to do, so we support them.

> The anecdote above explains how guidance counselors advocate on behalf of students

and give voice to the issues that concern them. In T&T's education system, advocating for

students is filtered through principals in the school system and the Student Support Services

Division/Unit that manages guidance and counseling services in schools. Any matter concerning

students goes through this Division/Unit and a referral system managed by a team of

professionals that create a plan of action for them. However, marginalization and the

disenfranchisement of special needs students are more institutional and can only be fixed through

equitable policies in the Ministry of Education and the Tobago House of Assembly.

Accordingly, the failure of the education systems in T&T to provide the necessary

support for students with special needs is a social justice, equality, and human rights issue

(Barton & Armstrong, 2007). Students with special needs require adaptation and modification in

teaching methods, curriculum, and structures to help them integrate into the mainstream

education systems (Williams, 2007).

According to Ball et al. (2012), schools have "distinct sets of professional cultures,

outlooks, and attitudes that have changed over time and modify policy responses in particular

ways that are multifaceted and muddled" (p. 29). In this multifaceted policy landscape,

professional culture mediates the values and commitments of guidance counselors to policy

enactment within schools (Ball et al., 2012). Professional cultures at secondary school in T&T

are like that of Ontario. Chapter 5 shows guidance counselors engaging in some of the same

activities at school, such as advocating for students and giving them a voice in the education

system. The professional cultures of guidance counselors and other policy actors are essential for

meeting schools' commitments and shaping policy enactments (Ball et al., 2012). As such,

professional cultures of guidance counselors function in varied capacities within similar material

contexts in which policy enactments occur at school.

Material Contexts

The material contexts of schools incorporate "physical aspects such as buildings, budgets,

levels of staffing, technologies and surrounding infrastructure" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 29).

Additionally, material contexts consider how "buildings are layout, the quality, and spaciousness

of schools and the impact it has on policy enactments on the ground" (Braun et al., 2011, p. 592).

In T&T and Ontario, the material contexts of schools are vastly different and operate within

varied capacities. For instance, in this study, different material contexts and capacities for

enactment in each setting were observed (Ball et al., 2012). Some of the themes are now

discussed below as *access to educational resources, and education initiatives.*

Access to Educational Resources. In T&T, like other Caribbean countries, the pandemic

exposed inadequacies in the education system concerning technology, infrastructure, and budget

to facilitate the transitions to online schooling (Blackman, 2021). In terms of *budget* and

technologies for facilitating learning at schools in T&T, Laura (p. 20) describes the situation with

having resources to facilitate students learning and teaching:

> So, regarding resources, our parents, teachers, and association (PTA) would have donated some devices. Externally, we have not received any resources, even financially, because we would get certain things that we usually get that did not happen. The money we should be getting to help us have our resources, like our own devices, and the internet, has not been provided yet. Then it is up to us to make sure that we make that happen.

> The anecdote addresses the issues of school budgets and the lack of finances to purchase

needed resources to facilitate continuous learning for students and their transitions from in-

person learning/schooling to online learning/schooling. Laura (p. 20) further explains:

> I think we would not have too many students being left behind at our school. It is less than 5% because we have been monitoring and trying to help students who do not have *access*. So, whatever we can do, even to get the assignments to them, touch base with them via telephone, if they do not have Internet Wi-Fi, we have phone means and ways to do that.

> The narrative addresses the concern related to moving to remote online learning, where

students are left behind because of a *lack of technological access* and *internet connectivity*.

Similarly, as was observed in the Ontario data, online learning also posed some challenges where

some students were being left behind and others were leaving the education system because they

could not cope with online learning. In T&T, equitable access to resources also depends on the

two types of public schools (government-assisted denominational and government/state schools).

Speaking about the immediate access to resources at her government-assisted denominational

school when the COVID-19 pandemic began in March 2020, Karen (p. 11) highlights what her

school was doing:

We were one of the early schools even before the Ministry of Education made that declaration or took that stance to teach virtually. If I look back at our last year, we have been teaching virtually since the 16th of March 2020. Let me say this guardingly: no students falling behind who did not have devices. Because of that observation between March and June 2020, when we realized how many were checking in for assembly and classes, those devices would have gotten to students who were not accessing school online during that July- August vacation into September and October 2020. We also had students with devices but had an issue with connectivity, and the school devised a plan for those students to come to the physical school with the necessary provision made and use their devices there between 8:00 -2:30 and have school on site. So, students had all the necessary resources and services to facilitate their learning.

Karen's narrative above highlights the preparedness of government-assisted denominational schools to respond to the exigencies of COVID-19. Government-assisted denominational schools have the resources that serve as a mediating force to circumvent the lack of access to devices. In addition, these government-assisted denominational schools have an active past student alumnus that ensures students receive all the necessary resources. Government-funded schools do not have such support from their alumni, so they must wait on the state to provide, leading to long wait times and inequity reinforced by socioeconomic challenges. Nora (p. 3) explains the inequity facility by the challenges with lack of resources:

Equity means that each student has a fair opportunity to access resources. I was speaking with my principal this morning about this issue. However, of course, in most schools, or many schools, I should not say most, as access to resources is an ongoing challenge. Students do not have the basics; they do not have devices and connectivity, so they do not come to class. Some students come to class online, but they come to take rolls, and then they do not show up in the classes. Some log on, and then they do not pay attention. Students do whatever they do at home and do not turn on their cameras. So, you do not know what they are doing. So, there are many challenges, many different reasons, and issues, I think, for students not showing up.

The narrative above addresses issues of fairness in the provision of resources so students can have the same opportunities to access devices to facilitate their online learning. However, in T&T, because schools are segregated into different types and managed by denominational boards and the government, there is a difference in how resources are allocated. Government-assisted

denominational schools do not wait on the government to receive resources. They receive

resources from their well-established past student associations who support their schools with

timely resources. Unlike government schools, which must wait until the Ministry of Education

releases funds. However, Arlene (p. 4) explains the challenges students experienced who do not

have the right resource to facilitate their learning, leading to inequity in the system:

> To access classes, everybody needs a phone, computer, or tablet, which is just the
> beginning; you know, they need good internet service. So, if you do not have a computer,
> it is also tricky because you may have a phone or a tablet, but sometimes the ability to
> come online has issues accessing the work. So, for example, if I play a video, people who
> are on a tablet or a phone may not be able to hear it, or you must log out and log in again
> [several times to get access]. So, it is not as easy for someone who may have a computer,
> and then the next thing is what kind of computer do you have an inexpensive computer
> that does not have the features that are necessary to be able to have proper access, so that
> is also a challenge there.

Arlene's narrative points to a material context in some schools where students experience

technology and infrastructure-related challenges (Ball et al., 2012) to facilitate online learning at

home. The lack of technology and infrastructure leads to internet access and connectivity

inequities in the education system. As Devon (p. 4) discussed:

> It would be good if students had the same access to things. However, I do not see that
> happening. This school is considered high-risk because of the area it is on. Then our
> students are not financially privileged. Most of them do not have anything to eat. So even
> if they have equity, they still will not be able to function [because they are hungry at
> school and learning cannot take place]. Sometimes, the teachers or I must give students
> money to come to school, and they do not have a new skirt right now. I have skirts in my
> cupboard if a student needs a skirt. However, their access is still limited even if they have
> the same opportunities because they might have access to school online, but many of
> them cannot attend because they do not have a device, and even if they do have a device,
> they do not have access to the internet because their parents may not be able to afford it

The narrative above discusses issues of the lack of infrastructure and resources to

facilitate online remote learning for students (Ball et al., 2012). The narrative also highlights

some of the issues schools in high-risk areas face daily. For example, some school locations

perpetuate poverty; therefore, students who attend these schools also reflect challenges

182

associated with the low socioeconomic communities in which they live. Therefore, they are

vulnerable and are more likely to need support (Beuermann et al., 2020).

Education Initiatives. The Ministry of Education has undertaken several initiatives in

T&T to fix the lack of technology and infrastructure in some schools. One such program is

"Adopt-A-School." Through this program, the Ministry of Education collaborates with

stakeholders through the "No Child Left Behind" project to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19

pandemic on the education system (Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Education, n/d). The

Ministry of Education continues to step up and provide needed resources. Nora (p. 4) explains:

> My school had gotten several donations, and students who did not have devices got
> devices. However, those who did not have internet connectivity were allowed to come to
> school to attend classes online, and only maybe three students took up the opportunity to
> do that. In addition, as directed by the Ministry, our school was provided packages of
> printed material to distribute to students who had no devices or connectivity and
> preferred paper printouts. However, they spent time and money to do that and honestly
> wasted ink and printed material to print the whole document because students did not
> show up to collect packages.

Nora highlights that the Ministry of Education is providing the necessary resources and

meeting the connectivity needs at her school. Ball and colleagues suggest that how schools are

"equipped internally impacts teaching and learning activities necessary for policy enactments"

(Ball et al., 2012, p. 33). According to Devon: "Sometimes I think they [Ministry of Education]

go above and beyond because some of these things parents should be provided to their children.

If you look at the rights of a child, parents, of course, have the responsibility" (p. 5). However,

on online connectivity, Devon continues:

> The schools have internet access. Some children are back to school, and even though they
> do not have a device, we have computers in the library, two computer labs, and devices in
> different parts of the compound. So even if they do not have a device or anything, they
> can come and access it at school. The equity may come in there because they will have
> the same access to the information and stuff like that but getting to the access points may
> be a little tricky. (p. 5)

183

This narrative addresses what the school did to facilitate online learning for all students.

In addition, the narrative points to the solution this school produced for making the system more equitable. At the beginning of the pandemic in T&T, data showed that approximately 63,369 students lacked devices, information communication technologies (ICTs), and internet service to facilitate their learning (Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Education, n/d). This situation posed a serious challenge for the Ministry of Education and the Tobago House of Assembly as these institutions were left scrambling for solutions to mitigate the problem exacerbated by the pandemic.

Technology and infrastructure initiatives by the Ministry of Education provided students with the necessary resources (computer devices) to aid in their learning as an essential intervention during the COVID-19 pandemic. The ministry's intervention also prevented a widening of the gap between students with and those without access to technology and educational resources (Blackman, 2021).

External Contexts

The last contextual factor discusses the external contexts and how they address the burdens and expectations from broader local and national policy (Braun et al., 2011). This contextual dimension considers "aspects such as pressures and expectations generated by wider local and national policy frameworks" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 36). As a result, issues of power and politics discussed within the *top-down approach to policy formulation* and giving guidance counselors a *voice* in the external context of schools are important.

Top-down Approach to Policy Formulation and Enactment. In the local school context, policy work exists within a broader national policy scale where the Ministry of Education is driving school equity work. This policy work is formulated with little consultation

from other policy actors, like teachers and guidance counselors positioned in schools (Nora, p. 15). A top-down approach to policy formulation is also evident in the Ontario education system. Here, policy decisions passed to school boards for the schools to implement are constructed by politicians and government officials (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009). Similarly, in Trinidad and Tobago, education policy formulation occurs at the office of the Minister of Education and filters down to the Chief Education Officer, unto the head of the guidance unit, and then guidance counselors are asked to enact it at the school level. This linear top-down process embodies "politics in action that links economic and social forces, institutions, people, interests, events interact" (Taylor et al., 1997, p. 20). The process also exemplifies "issues of power and interest … in policy-making, … and processes of consultation …." (Taylor et al., 1997, p. 20) in policy enactment at schools.

Like Ontario, the external influence of the Ministry of Education on policy work is often political in T&T (Ball et al., 2011), as all government-assisted denominational and government schools report in some manner to the Minister of Education. However, in government-assisted denominational schools, that role shifts to the denominational boards, which then submit reports to the Ministry of Education. Whereas, in the government, schools' reports go up the chain until they get to the Chief Education Officer and then the Minister of Education. Nora (p. 12) explains the issue with the minister having too much power over what gets enacted into the education system:

> I also think one of the main issues is that the Minister in the Ministry of Education is calling the shots, and bodies like Student Support Services Unit, must fall into place and do what the Ministry of Education is asking. So, I would not say the Student Support Services Unit asks for all the reporting. Well, I think some of it is unnecessary. I think a lot of it is about being data-driven in quotation marks because all these reports that get submitted, who is reading them? Who is collating them? Who is doing anything with that information? Probably no one because we do not know anything about it after the fact.

185

So, I cannot understand all the need for reporting, as there are some things, I think are unnecessary, like weekly reporting.

The above narrative addresses issues related to the lack of autonomy by the Student Support Services Division to use data to undertake its policy work. In Ontario, guidance counselors use big data to inform policy and practice in the school with principals and school boards. At the Ministry of Education, the data also informs policy decisions and serve as a political statement of accomplishment (Laura, p. 15). However, in T&T, data does not inform policy but serves more as a mechanism for satisfying political agendas, as indicated by a guidance counselor. Nora (p. 13) explains:

> When the Minister commented last year about how many students attend classes, that was such false data. We do not even know where she got that information from because what we see here at school and the number of students who are not showing up to class is a lot, but the Minister is on the news, making it seem like, you know, they are managing the online learning which derived from the pandemic. I mean, before the Minister makes those loaded statements, she is supposed to communicate with teachers and guidance counselors about the real story of what is happening in schools and to know what we know.

Nora's narrative points to government pressure to operate in "a logic of opportunistic politics, in which decision-makers manipulate policies to achieve desired outcomes" (Cerna, 2013, p. 153). As a result, "policies become 'iteratively refracted' and are adjusted as they are introduced into and work their way through school environments by guidance counselors" (Newton, 2010, p. 431).

Guidance Counselors' Voice in Policy Work. Another issue that emerged when thinking about the external contexts of guidance counselors in T&T is the relationship between management, particularly the belief by guidance counselors that they do not have a voice in policy works/enactment at school. One guidance counselor explains the issue, stating:

> There is a bit of a disconnect between management and the actual officers who are in the schools. So, in terms of what is happening, on the one hand, I understand that our

186

supervisor tries to hold us to a high standard because she is just like us and knows what it is like to be a guidance officer, yet she is in an administrative position. So, therefore, all the reporting comes from above, and she must do what the Division Heads ask. However, on the other hand, all the reporting is a bit backward, and they need to revamp it. (Nora p. 11)

Within Nora's narrative, there is a disconnect between the management of the Student Support Services Division and guidance counselors and the type of relationship. The dissonance observed in this narrative explains how guidance counselors perceived the policy work they engage in at school as not being forward-thinking and a true reflection of what is happening in schools. According to Nora (p.12),

> So, the Student Support Services Division (SSSD) decides the topics that all schools should focus on for the academic term, and we must enact [it into our work]. SSSD decides that schools should be doing this at this time, and we must show in our reporting that we taught the topic at this specific time of the term. However, officers say this does not make sense and does not apply to my school. My school administration has told me there should not be a standard on topics that every school has to follow as schools are different. They say to us we understand that all students deal with transition, we understand all students must learn study skills, you know, but there needs to be that flexibility to meet the needs of these children at the different schools.

Nora's narrative above is centered around "the role of policy entrepreneurs in shaping school policy responses" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 27). In policy work, guidance counselors are well-positioned to speak on school issues because they are both policy receivers and agents (Ball et al., 2011). However, guidance counselors feel as if their values, experiences, and commitment to their work at the schools are not appreciated within their professional cultures. Roland explains: "guidance counselors continue to face an uphill climb in terms of recognition of importance within the school frame" (Roland, p. 12). Additionally, Roland (p. 12) continues to expound on the changes he has observed in the recognition of guidance counselors and their practice at secondary schools:

> Since I have been in guidance counselor, there has been a shift and acknowledgment of guidance in the daily running of schools. However, more can get done in terms of

inclusivity. I think the inclusion of guidance must be in drafting policy as it relates to students because we give a different vantage point. Additionally, guidance counselors come from a neutral standpoint, not from the standpoint of background information about a child. Therefore, I think guidance counselors can help change how we treat students at school. Therefore, it is advisable that when equity policies become formulated, guidance should be present on the board or be part of the group of individuals formulating these policies for dissemination throughout schools. (p. 12)

The anecdote explains the views of a guidance counselor on the shift he observes in the acknowledgment of guidance within the Ministry of Education and Tobago House of Assembly. However, Roland believes more inclusion needs to occur as guidance is a critical aspect in schools and can provide a different perspective for students. Other guidance counselors shared differing sentiments of exclusion and invisibility to the Ministry of Education, the Tobago House of Assembly, and even some schools. Two guidance counselors shared similar stories about being invisible in their practice: "The issue is that guidance is not seen. Our experiences and our thoughts on how we deliver our guidance services should be factored in, especially when it comes to what is being asked of us to do like all the reporting; all the reporting then should help the administration and Ministry of Education and the Tobago House of Assembly to see very clearly what is happening at the school level" (Laura, p. 6; Nora, p. 11).

The anecdotes address concerns of guidance counselors and their work not reflected in the decision-making activities in the Ministry of Education and Tobago House of Assembly. The lack of inclusion of guidance counselors, their voices, and contributions when formulating education policies unearths feelings of being undervalued within the Ministry of Education in the Trinidad and Tobago House of Assembly. Addressing the unrecognition of the *value of guidance counselors* in the school system, one guidance counselor laments: "I think that the structure that is in place should be working more efficiently. I understand that there should be a structure in place that bring to the forefront the challenges that we guidance counselors/officers face in the

schools" (Laura, p. 14). Laura continues: "When the management of the Student Support

Services Division gets written documents with whatever recommendations from the guidance

and counseling unit or a guidance counselor, they need to be perceived as significant enough to

be considered in the discussions with senior level staff in the Ministry of Education/Tobago

House of Assembly, before they develop any policies or in that, you know (sic), enact any

policies" (Laura, p. 17).

There are broader issues impacting external contexts within schools and the influence of

leadership outside the school system. This leadership points to the role of the Student Support

Service Division in T&T, considering the *voices of guidance counselors* in a meaningful way.

Listening to guidance counselors' voices ensures that they can put forward their concerns to the

Ministry of Education as the Student Support Services Division can be the mediating context in

policy formulation and enactment at the schools (Ball et al., 2012).

The Ministry of Education, the Student Support Services Division in Trinidad, the

Tobago House of Assembly, and its Student Support Services Unit in Tobago significantly

influences school equity work. However, the Student Support Services agencies are responsible

for disseminating education policies and equity strategies provided by the Ministry of Education

and the Tobago House of Assembly for guidance counselors to enact into their practice at

secondary schools (Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Education, n/d).

In Ontario, there is no national system of education because education is a provincial

responsibility. Therefore, the federal Ministry of Education cannot dictate how education is

facilitated in the province of Ontario. Instead, the Ontario provincial government formulates

policies through the Ministry of Education, which then instructs school boards to adopt and enact

their versions of the policies to meet the needs of their schools and student population (Ontario

Ministry of Education, 2009a). However, in T&T, school boards do not operate and manage schools or enact educational equity strategies/policies in the same way as in Ontario. What is similar between Ontario and T&T is that they both report to the Ministry of Education (Provincial and National). School boards in Ontario are established by and answer directly to the provincial Ministry of Education. Likewise, in T&T, school boards answer directly to the Ministry of Education (Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Education, n/d).

Consequently, in Ontario and T&T, school boards do not function as independent regulatory bodies (Ontario Ministry of Education, n/d; Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Education, n/d). Additionally, in Ontario, school boards have an operating budget from the province for hiring teachers and other staff, building and schools maintenance, and developing local education policies (e.g., Safe Schools), ensuring that schools follow the rules as outlined in the Education Act (People for Education, n/d). However, in T&T, school boards do not have as much autonomy or operating budgets to make decisions like Ontario. School boards in T&T have three significant duties: "Strategic planning; building community relationships and maintenance and upgrade of school's physical facilities" (Trinidad and Tobago Local School Boards Regulations, 2005, p. 3), thereby limiting the activities that they can engage in at schools to bring about meaningful change in the education system.

Actions of Guidance Counselors and Educational Equity at Secondary Schools. The typologies of Ball et al. (2011) and Ball et al. (2012) examine the actions of guidance counselors in T&T and how they engage in policy work. Both typologies outline the roles and positions of policy actors [guidance counselors] in policy enactment at secondary schools. Guidance counselors in secondary schools in T&T, and Ontario, function in different capacities and roles

"as subjects, producers, and consumers of policy, and as readers and writers of policy" (Ball et al., 2011, p. 611) in the enactment process at schools.

The varied roles of guidance counselors in policy enactment require understanding the hermeneutics of policy and how this influences policy interpretation and translation (Ball et al., 2012). In schools, a heuristic distinction between interpretation and translation is critical to the policy process. Interpretation is the "initial reading or making sense of policy, and what the text means to us" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 43). Interpretation also entails engaging with the language of policies. Whereas translation is an "iterative process of making institutional texts and putting texts into action… enacting policy, using tactics, talk, meetings, plans, events, … producing artefacts and borrowing from other schools, from commercial materials and official websites" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 45) to facilitate their programs.

Policies are interpreted and translated into meaningful practices in T&T through several processes. One such process is *policy borrowing*. Policy borrowing is a "conscious adoption in one context of policy observed in another" (Phillips & Ochs, 2004, p. 775). The action of borrowing policies is deliberate and purposive and has potential policy value in the home country (Phillips, 2005). As such, policies utilized in the Student Support Services Division are often borrowed from across international jurisdictions and adapted to meet the local school context in T&T. Policy borrowing is not unique to T&T because, in Ontario, similar actions occur in the Ontario Ministry of Education in varying contexts (Cohen, 2012). Policy borrowing is often done to strengthen the education system by examining and incorporating tried and practical measures that have proven to increase equity within schools (Cohen, 2012; Gilbert & Pratt-Adams, 2022).

In T&T, one guidance counselor explains the Student Support Services Division's justification for engaging in policy borrowing: "Although we have a guidance handbook, we

have utilized and borrowed some aspects of the America School Counseling Association

(ASCA) policy. We have culturized it based on our country's and citizenry's needs. We did not

borrow it wholesale, but ASCA policies also ultimately guide what we do" (Donna, p. 13).

The act of policy borrowing from internationally acclaimed organizations such as the

America School Counseling Association has guided guidance and counseling practice in T&T

for many years. Donna explains: "We borrow policies from other authorities depending on the

topic we want to address at school as issues arise" (p. 14). For example, "one school district close

to Venezuela was experiencing some human trafficking issues, so talking to students about this

was high on the agenda. We would look at their policy to gather more information, fine-tune it,

and determine how to infuse it into our year plan" (Donna, p. 14).

Adopting a policy that originates from another jurisdiction requires "engagement with the

language of policy" (p. 45) and translation through an "iterative process that is specific to the

needs of the population under study" (Phillips & Ochs., 2004, p. 775). One guidance counselor,

Val (p. 15) explains:

> Well, I borrow policies from all over. I do not look at one specific policy; you know I
> will go into this one (policy), oh, this is an excellent lesson, and this is information that I
> want to pay attention to because sometimes the information can allow them [students] to
> engage in conversation. For example, I did career development with students ' careers,
> my choice, and I showed them a video I got from another place, and they started to
> debate it and coming out of that debate, I planned a lesson. So, my lesson for the next
> session was placed on the back burner because I realized that the [students] interest was
> in something else.

Val's anecdote discusses policy borrowing from other national agencies in other

jurisdictions and how guidance counselors make decisions based on the local policies from the

Ministry of Education and other ministry documents as they facilitate children's well-being and

rights. As Donna suggests: "We have our guidance curriculum, a guidance manual, and a

guidance policy, and our guidance handbook also guides our practice. We also have other

policies, such as the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) policy for the education sector and a work-based HIV policy. So, in terms of policies, those are some that we use in our practice at school to assist students" (Donna, p. 13).

Guidance counselors in this study engage with several policies within the local school context to unearth the 'problem of meaning' through multifaceted and differentiated activities at the school (Ball et al., 2011). Unfortunately, the multifaceted and differentiated activities that guidance counselors engage in within contexts "are obscured and distorted" (Ball et al., 2011., p 625). This obscurity and distortion mean that guidance counselors must be "positioned differently and assume positions about policy, including positions of indifference or avoidance or irrelevance" (Ball et al., 2011., p. 635). In T&T, the positions of guidance counselors and the work they engage in within the school system are manifested but not limited to *entrepreneurs*, *enthusiasts*, and *translators* (Ball et al., 2012).

Entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs function in schools as policy advocates who champion policies and recruit others to build the capacity to enact policies (Ball et al., 2011). As policy advocates, guidance counselors as entrepreneurs use a diverse set of policies to "rework, recombine aspects of policies… to produce something original, and crucially translate this into a set of positions and roles and organizational relationships which 'enact' policy" (Ball et al., 2011, p. 628). In her work as a policy entrepreneur, Donna explains the positions and roles she engages in at school:

> We are advocates for the students. We are a voice for the students and advocate for the child. Therefore, we are fighting for equity at all levels. We advocate for the rights of the marginalized, disenfranchised, and those with special needs. We advocate for students and their sexuality to help them to understand who they are. We recognize, accept, promote, and advocate. We also work with parents and give them strategies because many parents did not go to school to be parents, and many feel helpless and do not know what else to do, so we support them. (Donna, p. 5)

In the anecdote, the advocacy role of guidance counselors facilitates their daily actions to fight for equity for students. However, a redefinition of the guidance counselor role is needed in the education system and should include a vital advocacy component aimed at systemic change toward the inclusion of all students in the education system (Bemak & Chung., 2005). Discussing further how other policies help in the work of guidance counselors as advocates in the school, Donna (p. 12) spoke about the different policies and legislative arrangements that direct guidance counselor practice in school:

> So, the Education Act is one, and then there is the school code of conduct. We revised the National School Code of Conduct, and I would have been instrumental in its relaunch. Next, we have our Student Support Services Division policy and a National Policy [that we use for working with students]. Then, we have the legislations to manage any issue presented to students at school. Then, there is the Children's Act and the Children's Authority Act. We also used the UN Conventions and the Rights of the Child 1989. Lastly, we have the Labor Laws and several other documents as the Sexual Offences Act because it is for mandatory reporting of sexual abuse through the Child Sexual Offences Act of 2000. So, all these legislative documents are in our practice, and their use depends on the issues presented at schools.

Donna's narrative above presents a picture of the complexity of the regulatory environment within which educational policy enactment occurs in T&T. It points to the need for "a particular kind of and sophisticated form of policy enactment that involves creativity (within limits), energy and commitment (as available)" within schools (Ball et al., 2012, p. 54). Thinking of the creative ways, policies in schools involve "a complex interplay between legislation (my emphasis) discourse and ground-level practices, conflicting choices, and pressures" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 54). Donna (p. 18) clarifies:

> All secondary schools must deliver this standardized plan. We have an overarching standardized plan, and each officer [i.e., guidance counselors can function as guidance officers] is free to amend it based on the needs assessments in their school. Guidance officers are allowed to insert and include any needs emanating from their school population, with consultation from guidance heads, principals, vice-principals, heads of department Dean, teachers, parents, cleaners, and the Maintenance Training Security (MTS) officers, because they see things, they know things. Another guidance counselor

explains: The MTS are the ones who know that a child arrives at school at six o'clock in the morning and is still on the school compound at six o'clock in the evening because home is not a safe place and school is my hideout.

Donna's narrative above addresses guidance counselors' roles and positions as entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs work with different stakeholders to implement policies for students' well-being. Roland, another guidance counselor, shared similar sentiments about the roles and tactics he also uses at his school to get policies done:

> When I go to a school, I am best friends with the cleaner, and the janitor because everybody that is on the compound can relay some information to me that could help a child. The principal would not know, the teacher would not know, and the deans would not know, but these individuals would come and say to the guidance counselor that they saw this child and they need to talk to that child. So, I make friends with everybody on the school compound; because of that, they know me, and you will find that they tell me things. (Roland, p. 13)

Adopting such an approach gives guidance counselors the leeway to make changes, allowing them to devise a creative policy. Roland illustrates the involvement of different stakeholders in the school system and their role in moving policy work forward. Donna, who functions as an entrepreneur, spoke about how she builds capacity in her guidance counselors through encouragement and motivation and how they use the strategies to help students adopt positive beliefs in themselves. As Donna (p. 6) describes:

> What I do is I would message the [guidance counselors] officers and encourage them because I have a great set of officers who are going the extra mile already. However, you must continue to massage them and keep that enthusiasm there. So, I encourage and motivate them [guidance counselors/officers] to keep working on the children's self-belief and use different strategies with students because once they believe they can do anything, it is a self-fulfilling prophecy that they are not going to fail. So as a team, we strive to build up students who believe they will amount to nothing. So, I tell my guidance counselors when they go into the class to be optimistic and empower the students because if they believe that teachers view them as failures, they believe it and, therefore, will fail.

The role of entrepreneurs in policy work is to build capacities in students by using self-belief and self-fulfilling prophecy strategies to remove doubts and ideation of failures. Self-belief

195

can significantly impact student performance and the application of knowledge and skills to improve their academic achievement (Turner, 2014).

  Enthusiasts and Translators. Enthusiasts are policy actors that "plan and produce the events and processes and institutional texts of policy about others' by inducting them into its 'discursive patterns' of policy" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 59). Enthusiasts as guidance counselors function as policy models who "embody policy in their practice and are considered examples to others; policy paragons" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 59). In this role, policy enthusiasts in secondary schools "speak policy directly to practice, and join up between specialists' roles and responsibilities, to make enactment into a collective process" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 60). Arlene (p. 6) explains the team approach taken in the Student Support Services Division to manage any issues students face:

> So, we have something called a Multidisciplinary Team (MDT), where all the seniors in the Student Support Services Division, that is, the senior school social worker, the guidance officer II, the psychologist, and the senior education person, will all sit and look at all the referrals that come in. We will look at as much information as possible to assess students needing the entire team to collaborate with them because they may need the psychologists' assessment and psychoeducation [assistance]. Students may also need lesson plans from these specialists and the social worker to address the student's absenteeism and aggressive behavior. So, the team's goal is to get the student to function at a higher level and be successful in the school environment, barring all the other issues. So, once everybody does their part, as each person has a particular time with the referred student, the team will be able to work together to adjust to the need of the student.

  Arlene's anecdote highlights the work enthusiasts engage in through the interdisciplinary team is about making informed decisions to meet the varied needs of students. Enthusiasts "simultaneously translate and enact policies in their practice" and function as translators to "plan and produce the events, and process instrumental policy text for others" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 59). In addition, the act of policy translation involves engagement with "classroom priorities and values that compete for attention and that 'drip,' 'seep, and 'trickle down' into classroom practice to become part of the bricolage of teaching and learning activities" (2012, p. 60).

According to Karen: "So, if you look at all those things in the hidden curriculum, that is

very much taboo. The Health and Family Life Education policy is not explored equitably in

schools to bring the issues in the policy to the surface a little bit more. So how do we expect our

children to understand those relationship dynamics? Do they get it out of the sky or get the

information on social media when they finish school? We need to engage students in those kinds

of conversations about sex" (p.14). Karen further explains the roles and responsibilities of

guidance counselors as translators:

> We have guidance officers in schools to talk about these issues. However, not every
> parent or every person will want their child to be a part of a thing like that, but at least
> they know something is in place. However, why would you not want your child to be a
> part of that conversation? Is it because of religious background, the child's age, the parent
> expressing socialist views, or other personal issues? Who is teaching it at the end of the
> day? Who is informing the children and guides them at the end of the day in a structured
> manner? (p.14)

The hidden curriculum mentioned above in Karen's narrative refers to the unwritten,

unofficial, and often unintended lessons, values, and perspectives communicated to learners. It

addresses the incongruity between what students in the formal school setting and the school's

culture learn. For example, Karen points to how translators of policy such as teachers and

guidance counselors deal with sensitive topics such as sex and sexual health. Additionally,

translators function as policy activists in planning and producing texts, artifacts, and events to

make the policy a collective process (Ball et al., 2012). Donna who functions as an entrepreneur

previously describes her work as a translator. According to Donna:

> When the Division (Student Support Services Division) started, it was just the central
> guidance unit, so it expanded from just a unit within the Ministry of Education to the
> Students Support Services Division. The expansion now included school social work,
> special education units, and guidance to create the Student Support Services Division.
> Subsequently, they added the fourth unit, the diagnostic assessment intervention unit
> which contained clinical psychologists, school psychologists, and behavioral specialists.
> So, we now had a broader reach to do any necessary intervention on behalf of these

students. Moreover, we included the psychologists because to get them evaluated outside through health services, it takes too long to wait to address the needs of students. (p.12)

Based on Donna's submission, the role of translators of policy is in creating the vision for the Student Support Services Division. Translators act as recruiters of the possibility of a policy and speak policies directly into practice (Ball et al., 2012). Translators also work with others to make the enactment of policies, a process that involves different stakeholders easier (Ball et al., 2012). Donna functions as a middle-level leader, responsible for junior-level staff and managing a school district in T&T. Middle-level leaders engage in the planning and production of institutional policies and enroll others in policy work (Ball et al., 2012). As Ball and colleagues expound, middle-level leaders also function as policy translators and introduce the internal policies that guide the work of junior policy actors as guidance counselors at school.

Chapter Summary

Chapter six discussed educational equity work and policy enactment in T&T. The discussion of policy enactment situates Ball et al. (2012) typologies of contextual dimensions and policy roles and positions assumed in schools by policy actors as guidance counselors. The chapter highlights the fact that although T&T lacks an official standalone equity policy, equity issues become subsumed in government education strategic plans, policies, and mandates.

In T&T, education and inequity can be traced historically to the period of colonialism and the lingering colonial ideologies. The effects of colonialism continue to impact the education system, leading to inequitable student outcomes across the nation. The chapter locates some of these inequities within the context of the 1960 Concordat and the 20% rule that brought about differentiated and segregated schools and student placements in secondary schools. The 1960 Concordat is a memorandum of understanding between denominational schools and the government of T&T however the autonomy given to denominational school boards to formulate

their curriculum with the government providing the required financial support is seen as problematic in the education system.

Also, in this chapter, the segregated and differentiated school system discussion focused on how T&T's education system promotes inequity by differentiating schools as prestige and non-prestige. The chapter highlights that equity issues in T&T are subscribed within the social class and rural-urban issues thus affecting the quality of equity education students receive at school.

The chapter conceptualizes equity in T&T by drawing on the Education Sector Strategic Plans and the Draft Policy Paper 2017-2022, promoting the idea of equitable education for diverse learners operating in a complex multileveled school system; and infused with socioeconomic differences. The chapter also situates equity within varied contexts such as situated contexts, professional cultures, material contexts, and external contexts of schools. It then positions and examines the various contextual factors that shape policy enactment within the localized secondary school context. It demonstrates how different contexts function as mediating factors that influence policy enactment, and how this plays out in practice.

The discussion highlights the notion that contexts are always specific, dynamic, and shifting, both within and outside of schools (Ball et al., 2012). As such, the chapter shows that policy enactment changes within different contextual factors co-occurring within schools in T&T. Braun et al. (2011) suggest that the enactment of school policy influences the school context. As such situating policy enactment within the different contexts at school is an essential consideration for policy analysis.

This research draws data from two case locations and makes comparisons to show similarities observed in Ontario and T&T concerning the different contexts that impact guidance

counselors' equity work at schools. Using Ball et al. (2012) typology of policy actors, namely, entrepreneurs, enthusiasts, and translators, the chapter then examines the actions of guidance counselors and the positions they assume in undertaking policy work in the education system. The discussion demonstrates that these roles and positions can overlap and guidance counselors can engage in various activities in the policy enactment process at secondary schools. The chapter also demonstrates that there is confluence and divergence between the roles and positions guidance counselors in T&T and Ontario assume in policy enactment work at secondary schools.

Chapter 7:

Conclusion

Introduction

The purpose of chapter seven is to reflect on the main findings of the study. The research is a cross-case study grounded theoretically and methodologically in policy sociology, and theories of policy enactment. The cross-case study examined the enactment of educational equity policies by guidance counselors in secondary schools in Ontario and T&T. The first section provides an overview of the entire study, including the problem statement, the purpose of the study, conceptual frameworks, methodology, and the research methods [data collection technique and data analysis]. The second section revisits the research questions and situates them within Ontario, T&T data. Finally, the third section discusses the knowledge contributions and limitations of the study and concludes with suggestions for future research.

Summary of the Study

This study investigates the enactment of educational equity policies in Ontario and T&T secondary schools from the perspectives of guidance counselors. In exploring the experiences of guidance counselors, the study utilized both primary and secondary data. Preliminary data were collected from guidance counselors using semi-structured interviews. The data collection focused on the policy enactment practices of guidance counselors at secondary schools. In addition, this research collected secondary data drawn from provincially mandated educational equity policies for Ontario and government strategic education documents from T&T.

In Ontario, at secondary schools, the enactment of educational equity policies is framed within a "globalized discourse and agenda-setting and policy processes emerging from beyond the nation" (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010, p. 15). At the provincial level, equity policies in Ontario are

situated within a discourse of globalization on the one hand and inequity on the next, and the pressures of school boards to realign their plans between the two competing interests.

In T&T's secondary schools, the enactment of educational policies adopts an "Education for All" philosophy existing in a differentiated and segregated education system based on meritocratic ideology (De Lisle, et al., 2010). Additionally, the education structure focuses on student placement based on a high-stake examination that determines the school a student attends at the secondary level. The student placement system is influenced by the 1960 Concordat, a memorandum of understanding between the state and religious bodies. The memorandum gives denominational boards the right to select 20% of students who sat the SEA examination and send these students to their religious secondary school. In T&T, conversations about reviewing the 1960 Concordat have been contentious, especially around the SEA time. Presently, the 1960 Concordat is under review on the island.

Additionally, the education system in T&T is merit-based driven and segregates students into high and low performers. The top-performing students attend government-assisted denominational schools that are considered prestigious. Conversely, the low-performing students attend government/state schools with many challenges, including low morale, location disadvantage, resource scarcity, and stigmatized school cultures.

In T&T, the examination of educational policies showed the symbolic nature of policy existing within an education system deeply rooted in colonialism and with no clear guidelines for the enactment. In Ontario, the contextual factors revolve around ideas of new colonialism and a neoliberal education agenda resulting in teacher hesitancy, lack of training and accountability, and a numbers game. These factors present themselves as barriers to educational equity policy adoption within schools.

This research's findings suggest that the true impact of researching equity is how it changes depending on the context in which it operates within the policy enactment process. The findings examined the contextual factors that facilitate policy enactment drawing on Ball et al.'s (2012) typologies for discussing contexts (situated context, professional cultures, material contexts, and external contexts). Additionally, Ball et al. (2012) typology examine policy actors and the policy positions assumed in school policy work. In Ontario, provincially mandated educational equity policies and T&T's education strategies and policies provide valuable insights on how policies change during enactment work at secondary schools.

In Ontario, the findings show that some policy actors' unwillingness to adopt or engage with educational equity policies at secondary schools reveals the complexity of enacting equity policies (Ball et al., 2012). Whereas, in T&T, the examination of educational policies shows enactment processes are guided by a top-down approach facilitated by the Ministry of Education and the Student Support Services Division, and the Tobago House of Assembly to foster a robust reporting system to facilitate compliance.

This research is grounded on three integrated policy frameworks for understanding the local and global layered approaches to educational equity policy work at secondary schools: postcolonial theory, policy sociology, and policy enactment (Lingard et al., 2005). First, postcolonial theory engages critically with colonial processes, revealing a complex set of phenomena that explains the continual effects of colonialism on people, societies, and institutions (Brissett, 2018, p. 2). The postcolonial theory also helped examine how structures of globalization embedded in colonial processes of the education system affect equity education in Ontario and T&T.

Additionally, postcolonial theory provided insights into understanding inequities and informs and reshapes pedagogy (Haun, 2004). It shows that policy enactment impacts power relations emanating from the top, thereby revealing the synergistic relationship between postcolonial theory and policy sociology (Buzinde & Yarnal, 2012). This synergistic relationship between postcolonial theory and policy sociology is rooted in historically informed traditions that consider power structures to govern and transform education and its practices (Ozga, 2000).

Policy sociology is concerned with understanding "policy content, its related processes, and the effect it has on education practice" (Rizvi & Lingard, 2012, p. 50). Additionally, policy sociology considers "who are the winners and losers regarding any given policy and whose interest the policy serves" (Rizvi & Lingard., 2010, p. 52).

Policy enactment investigates the different contexts in which policies are enacted, and the various roles and positions of diverse policy actors such as guidance counselors assumed in secondary school processes (Ball et al., 2012). Using policy enactment in this research captures the multilayered ways in which policies operate alongside contextual factors and the different sets of policy actors (e.g., narrators, entrepreneurs, enthusiasts, and translators; Ball et al., 2012; Maguire et al., 2015). For example, enactment helps understand how policy actors in different schools and contexts address the policy process by adopting various overlapping policy works at schools, such as advocates, interpreters, producers, and entrepreneurs (Ball et al., 2012; Maguire et al., 2015).

In this research, policy enactment provides a theoretically rich lens for understanding policies in secondary schools and their effects on the education systems (Tromp & Datzberger, 2019). Understanding these effects helps shed light on the shifting focus of educational institutions, and how they deal with policy demands, specifically, how schools and agents within

schools, practice policy enactment (Ball et al., 2012). Additionally, enactment assists in understanding the (re)construction of policy ideas into contextualized practice at secondary school through 'interpretations of interpretations' (Ball et al., 2012).

In the secondary schools in Ontario and T&T, enactment is a "dynamic, non-linear, and complex process which involves interactions and accommodations between several policy mandates, institutional histories, and commitments" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 8). This complex process occurs because policies are not fully formed during the enactment process as it involves "…. borrowing, re-ordering, displacing, making do, and re-invention" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 8). As such, enacting policies at secondary schools in Ontario and T&T is a very contested process, subjected to varied interpretations by policy actors within the different school contexts.

Within secondary schools in Ontario and T&T, guidance counselors have varying experiences in enacting policies. Depending on the situated contexts, professional cultures, material contexts, and external contexts (Ball et al., 2012), "policy texts cannot simply be implemented [enacted] without an understanding of contexts because texts have to be translated and put into practice" at secondary schools (Ball, 1994, p. 10). Additionally, state-mandated educational policies change the school level after a complex process of pressure, advice-seeking, and consultation by policy actors (Singh et al., 2013, p. 4). As such, policy actors do not operate as passive receivers and enactors of educational policy.

In many instances, policy actors shape the policy enactment processes by determining what gets enacted, especially at the institutional level (Bell & Stevenson, 2006). Consequently, depending on the contexts in which policy actors operate, it is important to consider their voices and views on how educational policies are screened, filtered, and dissected for meaning,

resonance, and relevance, leading to the recontextualization of policy ideas (Braun et al., 2011; Singh et al., 2013).

Using a qualitative case study methodology in this cross-case policy enactment study helped explore the complex phenomena of real-life contexts using various data sources (semi-structured interviews, and policy document analysis), mainly, when the boundaries are not evident (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Easton., 2010). Additionally, the qualitative approach is ideal for investigating policy enactment at secondary school because it focuses on answering how and why questions (Yin, 2003). Finally, the cross-case approach revealed similarities and differences in how schools do policies at the secondary level in Ontario and T&T. The data collection approach utilized in the cross-case policy enactment study included semi-structured interviews and secondary data sources. An interview guide directed the semi-structured interviews to ensure in-depth conversations occurred. Participants in this research were 16. Eight respondents were from Ontario, and the other eight were from T&T. A selection criterion was applied to select participants employed as guidance counselors for two years within secondary schools in Ontario and T&T. In the recruitment process, the study relied on snowball sampling technique, a nonprobability method used in qualitative research that involves referrals (Parker et al., 2019). Snowball sampling identifies "cases of interest from people who know what cases are information-rich" (Creswell, 2013, p. 158); this technique yielded all the participants.

Initially, the recruitment of all participants in secondary schools was to be facilitated by school principals or heads of guidance units. However, due to the impact of COVID-19 on the education system in both study locations, the snowball sampling technique became the only alternative for recruiting participants. In Ontario, principals were not responding to the recruitment email and study information sent via email to them to indicate if their guidance staff

would participate in the research. In T&T, the challenge was getting guidance counselors to commit to a day and time to conduct the interviews. So, the lack of commitment of guidance counselors led to using the snowball technique to obtain participants.

The secondary data sources examined include educational equity policy documents for Ontario, T&T. Exploring Ministry of Education policies provided the opportunity for selecting the best government policy documents to use as data. The policy document analysis (PDA) method reviewed the policy documents. The PDA focuses on systematically reviewing and evaluating documents (Bowen, 2009). In addition, the PDA allows text to be examined and interpreted to elicit meaning, understand, and develop empirical knowledge about the phenomenon (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The secondary data were further analyzed using Taylor et al. (1997) framework that draws on three components of policy analysis: context, text, and consequences for examining the social and political forces that influence analytical activity. The framework also contextualizes and analyzes the different ways policies are interpreted and translated into practice (Ball et al., 2012; Taylor et al., 1997).

The empirical data for Ontario and T&T were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke., 2006). Coding strategies adopted help interpret the meaning found within the data through the exploration of the actions of participants or processes and perceptions found within the data (Saldaña, 2015). Themes from the data analysis were situated within the discussion using Ball et al. (2012) typology of contextual dimensions to understand their impact on how schools and guidance counselors enact policies. Additionally, the typology examined the policy positions of guidance counselors for determining policy work and unpacking their varying roles in policy enactment at secondary schools in Ontario and T&T

Revisiting the Research Questions

This section revisits the research questions and locates them within the findings. The research questions simultaneously discussed the results for Ontario and T&T. The first research question addresses the historical antecedents of educational equity policies in Ontario and T&T, considering how they change in the policy enactment process.

Q1. *How do historical antecedents on education in Ontario, Canada, and T&T impact*

educational equity policy mandates and principles in the policy enactment process?

This research shows that the historical antecedents related to education and educational policies in Ontario, Canada, and T&T are entrenched in colonial histories and the influence of British colonizers (London, 2003; Neeganagwedgin, 2013). In Canada, the education system dates to the colonial model and residential schooling system that impacted Indigenous peoples (Neeganagwedgin, 2013). For example, participants suggest that the education system in Ontario is operating in an era of colonialism repackaged as new colonialism. This new colonialism is disguised within modern-day schools as discriminatory biases and systemic barriers, as outlined in the Ontario Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy (Ontario Ministry of Education., 2009a). The study findings illustrate that discriminatory practices in the education system continue to be perpetuated by institutional policies and the reluctance of policy actors to institute those policies at schools to make the system more equitable for all students.

Like Ontario, the T&T education system historically emerged from a colonial past whose effects still linger within the education system. The residue of colonialism has brought about a differentiated and segregated type of public schooling that continues to be highly polarized (De Lisle, 2012; London, 2003). The 1960 Concordat and placement in the SEA examination facilitated the differentiated and segregated school system. Such arrangements in T&T have

entrenched inequity within the education system, leading to the marginalization of many students from low-income households (De Lisle, 2012).

Q2. *How have guidance counselors interpreted and translated educational equity policies at the local secondary school level in Ontario, Canada, and T&T?*

This research examined guidance counselors' roles and positions in enacting educational equity policies. In addition, this examination sought to investigate how guidance counselors enact policies at secondary schools in Ontario and T&T. Specifically, the question helped to explore guidance counselors' experiences. In this research, guidance counselors are not passive receivers and enactors of policies (Ball et al., 2012). Instead, those in Ontario and T&T function as part of the process because they are involved in enacting policies in secondary schools (Bell & Stevenson, 2006).

Using the typology of policy actors and policy work proposed by Ball et al. (2012), question two, served to guide and examine the various roles and positions guidance counselors assume within secondary schools as they perform policy enactment work (Ball et al., 2012). In Ontario, guidance counselors engaged in distinct roles and policy work at secondary schools such as narrators, entrepreneurs, enthusiasts, and translators. For example, in Ontario, guidance counselors function simultaneously as narrators, entrepreneurs, and translators in secondary schools, while interpreting and deciphering policy texts through advocating, championing, reproducing, and recruiting others to promote the realization of the policies (Ball et al., 2012). The various activities of guidance counselors in Ontario portray them as "producers and consumers of policy, and readers and writers of policy" (Ball et al., 2011, p. 1).

In T&T, guidance counselors assumed different roles and positions in their policy enactment work at secondary schools, such as entrepreneurs, enthusiasts, and translators. The

209

findings also provide insights into the advocacy role of guidance counselors. One of the primary roles of guidance counselors in T&T is entrepreneurship. The findings reveal that guidance counselors spend much time advocating for students, giving them a voice, and producing creative ways to enact simplified policies in schools (Ball et al., 2012). Additionally, while enacting a policy, the analysis shifts from understanding the conceptual meaning of a text to an examination of the contextual practice of the policy actors (Heimans, 2014), thus, allowing policy actors to negotiate policy goals and methods in their varied school contexts (Ball, 1994).

Q3. *How have contextual factors in secondary schools impacted the enactment of educational equity policy at secondary schools in Ontario, Canada, and T&T?*

Question three provides direction and insights into how policy enactment at secondary schools mediates context, particularly the dynamic and shifting aspects of context both within and outside schools (Ball et al., 2012). Accordingly, policies operating within context "are intimately shaped and influenced by school-specific factors which act as constraints, pressures, and enablers of policy enactments" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 19).

Using a typology of contextual dimensions (situated contexts, professional cultures, material contexts, and external contexts) proposed by Ball et al. (2012) contributes to mapping the findings/data analysis heuristically to investigate, question, and illuminate aspects of policy enactments at secondary schools. The typology used in this research demonstrates the interplay between the different contexts, providing insights into how policies move from policy text into contextual practice in secondary schools (Ball et al., 2012). According to Ball et al. (2012), the inter-relationship between the different contexts overlaps as "school intake is seen as a situated context but can also shape professional factors such as values, teacher commitments, and experiences, as well as policy management" (p. 21).

Findings in this research show similarities in the Ontario and T&T education systems based on their situated contexts and school histories. For instance, the school histories in Ontario and T&T derive from the lingering British coloniality in the education system. In this research, there were overlappings and interconnections among the contexts. For example, the challenges related to the professional cultures of guidance counselors in T&T were often interconnected to the external contexts of the Student Support Services Division/Unit. Likewise, in the case of Ontario, the professional contexts of guidance counselors and policy enactment at school are mitigated by school boards and principals functioning within the material contexts of their schools. Nonetheless, these material contexts in schools consider funding, staffing, and scheduling to understand how policies are enacted into practice at secondary schools. In this research, the material contexts function as the central contextual dimension influencing how all the other contexts operate in secondary schools.

The findings show that schools enacted equity policies based on different circumstances in the broader school system, which are not of their choosing (Ball et al., 2012). For example, in Ontario, the enactment of equity policies such as the Policy/Program Memorandum PPM 119 (2009) captures wide-ranging social issues in the education system, including identifying and eliminating discriminatory biases and systemic barriers that limit and marginalize certain groups of students' growth and contribution to society (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2009). However, the real focus of Ontario school boards and secondary schools continues to be on adopting neoliberal standards for education and comparing the academic performance of students while competing in a global market to increase profits in a competitive education market rather than solving equity issues (OECD, 2011; Savage et al., 2013).

In T&T, the broader issues also pertain to barriers that limit and marginalize students based on a high-stake placement examination. For example, the SEA examination that selects students based on test scores to transition from elementary to secondary school demonstrates a merit-based education system. In the education system, bias exists in the arrangements of the 1960 Concordat which is presently under revision by the Ministry of Education.

The contextual dimensions in which policy enactment occurs at schools in Ontario and T&T are specific to school-wide equity policy issues in one location and a differentiated and segregated education system based on meritocracy in the following location. Consequently, it is essential to note that policy enactment at secondary schools does not operate in isolation but depends on the contexts in which it exists. Additionally, the interplay between organizational practice and contexts is dynamic, not static, shaping policy enactments. Accordingly, the policy creates contexts, and contexts precede policy, constantly shifting depending on the policy that needs to be enacted at the schools.

Research Contributions

This research contributes to addressing some of the tensions and dilemmas associated with the cross-case transfer of knowledge across geographic locations within different education systems, as in the case of Ontario and T&T. According to the United Nations (UN), Canada is a developed country with a thriving economy. Similarly, the United Nations classified T&T as a developing country and economy. Despite these contrasting development trajectories of both countries, this research has shown that lessons learned, and insights gained can provide understanding to advance education equity practice in other contexts (see Segeren, 2016). In addition, this research points out that a well-established education equity landscape does not mean that enacting education equity policies will not be contentious. For example, in Ontario,

despite education equity policies at the provincial and school board levels, realizing equity goals has been challenging, and equity practice in secondary school remains selective.

Another important lesson from this research is the value of contexts in educational research. Contexts allow for broader antecedent circumstances responsible for shaping education systems and policies. For example, this research shows that the education system has continued to be influenced by colonialism in both Ontario and T&T. The established literature suggests that the lingering effects of colonialism have led to the formulation and enactment of equity policies that continue to marginalize specific groups of students. However, in both cases, marginalization occurs in diverse ways. An interesting observation is that in Ontario, the preconditions exist for marginalization because of the number of minority groups in the education system. However, this is not the case in T&T, as the society is divided into African and Indian peoples mainly. However, the education system still marginalizes many students, especially those from lower-income level households which are usually the ones who exist in communities with a lot of social issues.

Implications for Policy and Practice

This research has implications for education policy and practice in secondary schools in Ontario and T&T. In both case locations, policy enactment by guidance counselors occurred within specific contextual dimensions with overlapping and inter-related roles and positions according to Ball et al. (2012) typologies.

First, the cross-case nature of this research allowed for the investigation of how guidance counselors enact educational equity policies in Ontario and T&T to understand how policy work occurs in a developed country like Canada juxtaposed to a developing country like Trinidad and Tobago. In Ontario, the equity policy implications foster an understanding of neoliberalism's

impact on education. The study provides critical information regarding how neoliberal agenda and equity policies are rearticulated in the enactment process at schools (Rezai-Rashti et al., 2017). For example, the Ontario Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy implementation had several challenges due to a lack of resources and a shift in educational goals to reduce gaps and increase student achievement. The new focus of Ontario is now on achieving gold standards in international examinations at the expense of removing the barriers to equity education.

Second, this study illuminates the broad mandate for equity education established by Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy (2009) and how it failed to bring about changes in education by the time of this study, 2021-2022. The inequity issues in student achievement persist as the focus on equity has been recontextualized in the education system. This research shows that issues of teacher hesitancy and lack of accountability mechanisms contribute to the refusal of policy actors in enacting equity policies at school. This lack of accountability suggests that the Ontario Ministry of Education and some school boards were not committed to implementing system-wide changes in the education system. This absence of commitment to bring about meaningful changes in Ontario through adopting the Ontario Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy can be perceived as political.

In T&T, a developing country, one of the major policy implications as illustrated in this research is understanding why the Ministry of Education is yet to formulate standalone equity policies for making the education system more equitable. In its latest Draft Education Policy Paper (2017-2022), Section 4 (p. 67), the Ministry of Education in Trinidad and Tobago committed to treating equity issues in the classroom by ensuring access to formal education for all students with a focus on providing quality education (Government of Trinidad and Tobago Draft Education Policy Paper, 2017-2022). Additionally, in the Draft Education Policy Paper

(2017-2022), Section 4 (i), the Ministry of Education has recognized that for achieving quality and equitable education, it needs to "remove the inequity in the system of placing students, leading to stratification throughout the [education] system" (p. 67). Therefore, removing and achieving the Millennium Development Goals requires acknowledging the institutional barriers to placing students into secondary schools in T&T that exist as problematic to achieving equity education.

Establishing equity policies in T&T will require a profound restructuring of the education system to make it equitable and inclusive for all learners, including students with learning and unique needs. In this study, the reality of the T&T Ministry of Education and the Tobago House of Assembly, which function as autonomous education policy bodies, have not yet committed to making the education system equitable. Consequently, the study illuminated the challenges of bringing equity policies into the education system to provide every child with opportunities to achieve their goals at school. This perspective suggests that in the education system in T&T equity is not a priority. The school system remains differentiated and segregated because of colonialism, the 1960 Concordat, and present-day forms of colonialism that have lingering ideologies of prestige and non-prestige schools existing today in T&T.

Additionally, in T&T, findings illuminated a top-down approach to policy formulation in the education system. For example, consultations with prominent policy actors well-positioned in secondary schools are not encouraged, as ideas shared seems to never reach the ear of the policymakers in the education system. Therefore, some participants articulated that the lack of consultation with policy actors appears to be a political endeavor for scoring party-political mileage and not really for transforming the education system.

215

The practical significance of conducting this policy enactment cross-case study in Ontario and T&T is to provide a new lens to understand how policy texts get enacted (interpreted and translated) into meaningful practice at secondary schools. In Ontario, the study has implications for practice as more accountability measures are needed to ensure equity at all education levels. In T&T, this research aims to start a conversation about equity and an equitable education system that considers all students (including those with diverse special needs) in the education system and provides all the necessary resources for them to succeed.

Limitations

One of the substantial limitations of this study relates to the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic impacted the data collection processes of this study. The pandemic restructured how face-to-face interviews could be conducted as the world was locked down and traveling became restricted. Education systems and policy actors were also busy responding to school closures and moving to online learning. So, with the chaos of reorganizing the education system in Ontario, data collection occurred online, and researchers became dependent on the Zoom Platform and Internet connectivity to conduct interviews. Moving the data collection process online took away from the nuances of face-to-face interviews and the participants' reading of cues and body language. So, the challenges experienced in this research while using the online platform took some adjusting, but the job had to continue despite the minor setbacks. In addition, technology challenges impacted the data transcription process, where some of the interview conversations became inaudible in the data collection process.

A second limitation of this cross-case policy enactment study occurred in one district school board in Ontario and three school districts in T&T. As previously stated, this study takes place across two diverse case locations: Ontario and T&T. The school histories and experiences

with enacting educational equity policies differ. Additionally, T&T lacks standalone equity policies. As such, the cross-case study was exploratory. However, the exploratory nature of the study and the examination of two diverse contexts and analyses across different geographic locations to understand experiences do not allow for the generalization of guidance counselors' policy enactment practices in other sites outside of Ontario and T&T.

A third limitation of this cross-case policy enactment study relates to the sixteen schools selected as embedded cases. In the eight schools in each location (Ontario, T&T), participants were selected using snowball sampling facilitated through referrals from other guidance counselors. All guidance counselors in both case study locations engaged in enactment work at secondary schools. However, further investigation and insight are needed on the barriers to policy enactment which would illuminate a broader cross-section of schools and district school boards in Ontario and T&T.

Considerations for Future Research

This research intended to investigate the policy enactment experiences of guidance counselors at secondary schools in Ontario and T&T. This research is a starting point for research on guidance counselors' policy enactment practices across two different geographic locations. It may assist in broadening the investigation on a group of policy actors in the education system who are not usually considered subjects in the study, even though guidance counselors serve a significant role in the education system and perform several duties in the policy enactment processes at secondary school. Future research can build on knowledge claims in the comparative and international education fields regarding the conceptual frameworks used in this cross-case study conducted in a developed and developing country, expanding social inquiry can help guide policy enactment across multiple cases.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Western Ethics Approval

Western
Research

Date: 21 July 2020

To: Prof. Goli Rezai-Rashti

Project ID: 115696

Study Title: Guidance Counselor's Enactment of Educational Equity Policies: A Cross-case Analysis of Ontario and Trinidad and Tobago.

Short Title: Guidance Counselor's Enactment of Equity Policies: A Cross-case Analysis of Ontario and Trinidad and Tobago

Application Type: NMREB Initial Application

Review Type: Delegated

Full Board Reporting Date: 07/Aug/2020

Date Approval Issued: 21/Jul/2020 10:19

REB Approval Expiry Date: 21/Jul/2021

Dear Prof. Goli Rezai-Rashti

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the WREM application form for the above mentioned study, as of the date noted above. NMREB approval for this study remains valid until the expiry date noted above, conditional to timely submission and acceptance of NMREB Continuing Ethics Review.

This research study is to be conducted by the investigator noted above. All other required institutional approvals must also be obtained prior to the conduct of the study.

Documents Approved:

Document Name	Document Type	Document Date	Document Version
Recruitment letter for study	Survey Panel Recruitment Script		
Interview Guides for Trinidad and Tobago and Toronto Ontario	Interview Guide		
Ontario Letter of Information and written Consent Revised version	Written Consent/Assent	29/Jun/2020	
Trinidad and Tobago letter of information and written consent Revised Version	Written Consent/Assent	29/Jun/2020	
Supplementary Verbal Consent Script	Verbal Consent/Assent		
Documentation_of_Verbal_Consent REB	Verbal Consent/Assent		
Email Script	Recruitment Materials	06/Jul/2020	

No deviations from, or changes to the protocol should be initiated without prior written approval from the NMREB, except when necessary to eliminate immediate hazard(s) to study participants or when the change(s) involves only administrative or logistical aspects of the trial.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario. Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB. The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Katelyn Harris, Research Ethics Officer on behalf of Dr. Randal Graham, NMREB Chair

Note: This correspondence includes an electronic signature (validation and approval via an online system that is compliant with all regulations).

Western Research

Date: 29 June 2021

To: Prof. Goli Rezai-Rashti

Project ID: 115696

Study Title: Guidance Counselor's Enactment of Educational Equity Policies: A Cross-case Analysis of Ontario and Trinidad and Tobago.

Application Type: Continuing Ethics Review (CER) Form

Review Type: Delegated

Date Approval Issued: 29/Jun/2021

REB Approval Expiry Date: 21/Jul/2022

Dear Prof. Goli Rezai-Rashti,

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board has reviewed this application. This study, including all currently approved documents, has been re-approved until the expiry date noted above.

REB members involved in the research project do not participate in the review, discussion or decision.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario. Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB. The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

The Office of Human Research Ethics

Note: This correspondence includes an electronic signature (validation and approval via an online system that is compliant with all regulations).

Appendix B: External Ethics Approval

Research and Development
1 Civic Centre Court, Ground Floor
Toronto ON, M9C 2B3

February 22, 2022

Dear Dr. Goli Rezai-Rashti and Kathleen Sandy-Thompson,

Re: *Guidance Counselor's Enactment of Equity Policies: A Cross-case Analysis of Ontario and Trinidad and Tobago*

On behalf of the External Research Review Committee (ERRC) of the ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮
▮▮▮▮ I received and approved your renewal request

As a condition of this approval, ERRC will also look forward to receiving a copy of your research findings and summary report upon completion. It is expected that the final report would be made available to us by fall 2022.

Best,

Amie Presley, Chair, External Research Review Committee, ▮▮▮
E-mail: ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Please note, although ERRC has approved all research methods outlined in your application, the school or the Board may require amendments based on COVID-19 health and safety protocols at the time of study implementation.

Please be reminded of the following points:

- Please note that ERRC approval **does not obligate anyone to participate** and the invited individuals may make the final decision about their own voluntary involvement in the research and/or research support.
- **An amendment** must be submitted for any proposed changes to the approved application. The amendment must be reviewed and approved by the ERRC Committee or Chair prior to implementation of the changes.
- **An annual renewal application** must be submitted for ongoing research. Renewals must be submitted and approved by the ERRC Committee or Chair prior to the continuation of the research study.

File Number 2020-2021-04

Appendix C: Approval Letter -Trinidad

Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
Education Towers, No.5 St. Vincent Street, Port of Spain, Trinidad
(Fax)
Educational Planning Division
Level 14

E: 14/4/16

December, 2020

Ms. Kathleen Sandy-Thompson

London

Dear Ms. Sandy-Thompson,

Your request to conduct research entitled **"Guidance Counselors Enactment of Educational Equity Policies: A Cross-Case Analysis of Ontario and Trinidad and Tobago"** has been approved by the Chief Education Officer of the Ministry of Education.

This approval is granted for the academic year 2020/2021. It permits the researcher to conduct document analysis and online/ telephone interviews with guidance counsellors/ officers of the Student Support Services Division, Ministry of Education.

Attached is a letter of confidentiality, which is to be completed and returned to the Educational Planning Division of the Ministry of Education by the person conducting their research.

Should you require additional information please contact Ms. Jermaine Williams, Research Officer I, Educational Planning Division at   or

Yours Respectfully,

Dr. Peter Smith
Director (Ag.)

CERTIFIED CORRECT
10 DEC 2020

Appendix D: Approval Letter -Tobago

DIVISION OF EDUCATION, INNOVATION AND ENERGY
Office of the Administrator

Dutch Fort Plaza, Dutch Fort
Scarborough, Tobago.

Tel.# ▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆   Email ▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆

December 8, 2020

Ms. Kathleen Sandy-Thompson
▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆
Apt 21
London Ontario
Canada

Dear Ms. Sandy-Thompson,

Re: Request for Approval to Conduct Research in the Student Support Services Unit

I wish to acknowledge receipt of your letter dated October 18, 2020 regarding the captioned subject.

Approval is hereby granted for you to conduct research with Guidance Counselors and Guidance Officers in the Student Support Services Unit of the Division of Education, Innovation and Energy as part of the data collection component of your dissertation theses entitled 'Guidance Counselor's enactment of educational equity policies: a cross-case analysis of Ontario and Trinidad and Tobago'.

Please feel free to contact Ms. Susan Grant, Assistant Education Coordinator, Student Support Services at ▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆ or via email at ▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆ to arrange the necessary meetings with the Guidance Counselors and Officers.

Respectfully,

▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆▆

ADMINISTRATOR
DIVISION OF EDUCATION,
INNOVATION AND ENERGY
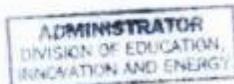
Mrs. Denese Toby-Quashie
Administrator
Division of Education, Innovation and Energy

Appendix E: Recruitment Letter

Western 🛡️

Guidance Counselor's Enactment of Equity Policies: A Cross-Case Analysis of Ontario and Trinidad and Tobago

Date: May 14th, 2020

RE: Recruitment Letter

Dear Mr./Ms./Mrs.,

My name is Kathleen Sandy-Thompson and I am a Ph.D. candidate at the Faculty of Education Western University. My dissertation research is entitled *Guidance Counsellor's Enactment of Equity Policies: A Cross-case Analysis of Ontario and Trinidad and Tobago.* I am currently researching the experiences of guidance counselors to understand how they enact educational equity policies. Specifically, I am interested in asking guidance/career counselors about sharing their experiences with enacting educational equity policies in their guidance and counseling practice at two secondary school districts in Trinidad and Tobago, and one school board in Toronto, Ontario.

I hereby take this opportunity to invite you to participate in this study as the information that will be generated from the experiences of guidance/career counselors can be very insightful and valuable to this study and practice in general. The primary investigator for the study is professor Goli Rezai-Rashti (Ph.D.), at the Faculty of Education, Western University.

I am therefore asking the guidance/career counselors employed with the Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Education, or the Division of Education in Tobago, and Ontario's Ministry of Education who are assigned to work in secondary school to participate in this research.

The guidance/career counselors will participate in one (1) interview which will last approximately 60 minutes. The interviews will be conducted using the Zoom Meeting Platform because of the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions in social distancing and traveling. All interviews will be audio-taped with your permission. Participation in this study is voluntary, and your decision to participate will be kept confidential, and your privacy and identity will be protected by using pseudonyms. As a participant, you can withdraw from the study at any time.

I am hoping to conduct these interviews between September 2020 and November 2020 depending on the availability of guidance/career counselors during the new school term. The interview questions will discuss your experience with enacting equity policies at secondary schools, along with your role and responsibility in enacting equity policies. The

interview questions will also address any challenges faced in enacting equity policies and how they are mitigated.

I am providing a letter of information and consent for your signature with more details about the study. Please contact me by email at ███████████, or by telephone at ██████████ if you are interested in participating in the study, have any questions, or require additional information.

Thanks for your favorable response and kind consideration of my study.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Sandy-Thompson,
Ph.D. Candidate,
Faculty of Education,
Western University.

Appendix F: Email Script

Western 🛡️

Email Script for Recruitment

<u>Subject Line: Invitation to participate in research on Guidance/Career Counselors
Enactment of Equity Policies.</u>

Hello,

We have received your email address from your school principal. You are being invited
to participate in a study that we, Kathleen Sandy-Thompson and Professor Goli Rezai-
Rashti are conducting. Briefly, the study involves guidance counselors/officers and career
counselors' enactment of educational equity policies at secondary schools in Toronto,
Ontario, and Trinidad and Tobago. You will be asked about your experience with
enacting equity policies in your professional practice at secondary school. You are free to
not answer any questions you do not want to or feel comfortable answering.

All interviews will be facilitated by Western's Corporate Zoom Platform and will take
approximately one hour. Western's Corporate Zoom Platform is now being used as an
alternative to conducting interviews because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the
restrictions placed on traveling presently. All interviews will be conducted at a time
convenient for you. In the event that you do not have access to a computer and Internet
service to participate in the Zoom interview, a regular phone call can take place instead.

Participants will not be compensated for their participation in this study.

If you would like more information on this study or would like to receive a letter of
information about this study please contact the researcher at the contact information
given below.

This email is being sent for recruitment purposes only, if you would like to participate in
this study please contact the research at the contact information given below and I will
forward the letter of information and consent to you.

Thank you,

Researcher's name: Kathleen Sandy-Thompson
Researcher's affiliation: Western University
Researcher's email address ███████████
Researcher's telephone number: ███████████

Version Date: 06/07/2020

Appendix G: Verbal Consent
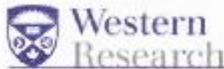
Western Research

Study Title: Guidance Counselor's Enactment of Equity Policies: A Cross-Case Analysis of Ontario and Trinidad and Tobago.

Principal Investigator: Professor Goli Rezai-Rashti Ph.D.,
Faculty of Education, Western University

██████████

Documentation of Verbal Consent

You have previously agreed to take part in this research study titled Guidance Counselor's Enactment of Equity Policies: A Cross-Case Analysis of Ontario and Trinidad and Tobago at Western University. As a result of the current COVID-19 pandemic, the researcher conducting this study will be utilizing Western's Corporate Zoom Platform to connect with you via a call. The call will take 15 minutes where I will seek your verbal consent and provide you with more information about my research.

Like online shopping, when using teleconferencing/videoconferencing technology there are some privacy and security risks. It is possible that information could be intercepted by unauthorized people (hacked) or otherwise shared by accident. This risk can't be completely eliminated. We want to make you aware of this.

The researcher will confirm your identity at the beginning of the call by asking a few short questions, or may ask to see a piece of government-issued ID, via video, during the session.

Video sessions can be conducted using your cell phone, tablet or personal computer enabled with a camera/microphone and internet connection. Do you have one of these devices available?

☐No (If participant indicates, No, please provide next steps)

☐Yes

You indicated that you do not have any of the devices available to facilitate a video session so we will have to speak via a regular phone call using a land line.

To use Western's Corporate Zoom Platform for the call, I will need to send you an email. This email will include the instructions for how to log-in. For the session, please try to find a quiet place where you will not be disturbed and use earphones if you can. It's a good idea to test out the system a few minutes before the session to make sure the connection and sound are working. It is recommended that you use your home computer or personal device, and not a shared or work device to ensure privacy. If you do not have your own personal devices and opt to use a work device, we cannot ensure your privacy and as stated before the information can be intercepted by unauthorized people or otherwise shared. This risk can't be completely eliminated.

Do we have your consent to send you information by email? The security of information sent by e-mail cannot be guaranteed.

☐No (If participant indicates, No, please provide next steps)

Documentation of Verbal Consent: Version #:1
Version Date:2020MAR25

Page 1 of 3

267

Western
Research

☐Yes. Email Address:

Please do not communicate personal sensitive information by e-mail. Email is not routinely monitored outside of work hours. Please do not use e-mail to communicate emergency or urgent health matters – please contact your clinician or family doctor. If it is a medical emergency, call 911.

The session will be audio-recorded which is mandatory. The audio-recording is being used solely for research purposes only. The recording will be accessed only by the primary investigator and the study investigator.

The recording will be transcribed by the study investigator. This means that the words on the recording will be written out. When the recording is transcribed, any information that could directly identify you will be changed by using pseudonyms. The audio-recording will be kept in a safe and secure place by the researchers who alone will have access to the information. Audio-recordings will be stored in a secure and confidential location for seven years and all other study data will be deleted from storage devices such as USB and hard drives of computers. Any hard copies of data will be shredded and disposed of, by following the data destruction procedures of Western University.

You or the researcher can stop the session at any time, including if there are technical difficulties.

The rest of the information in the consent form you signed previously is the same. Do you have any questions?

    ☐No

    ☐Yes.

Questions:

Do you agree to the change in study procedures we've discussed?

    ☐Yes

    ☐No

We would like to provide you with a copy of what we've talked about today, which will include your name, the study title and other information you have provided over the phone. Can we send this to you by email or mail? Alternately, if you do not consent to mail or email, you may pick up a copy of the consent at your principal's office in the future when the pandemic has been resolved. The security of information sent by e-mail cannot be guaranteed.

    ☐Mail. Confirm mailing address if not confirmed previously:

    ☐Email. Confirm email address if not confirmed previously:

Documentation of Verbal Consent: Version #:1
Version Date:2020MAR25

Appendix G: Verbal Consent

Western
Research

If you have questions, you can contact the researcher in charge of that study who is Professor Goli Rezai-Rashti (the primary investigator) by email ███████████ or by telephone at ███████████
███████

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or want to speak with someone who is not involved in this study, you can call the Office of Human Research Ethics (OHRE) at ███████████████████████ or email: ███████████

_____   _____
Name of Participant   Date of Participant Verbal Consent

_____   _____   _____
Name of person obtaining consent   Signature of person obtaining consent   Date

Project Title: Guidance Counsellor's Enactment of Equity Policies: A Cross-Case Analysis of Ontario and Trinidad and Tobago

Document Title: Letter of Information and Consent: Ontario

Principal Investigator and Contact: Professor Goli Rezai-Rashti Ph.D.,
Faculty of Education, Western University

Study Investigator and contact: Ph. D. Candidate
Kathleen Sandy-Thompson
Faculty of Education, Western University

You are being invited to participate in this research study regarding guidance counselors/officers and career counselors' enactment of educational equity policies at secondary schools in Toronto, Ontario, and Trinidad and Tobago. You are asked to participate because your experience is valuable and will provide insights into the enactment of equity policy in practice. Specifically, sharing your experiences will enrich our understanding of the policy enactment process in secondary schools.

This study is being conducted because a gap has been identified in the literature regarding the enactment of equity policies by guidance counselors/officers and career counselors in the two geographical locations mentioned above. The study investigates how provincial mandated equity policies as the Ontario's Education Equity Action Plan 2017, including Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Strategy 2009 are enacted by career counselors into their professional practice in one school board district in Ontario.

To participate in this study, you must be a career counselor with at least two (2) years of experience working in Ontario. If you meet the criteria and agree to participate in this study you will be asked several questions during an on-line face-to-face interview session. The interview will take approximately one hour. Interviews will be semi-structured and facilitated by an

Version Date: 29/06/20

interview guide. You will be asked about your experience with enacting equity policies in your professional practice at secondary school. You are free to not answer any questions you do not want to or feel comfortable answering. The interview will be completely confidential and you will be assigned a pseudonym to protect your identity and your data. A list linking your pseudonym with your name will be kept by the researcher in a secure place, separate from your study file.

All interviews will be facilitated by Western's Corporate Zoom Platform. Western's Corporate Zoom Platform is now being used as an alternative to conducting interviews because of the COVID- 19 pandemic and the restrictions placed on traveling presently. All interviews will be conducted at a time convenient for you. In the event that you do not have access to a computer and Internet services to participate in the Zoom interview, a regular phone call can take place instead.

Audio-recording of the interview is mandatory. Interviews will be audio-taped with your permission using an audio-recorder. This audio-recording is being used solely for research purposes. The interview is audio-taped to retain the full interview and to make transcribing and data analyzing easier. The audio-recording will be kept in a safe and secure place by the researcher who alone will have access to the information. The interviews will be transcribed solely by the researcher. Direct quotes used from the interview may be used in the study using pseudonyms.

All the necessary measures will be taken by the researcher to protect your privacy, identity, and confidentiality. Data collected with any identifiable information such as your name, contact information, specific job titles/positions, and location, will be assigned pseudonyms. Only your pseudonym will be used to label and identify you on notes and in the research study.

Representatives of the Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board may require access to your data to monitor the conduct of this research.

There are no known anticipated or potential risks or harm associated with participating in this study. The proposed study is only intended to garner the experiences of guidance counselors/officers and career counselors at enacting educational equity policies at secondary schools.

Given the lack of research regarding the experiences of guidance counselors/officers and career counselors with enacting equity policies across two geographical spaces as Trinidad and Tobago and Toronto, Ontario, your participation in this study will help in understanding policy enactment practice in secondary school. Specifically, your participation will aid in practical knowledge translation about best practices for supporting and facilitating policy enactment practices. Your participation can also help in facilitating services and resources to support policy enactment at secondary schools.

If you chose to withdraw from the study, you can do so anytime after your semi-structured face-to-face interview or videoconferencing interview using Western's Corporate Zoom Platform/ by regular telephone call. You have the right to request the withdrawal of all or part of any

Version Date: 29/06/20

information collected from you by phone or in writing to the primary investigator or the study investigator. Once we receive the request to withdraw your information it will be removed and destroyed by following the data destruction procedures of Western University.

Interview data will be stored in a secure and confidential location for seven years and all other study data will be deleted from storage devices such as USB and hard drives of computers. Any hard copies of data will be shredded and disposed of, by following the data destruction procedures of Western University.

Participants will not be compensated for their participation in this study.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Even after consent is given you have the right to refuse to participate, to answer questions, or withdraw at any time from the study. If you choose not to participate or to leave the study at any time it will not affect the study.

You do not waive any legal right by signing this consent form.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact The Office of Human Research Ethics, Western University (████████████ ████████, email: ████████████ This office oversees the ethical conduct of research studies and is not part of the study team. Everything that you discuss will be kept confidential.

If you require any further information about this study, please contact Kathleen Sandy-Thompson by email ████████████ or by telephone at ████████████ or Professor Goli Rezai-Rashti (the primary investigator) by email ████████████ or by telephone at ████████ ████████

If the study results are published after the completion of this dissertation, your identity will not be used in any way. If you would like to receive a copy of any potential findings, please contact Kathleen Sandy-Thompson by email at ████████████ or by telephone at ████████████.

If you agree to participate in this study, kindly sign the attached Consent Form and email it back to Kathleen Sandy-Thompson at ████████████.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Sandy-Thompson,
Ph.D. Candidate,
Faculty of Education,
Western University

Western Education

Project Title: Guidance Counselor's Enactment of Equity Policies: A Cross-Case Analysis of Ontario and Trinidad and Tobago

Document Title: Letter of Information and Consent Form: Ontario

Principal Investigator and Contact:
Professor Goli Rezai-Rashti, Ph.D.,
Faculty of Education,
Western University

███████████████████

Study Investigator and contact
Kathleen Sandy-Thompson, Ph.D. Candidate
Faculty of Education,
Western University

███████████████

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate in the study. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I consent to the use of unidentified quotes obtained during the study in the dissemination of this research.

☐ YES ☐ NO

_____   _____   _____
Print Name of Participant   Signature   Date (DD-MM-YYYY)

My signature means that I have explained the study to the participant named above. I have answered all of their questions.

_____   _____   _____
Print Name of Person   Signature   Date (DD-MM-YYYY)
Obtaining Consent

Version Date: 29/06/20

Appendix I: Letter of Information and Consent-Trinidad and Tobago

Western Education

Project Title: Guidance Counselor's Enactment of Equity Policies: A Cross-Case Analysis of Ontario and Trinidad and Tobago

**Document Title**: Letter of Information and Consent: Trinidad and Tobago

Principal Investigator and Contact: Professor Goli Rezai-Rashti Ph.D.,
Faculty of Education, Western University

Study Investigator and Contact: Ph. D. Candidate
Kathleen Sandy-Thompson
Faculty of Education, Western University

You are being invited to participate in this research study regarding guidance counselors/officers and career counselors' enactment of educational equity policies at secondary schools in Toronto, Ontario, and Trinidad and Tobago. You are asked to participate because your experience is valuable and will provide insights into the enactment of equity policy in your practice. Specifically, sharing your experiences will enrich our understanding of the policy enactment process in secondary schools.

This study is being conducted because a gap has been identified in the literature regarding the enactment of equity policies by guidance counselors/officers and career counselors in the two geographical locations mentioned above. This study investigates how government-mandated equity strategies found in the Trinidad and Tobago Education Sector Strategic Plan 2011-2015, including the Draft Education Policy Paper 2017-2022 are enacted by guidance counselors/officers into their professional practice in two school districts in Trinidad and Tobago.

To participate in this study, you must be a guidance counselor/officer with at least two (2) years of experience working in Trinidad and Tobago. You can also participate if you function as Heads

1

of Guidance and Counseling Units with experience in enacting government mandates, strategies, and policies in the education system as well as in secondary schools.

If you meet the criteria and agree to participate in this study you will be asked several questions during an on-line face-to-face interview session. The interview will take approximately one hour. Interviews will be semi-structured and facilitated by an interview guide. You will be asked about your experience with enacting equity policies in your professional practice at secondary school. You are free to not answer any questions you do not want to, or feel comfortable answering. The interview will be completely confidential, and you will be assigned a pseudonym to protect your identity and your data. A list linking your pseudonym with your name will be kept by the researcher in a secure place, separate from your study file.

All interviews will be facilitated by Western's Corporate Zoom Platform. Western's Corporate Zoom Platform is now being used as an alternative to conducting interviews because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions placed on traveling presently. All interviews will be conducted at a time convenient for you. In the event that you do not have access to a computer and Internet services to participate in the Zoom interview, a regular phone call can take place instead.

Audio-recording of the interview is mandatory. Interviews will be audio-taped with your permission using an audio-recorder. This audio-recording is being used solely for research purposes. The interview is audio-taped to retain the full interview and to make transcribing and data analyzing easier. The audio-recording will be kept in a safe and secure place by the researcher who alone will have access to the information. The interviews will be transcribed solely by the researcher. Direct quotes used from the interview may be used in the study using pseudonyms.

All the necessary measures will be taken by the researcher to protect your privacy, identity, and confidentiality. Data collected with any identifiable information such as your name, contact information, specific job titles/positions, and location, will be assigned pseudonyms. Only your pseudonym will be used to label and identify you on notes and in the research study.

Representatives of the Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board may require access to your data to monitor the conduct of this research.

There are no known anticipated or potential risks or harm associated with participating in this study. The proposed study is only intended to garner the experiences of guidance counselors/officers and career counselors at enacting educational equity policies at secondary schools.

Given the lack of research regarding the experiences of guidance counselors/officers and career counselors with enacting equity policies across two geographical spaces as Trinidad and Tobago and Toronto, Ontario, your participation in this study will help in understanding policy enactment practices in secondary school. Specifically, your participation will aid in practical knowledge translation about best practices for supporting and facilitating policy enactment

2

practices. Your participation can also help in facilitating services and resources to support policy enactment at secondary schools.

If you chose to withdraw from the study, you can do so anytime after your semi-structured face-to-face interview or videoconferencing interview using Western's Corporate Zoom Platform/ by regular telephone call. You have the right to request the withdrawal of all or part of any information collected from you by phone or in writing to the primary investigator or the study investigator. Once we receive the request to withdraw your information it will be removed and destroyed by following the data destruction procedures of Western University

Interview data will be stored in a secure and confidential location for seven years and all other study data will be deleted from storage devices such as USB and hard drives of computers. Any hard copies of data will be shredded and disposed of, by following the data destruction procedures of Western University.

Participants will not be compensated for their participation in this study.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Even after consent is given you have the right to refuse to participate, to answer questions, or withdraw at any time from the study. If you choose not to participate or to leave the study at any time it will not affect the study.

You do not waive any legal right by signing this consent form.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact the Office of Human Research Ethics, Western University ████████████ ██████████ email: ███████████ This office oversees the ethical conduct of research studies and is not part of the study team. Everything that you discuss will be kept confidential.

If you require any further information about this study, please contact Kathleen Sandy-Thompson by email: ███████████ or by telephone at ███████████ or Professor Goli Rezai-Rashti (the primary investigator) by email ███████████, or by telephone at ██████ ████████

If the study results are published after the completion of this dissertation, your identity will not be used in any way. If you would like to receive a copy of any potential findings, please contact Kathleen Sandy-Thompson by email at ███████████ or by telephone at ███████████.

If you agree to participate in this study, kindly sign the attached Consent Form and email it back to Kathleen Sandy-Thompson at ███████████

Sincerely,

Kathleen Sandy-Thompson,
Ph.D. Candidate,
Faculty of Education,
Western University

This letter is yours to keep for future reference.

Appendix I: Consent Form

Western Education

Project Title: Guidance Counselor's Enactment of Equity Policies: A Cross-Case Analysis of Ontario and Trinidad and Tobago

Document Title: Letter of Information and Consent Form

Principal Investigator and Contact:
Professor Goli Rezai-Rashti, Ph.D.,
Faculty of Education,
Western University

Contact No: ███████████████

Study Investigator and contact
Kathleen Sandy-Thompson, Ph.D. Candidate
Faculty of Education,
Western University

Contact No: █████████

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate in the study. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I consent to the use of unidentified quotes obtained during the study in the dissemination of this research.

☐ YES ☐ NO

_____   _____   _____
Print Name of Participant   Signature   Date (DD-MM-YYYY)

My signature means that I have explained the study to the participant named above. I have answered all of their questions.

_____   _____   _____
Print Name of Person   Signature   Date (DD-MM-YYYY)
Obtaining Consent

4

Version Date: 29/06/20

Appendix J: Interview Guide -Trinidad and Tobago

Site: Trinidad and Tobago

Research Topic: Guidance Counsellor's Enactment of Equity Policies: A Cross-Case

Analysis of Ontario and Trinidad and Tobago.

Biographic Data

1. Please describe any personal information you may wish to share about yourself such as your name, age, background.
2. Can you describe your professional journey?
3. How long have you been working at this school?
4. What other types of educational positions have you held?
5. What is your current position or job title, and job description at this secondary school?
6. Describe a typical day in your current position.

Core Data Questions – Trinidad and Tobago

7. Can you share your thoughts on equity and what does it mean to you in your professional practice?
8. Do you think equity issues are important in your professional practice at this secondary school? Can you please explain why?
9. Can you talk to me about an educational equity mandate/strategy/directive at your school, or in the Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Education, or the Division of Education, Tobago House of Assembly that guides your professional practice, please share your thoughts on that policy?
10. Can you describe a time where you were asked to implement/enact an educational equity policy directive/strategy from the Ministry of Education/ Division of Education in your professional practice? If you cannot think of a time, may I garner your thoughts on the usefulness of having an educational equity policy in your professional practice?
11. Can you describe some of the challenges you would have faced in your practice while enacting equity strategies/directives from the Ministry of Education/Division of Education?

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12. Can you describe how educational equity policies should be handed down to you for enactment in your professional practice?
13. Can you share who should facilitate or gives the directives for the enactment of educational equity strategies/directives in your practice and why?
14. Do you think guidance counselors should be included in consultations on how equity mandates/directives should be facilitated at secondary schools, please explain why?
15. Do you think guidance counselors should play a major role in the enactment of educational equity policies, please explain why and what should that role be?
16. Can you explain the benefits of having an educational equity policy in your professional practice?
17. How would you describe the role of the Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Education, and the Division of Education in Tobago, on equity issues in the education system, particularly in secondary schools?
18. Do you think the Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Education or the Division of Education, Tobago House of Assembly are doing enough to address equity education in secondary schools?
19. What resources or support have you received in enacting educational equity policies at your secondary school? If you have not received any, what resources or support would you suggest to the Trinidad and Tobago Ministry of Education, or the Division of Education, Tobago House of Assembly to facilitate your professional practice?

Closing Questions:

20. Can you provide any other information on the enactment of equity mandates/strategies/directives as a guidance counselor/officer at this school?
21. Do you have any final thoughts to share with me on your experience with enacting policies in your professional practice?

Appendix K: Interview Guide – Ontario

Research Topic: Guidance Counsellor's Enactment of Equity Policies: A Cross-Case

Analysis of Ontario and Trinidad and Tobago.

Biographic Data

1. Please describe any personal information you may wish to share about yourself such as your name, age, background.
2. Can you describe your professional journey?
3. How long have you been working at this school?
4. What other types of educational positions have you held?
5. What is your current position or job title, and job description in this position at this secondary school?
6. Describe a typical day in your current position.

Core Data Questions

7. Can you share your thoughts on equity and what does it mean to you in your professional practice?
8. Do you think equity issues are important in your professional practice at this school, please explain why?
9. Can you talk to me about an educational equity policy at your school or in Ontario's Ministry of Education that guides your professional practice? What are your thoughts on that policy?
10. Can you describe a time where you were asked to implement/enact an educational equity policy from your principal/ the Ministry of Education in your professional practice?
11. Can you share your experience with enacting educational equity policies into your practice?
12. Can you explain the process of policy enactment, and how it was facilitated into your practice?
13. Describe how equity policies are handed down to you for enactment in your professional practice as a guidance/career counselor, and who facilitates the process, or gave the directives?

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14. Can you explain the benefits of having an educational equity policy in your professional practice?
15. Do you think guidance counselors should be included in consultations on how equity mandates/directives should be facilitated at secondary schools, please explain why?
16. Do you think guidance/career counselors should be more involved in the implementation/enactment of equity policies for secondary schools and why?
17. Can you describe some of the challenges you would have faced while enacting equity policies/strategies from Ontario's Ministry of Education?
18. How would you describe the role of the Ontario Ministry of Education on equity issues in the education system, particularly, in secondary schools?
19. Do you think Ontario's Ministry of Education is doing/not doing enough to address the varied equity issues faced by guidance/career counselors in secondary schools?
20. What resources or support have you received in enacting educational equity policies at your secondary school?

Closing Questions:

21. Can you provide any other information on the enactment of equity policies as a career counselor at this school?
22. Do you have any final thoughts to share with me on your experience with enacting policies in your professional practice?

Appendix L – Curriculum Vitae

Kathleen Sandy- Thompson

EDUCATION

Doctorate of Philosophy
Western University, London, Ontario, Canada
Faculty of Education: Critical Policy, Equity and leadership Studies   2022
Dissertation: Guidance Counselor's Enactment of Educational Equity Policy:
A Cross-Case Analysis of Ontario and Trinidad and Tobago.

Masters of Education
Lakehead University, Thunder Bay, Ontario
Faculty of Education: Education with Gerontology   2014
Thesis: Older People's adaptation to new modes of communication

Bachelor of Science
The University of West Indies,
St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago
Faculty of Humanities: Psychology (Special)   2008
Thesis: The Psychological effects of Residential Care compared to Non-Residential Care on Older
Persons in Trinidad and Tobago

SCHOLARSHIPS

- Western Graduate Research Scholarship, Western University, Faculty of Education
  (September 2017-April 2018).
- Western Graduate Research Assistantship, Western University, Faculty of Education
  (September 2017- April 2018)
- Lakehead Graduate Student Scholarship, Faculty of Education (Sep 2011- August 2012)
- Lakehead Graduate Assistantship, Lakehead University, Faculty of Education (Sep 2011-
  April 2012).

- Lakehead Graduate Bursary (Awarded Fall, 2012).

- Government Assistant Tertiary Education (GATE) Grant, University of the West Indies,
  St. Augustine Trinidad and Tobago (January 2006- August 2008)

PUBLICATIONS

Book Review:
Sandy-Thompson, K. (2021). Learning to Leave: The Irony of Schooling in a Coastal
Community. *Canadian Journal of Education, 44*(3), xxxvii-xxxvii.

Sandy-Thompson, K. (2020, January). What about Equity in Education? Re-contextualization of Equity Across Local, Regional and International Spaces. In *2020 Conference of the Canadian Society for the Study of Education*.

Published Master's Thesis-

Sandy-Thompson, K. (2014). *Older people's adaptation to new modes of communication* (Master's dissertation).

Published Undergraduate Research Thesis-
Sandy-Thompson, K et al. (2008). The Psychological effects of Residential Care compared to Non-Residential Care on Older Persons in Trinidad and Tobago. The University of the West Indies Library.

Book Chapters Contributions

Tentative Book Title: Handbook of the Caribbean and African Studies in Education: Reimagining   Education the Post -2020 ERA.

Chapter Title: Building Resilient Education Systems: Climate Change, Disasters, and Emergency Response in Education (Abstract Accepted) Co-Authored Thompson, A., **Thompson-Sandy, K** & Marcelle, P (2022).

Chapter Title: Postcolonial Issues, Identity and Decolonialization Discourses in Education (Abstract Submitted) Single Authored **Thompson-Sandy K.** (2022)

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Graduate Research Assistant   **2017-2022**

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS

The American Education Research Association (since 2017)
The Canadian Journal of Education (since 2017)
The Canadian Society for the Study of Education (since 2018)

PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATION & TRAINING

The University of South Florida- Muma College of Business   **2020-2022**
Certificate in Inclusive and Ethical Leadership (In process/pending)

US Institute of Diplomacy and Human Rights Washington, DC
Certificate in Human Rights Education Training for Human Rights Consultants
Issued on April 18, 2021

The University of South Florida- Muma College of Business

Certificate in Equity, Diversity & Inclusion in Workplace
Issued June 2021.
University of Western Ontario- Ivey Business School
Training in Leadership 2020