Why Do Parties Not Make a Difference? An Examination of the Causes of Education Policy Outputs in Ontario, Saskatchewan, and Alberta

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Abstract

This study seeks to explain why partisanship—contrary to what we might expect based on the findings of other studies concerning social policies—is generally not a useful explanatory variable when examining the primary and secondary education policies of three Canadian provinces (Ontario, Saskatchewan, and Alberta) during two periods (the 1970s and 1990-2008). Four specific areas of the education sector of the provinces will be examined: objectives of curricula; spending; ministry relations with school boards; and government policies concerning private and charter schools. Utilizing a qualitative approach and building on the findings of other studies on provincial education systems, it will be argued that in order to understand why the three provinces generally adopted similar policies in both periods, regardless of the differences in the ideologies of governing parties, we need to consider the causal effect of key ideas in both periods. In addition, it will be shown that opposition parties in most instances did not present policies that differed from those of governing parties or criticize the policies of such parties. This will further illustrate the limited usefulness of adopting a partisanship lens when seeking to understand the policy positions of various parties in the provinces concerning the education sector. Partisanship will be shown to be a partially useful explanatory variable only in the second period when
seeking to understand the level of spending, though not the general patterns (i.e. periods of cutbacks or expansions), and why particular policies concerning private and charter schools were implemented. This study will also allow us to better understand how and why particular policies related to dominant ideas were transferred between policy actors in different jurisdictions.
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Chapter 1
Introduction

Why is it that variation in the ideology of governing parties (i.e. partisanship) leads to major differences in the types of policies that are implemented in many policy fields, but the impact of partisanship is less pronounced—though not completely inconsequential—with respect to the education policy sector? What makes this social policy sector unique? What factor(s) lessen the causal effect of partisanship? This study seeks to answer these fundamental questions by examining the education policies and systems (kindergarten to grade twelve) of three Canadian provinces: Ontario, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. This enquiry will cover two very distinct periods: the 1970s and 1990-2008.

As we will see, the primary reason why the partisanship variable is somewhat less consequential in the education policy sector unlike other social policy sectors is because the main factors shaping the outlook of policymakers in this sector were dominant ideas, specifically Keynesianism, neoliberalism, and human capital theory. As will be shown, the latter two became prominent as a result of the emergence of globalization in the final decades of the twentieth century. Due to these ideational forces, different governing parties in each jurisdiction went down the same policy paths, as opposed to pursuing policies in a manner that would be consistent with their distinctive ideologies.

Five obvious questions need to be addressed before advancing. First, why even assume that partisanship can be a useful explanatory variable? This is because in the discipline of political science, there have been many studies which have shown that partisanship is a key cause of why social policies differ in Western industrialized countries.
(i.e. differences in the ideologies of governing parties explain why certain policies are pursued or ignored at particular times). Hence, it is necessary to focus on this variable and explain why it does not have a great causal effect on the education component of the social policies of the aforementioned jurisdictions.

The second question concerns whether the finding of this study contributes anything new to our knowledge about this policy sector. After all, there have been studies regarding the education systems of Canadian provinces that have shown that shared ideas among policymakers led to similar policy outputs. As important as these findings are, they do not explain why partisanship does not have a causal effect. Due to the fact that partisanship is so often found to have such an effect in other social policy areas, the lack of this focus in prior research on education systems means that we do not know why, contrary to what we might expect, partisanship does not matter in educational policy in Canadian provinces.

The third question is how do the findings of this study fit into the comparative politics literature on education policies, which has shown that partisanship is a key explanatory variable internationally in terms of understanding differences in education policy outputs? The answer is that existing studies have only examined one aspect of the sector: decisions pertaining to spending. As important as these decisions are, there are other critical decisions which also have a major impact on the structure and functioning of an education system. It is not satisfactory to only examine spending decisions when attempting to determine the causes of education policy outputs. We cannot conclusively say that partisanship has a causal effect when only one aspect of the sector is examined. Accordingly, the objective of this study is to examine other aspects of education sector, in
addition to financing, in order to present a more complete picture and thus be in a better position to conclusively say which variable has the greatest effect on the sector *as a whole*.

The fourth question concerns the contribution this study can make when there have been other studies which have shown that aforementioned ideas associated with the emergence of globalization in the late 20\textsuperscript{th} century have led various jurisdictions to adopt similar education policies. Such studies—which are very few—do no offer a systematic account of how such variables have impacted specific components of a jurisdiction’s education system. They offer only a bird’s eye view of how such forces have influenced the education sectors of Western countries. A nuanced, detailed account is lacking, which prevents an understanding of how these forces are filtered by different jurisdictions, and of which areas of education sectors they influence the most.

The final question is whether the focus on ideas as the key causal variable in this study means that other factors are completely inconsequential in explaining education policy outputs? Simply put, the answer is no. Although the focus of this study is on the effect of ideas, this should not be understood to mean that ideas always led directly government officials to adopt a certain set of policies instead of others in a given time period. Members of the policy network (e.g. teachers’ unions, parent groups, business associations, etc.) are consequential as well because at times they are the transmitters of certain policy options based on a given ideational dictate. In fact, when such members of the policy network were instrumental in advocating that a given type of policy be implemented, such evidence is provided in the empirical chapters. Nevertheless, the objective of this study is to show how certain ideas—irrespective of how policy options based on their dictates came to be known and accepted by policymakers—were the main reasons why governing parties and opposition
parties often came to view one set of policies in relation to a given aspect of the education sector as superior or necessary.

Accordingly, a detailed examination of the policy recommendations made by members of the policy network as the (or additional) independent variable in this study would have led to focusing on the proximate cause of policy outputs. Although such an approach would help to further explain the intricate process of policymaking, such a focus was outside the scope of this study because the main objective of it is to focus on the ultimate cause of why partisanship is less consequential in the education policy sector. Zeroing in on the ultimate cause is necessary because dominant ideas, such as the ones that are the focus of this study, influence all sorts of actors, not just state actors. In other words, although focusing on a given component of the policy network to show that they advocated that a given policy should implemented concerning an aspect of the sector (e.g. the need to reduce spending at the start of the second period), this would not fully explain why policy network members came to see the policy that they were recommending as necessary (i.e. it would not show that those members were influenced by one of the key ideas in place during that period—an ideational force that dictated spending cuts). It is for this reason that it was necessary to focus on state actors, in particular governing and opposition parties by seeking to determine their positions on the particular aspects of the sector that were analyzed—either by obtaining evidence of why governing parties implemented a given type of policy, or in the case of opposition parties, obtaining evidence of agreement—so as to show that ideational influences resulted in both types of parties in all three provinces having a similar position in terms of the sorts of policies that should be implemented.
All of this means that the findings of this study should not be interpreted as signifying a simple causal process. Like many, if not all, policy processes, education policymaking is a complex process with causal influences other than ideational elements. However, to reiterate, the objective of this study is very specific (i.e. to examine the ultimate cause as opposed to proximate causes of education policy outputs).

Although as mentioned above we will see that ideational forces are the primary causes in shaping the education policies of the three provinces, we will also discover that in some cases, partisanship, meaning the differences in the ideology of governing parties, helps us understand why certain policies or policy proposals were advanced when a particular type of party was in office. Specifically, we will see that the partisanship variable will partially explain changes in the financial commitments made to the sector and also the policies of governments concerning private and charter schools, but this will be true only in the second period examined in this study; that is, financial commitments to the sector and policies concerning non-traditional schools were only impacted by the dominant consensus—Keynesianism—in place during the first period.

Beginning with spending, it will be shown in chapter three that when neoliberal parties came into office in the post-1990 years, they spent less than other parties. Having said that, it will also be shown that the impact of ideas is not completely irrelevant in this aspect of the sector either. This is because governments, regardless of their ideologies, followed the same spending patterns. This means that even though neoliberal parties spent less than other governing parties when cutbacks were made to the sector (e.g. when provinces were focused on reducing budget deficits in the 1990s), all parties reduced spending (e.g. the New Democratic governments in Saskatchewan and Ontario reduced spending just as the
neoliberal Progressive Conservative governments in Ontario and Alberta did, but the former less so than the latter). Similarly, when financial circumstances allowed for more commitments to the sector (i.e. when provincial economies and budgets had improved), all parties increased spending, not just centrist or left-wing parties (e.g. the neoliberal Progressive Conservative Party in Alberta increased spending just like the New Democratic government in Saskatchewan and the Liberal government in Ontario).

Clearly, partisanship matters to a certain extent when trying to understand the decisions of governments concerning spending. At the same time, this only presents a partial picture. This is because all governing parties were guided by the dictates of the two dominant ideas which influenced policymakers in the second period: neoliberalism and human capital theory. These ideational forces, both brought about due to the emergence of globalization, will be shown to have had contradictory dictates and that they offset one another. The former led parties to reduce spending when economic growth was limited and budget deficits were high, while the latter emphasized the need to maintain a strong education system so as to ensure that a jurisdiction would be able to compete in the modern, knowledge-based economy.

Turning to policies concerning private schools and charter schools, we will see that in all three provinces in the second period, neoliberal parties were more supportive of allowing non-traditional schools, such private or charter schools, to operate. In all three provinces, we will see non-neoliberal parties criticize (or in the case of Ontario, undo) such policies.

In spite of these exceptions, however, the predominant argument of this study, as mentioned above, is that partisanship is not a key variable for explaining education policy outputs in the cases examined. In order to fully understand the reasons for policy outputs in
the two periods being studied, we will see that it is the influence of ideational forces which shaped the views of policymakers in the three provinces.

In what is to follow, I will first examine the (limited) existing literature on education by political scientists\(^1\) and what it has to say regarding the factors that influence, and the characteristics of, the education policy outputs of various jurisdictions. Second, I will expand on the discussion above regarding the positive relationship between partisanship and policy outputs by reviewing two key literatures in the discipline: the welfare state and the party politics literatures. The third section will go into detail regarding the rationale behind case and time period selection. The subsequent section will provide an in depth discussion of the key explanatory variable (i.e. the causal effect of dominant ideas). The final section will discuss the methodology of the study.

**Review of Existing Literature on Education Policies**

There have been two major studies concerning the education systems of Canadian provinces by political scientists. Both seek to trace the evolution of public schooling in these jurisdictions from their establishment to modern times. The first study, *Public Schools and Political Ideas: Canadian Educational Policy in Historical Perspective* by Ronald Manzer\(^2\) traces 150 years of schooling in the British North American colonies and the provinces of Canada, beginning in the mid-1800s and ending in the 1990s. Manzer seeks to show the influence of ideas in shaping education policy in the provinces. This is because ideas, according to Manzer, “are important determinants of public policies because policy-makers

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\(^1\) Once again, the focus will be on kindergarten to grade twelve education, as opposed to studies on pre-kindergarten policies, post-secondary education, or adult skill-training policies. In addition, the focus will be on the literature concerning the education systems of developed countries.

can use ideas strategically to mobilize, persuade, or manipulate others to support their interests.”³ What is interesting is that Manzer also notes that public policies in turn affect and transform ideas thus showing that there is interaction between ideas and policy outputs, instead of a simple, cause and effect relationship.⁴

Manzer goes on to identify liberalism as the “hegemonic ideology” that has affected education policymaking in this country, but that this ideology has come in many shades. Three governance related topics (the nature and extent of provincial control over the education sector, the relationship between ministries of education and school boards, and the relationship between provincial governments and teachers’ unions and trustees’ associations)⁵ and three policy related topics (the role of religion in public education, the objective of secondary curricula, and policies concerning language of instruction)⁶ are analyzed as a means of advancing the central argument of the study: that different forms of liberalism over the past hundred plus years, specifically (in order of dominance) political, economic, ethical, and most recently technological liberalism, have shaped the manner in which policymakers have structured their education systems and why the different provinces did not establish radically different education systems; that is, the study shows that the dominance of a given form of liberalism during particular eras prevented alternative policy options from being considered or seen as legitimate.

It should be noted that Manzer also examines the history and evolution of Canadian provincial education systems in another study—Educational Regimes and Anglo-American

³ Ibid., 5.
⁴ Ibid., 17.
⁵ Ibid., 31.
⁶ Ibid., 49.
Democracy—
in addition to those of Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the
United States, from the 1800s to the early 2000s. However, that study’s primary focus is on
examining education policies as a means of understanding the similarities and differences in
the “practices” of democracy in those countries, specifically by focusing on three
“dimensions of democracy”: community; equality, and liberty. The central argument of the
study is that because of how three ideologies that are the basis of the political cultures of the
countries—conservatism, liberalism, and socialism—“have had very different manifestations
in the five countries,” and also because of institutional differences—specifically the fact that
three of the countries are federal states and two are unitary states—we have seen variation in
education provision and governance over time, which in turn allows us to understand the
differences in the “ideas and practices” of these democracies. From there, Manzer argues
that although education “policy choices and outcomes may differ across regimes... the
historical structure of policy narratives is essentially the same. This, in turn, has meant that
there is “a common shape to democratic development across Anglo-American regimes.”
Overall then, education regimes, including those of the Canadian provinces, are simply an
explanatory variable in a study that is focused on an unrelated political puzzle. Moreover, the
sections of the study regarding the Canadian provincial education systems are in many

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8 Specifically, Manzer focuses on “education provision,” which concerns “the scope of provision, the
commitment of public resources, the substance of teaching and learning, and the distribution of benefits and
costs” and “education governance,” which concerns the functions of governance, the levels of public authority,
the size of governments, and the representation of major social groups in educational politics, policy and
administration.” Source: Ibid., 9-10, 12. In addition, the study divides the period under examination into five
eras that were marked by unique “historical problems regarding the relationship of state, market, and society in
the demand and supply of education” as a means of explaining why and how education policies changed at
particular times. Source: Ibid., 15-16.
9 Ibid., 27.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid., 345-346.
instances similar to the historical accounts of these systems that were provided in *Public Schools and Political Ideas*.

The second study that analyzes the education systems of Canadian provinces, *Learning to School: Federalism and Public Schooling in Canada* by Jennifer Wallner,12 seeks to explain why the ten provinces have, over time, established similar education systems. At its core, the study is about the nature of federalism and how the provinces within Canada, without a federal education department to set broad guidelines or objectives, have managed to do this. After all, as Wallner explains, “the prevailing wisdom suggests that the achievement of interjurisdictional policy similarity is unlikely without direct interventions by a central government that has the necessary authority and capacity to hierarchically impose or compel common behaviour by the substate jurisdictions.”13

In order to address this puzzle, Wallner traces the evolution of the provincial education systems (beginning in the 1840s and ending in 2007), specifically their policies concerning administration, finance, curricula, evaluation, and the teaching profession. The methodological approach is institutional, given that an “analytical architecture” is established that seeks to “bridge” the three strands of institutionalism: rational choice institutionalism, sociological institutionalism, and historical institutionalism.14 Using this approach, Wallner

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13 Ibid., 5.
14 Ibid., 9. The following is an overview of what is drawn from the three strands of institutionalism in order to establish the “analytical architecture” of the study: “My interests in the historical development of a policy system led me to start from the base of historical institutionalism, which draws our attention to the importance of timing and sequencing in a particular context made up of formal rules and informal practices. Here the actions of education policymakers nested within a temporally and structurally bound context take centre stage. My interest in the meso-level policy development of the provincial education systems draws inspiration from sociological institutionalism’s focus on organizational evolution and the ways in which institutions can become infused with values that subsequently affect their configuration and evolution. Normative and cultural factors are woven into my analytical architecture as I argue that cultural bonds influence the processes of diffusion and that the implementation and adaptation of new policies is shaped by the active features of the internal education regime at work within each provincial system. Finally, to correct for the determinist and structuralist tendencies
argues that the main cause of similarities in the education systems of the ten provinces is the diffusion of policy ideas, via the diffusion mechanisms of learning, emulation, and cooperation. Such diffusion, it is argued, comes about because of a conducive policy climate that is comprised of three components: interdependence, specifically legal and economic interdependence; connectivity, specifically organizational and cultural; and “ideational aspects that prevail at particular moments in time.”

Overall, the study shows that the political actors of the provinces were able to mould their education systems in a similar way. The study does note that in certain periods and certain aspects of the sector, entrenched non-state actors in the policy community (e.g. trustee associations in the case of amalgamation policies or teachers’ unions and university administers in the case teacher education policies) were able to sometimes put up temporary roadblocks by preventing the implementation of a given policy. However, by the end of the last period in which the study focuses on (1982-2007), it is shown that when reforming and improving their education systems, provincial governments were able to learn from one another due to the diffusion of policy ideas, resulting in the ten provinces having similar education systems, irrespective of any of the temporary roadblocks.

What Manzer’s first study (i.e. *Public Schools and Political Ideas*) and Wallner’s study do not attempt to do is analyze the extent to which dominant ideas—ideas that influenced education policymakers in the provinces—were connected to broader, cross-national ideational forces. Simply put, we are not informed about whether the changes

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of historical and sociological institutionalism, I integrate insights from rational choice institutionalism without relying exclusively on rational choice theory to understand institutional change. Specifically, I work to identify the ways in which actors are influenced by one another and by their environments when making decisions as well as how these decisions in turn reshape or adjust the prevailing policy context, the choices that subsequent actors make, and the wider policy climate.” Source: Ibid., 9-10.

15 Ibid., 91.
implemented by provincial officials were consistent with developments in other countries and if not, why and how they differed. For example, Manzer does not seek to show how changes in objectives for curricula in the immediate post-World War II years—changes which stressed a humanistic, progressive education—were connected to broader global ideas regarding the need for states to provide social safety nets and equalize opportunities for all citizens and how by the end of the twentieth century, ideas advanced by international organizations and certain key actors concerning the need to reduce spending accounted for abandonment of the previous form of schooling. It should be noted that Wallner does mention in a few places that Canadian policymakers were influenced by ideas which originated outside the country (e.g. by being a member of the OECD, policymakers were exposed to the ideas of the policy network that such an association afforded), but again, there is not an in depth discussion of the nature and consequences of dominant cross-national ideas and their connection with the types of policies implemented by provincial education policymakers.

In addition, the two studies do not examine the role of politics. Specifically, although both studies argue that provincial education systems were structured in a similar way by the end of the time periods that they examine, they do not discuss whether similar policies were implemented regarding one particular aspect of the sector (e.g. curricula) only when ideologically similar governing parties came into office in the provinces; that is, there is rarely any discussion, for example, of when a conservative party in one province implemented one type of policy concerning an aspect of its education system, whether the same policy was implemented in other provinces only when they too had conservative governing parties or whether it was implemented irrespective of the ideology of the

16 Ibid., 154.
governing parties in those other provinces. Also, there is no discussion of what opposition parties had to say about new policies. Such analysis is crucial because similar policies implemented by ideologically different parties and agreement among opposition parties would mean that all political actors in the various provinces, irrespective of ideology, were guided by similar ideational dictates. Accordingly, such evidence would indicate the influence of ideas in structuring policymaking.

In other words, when a political party is mentioned, it is done so in passing (i.e. the name of a governing party is specified when the implementation of a policy is discussed) as opposed to being part of a broader theoretical discussion regarding partisanship as a variable. In the case of Manzer’s *Public Schools and Political Ideas*, there are fifty seven mentions of national and provincial political parties. Usually, such mentions are contained in a distinct paragraph in which more than one political party is mentioned.\(^\text{17}\) Only six of these paragraphs discuss whether there were policy agreements or disagreements among ideologically different parties, sometimes across provinces and sometimes within one province.\(^\text{18}\) (It is shown that there was agreement among ideologically different political parties in three paragraphs: policies concerning school board amalgamations in various provinces; funding for private schools in Ontario; and the characteristics of school boards in Quebec. Disagreement is shown among ideologically different political parties in the other three paragraphs, which concern discussions about policies for funding of Catholic high schools in Ontario and teachers’ collective bargaining rights and curriculum objectives in

\(^{17}\) Each individual mention of a given political party was counted separately.
\(^{18}\) The paragraphs are on pages 115, 167, 169-170, 171, 206, and 242. It should be noted that there is also such a paragraph concerning partisanship on page 253. However, that is a repetition of the discussion on page 242.
British Columbia. As for Wallner’s study, there are sixteen mentions of political parties. In one instance there is a discussion of a policy agreement (regarding centralized funding in the provinces) and one instance of a policy disagreement (regarding funding of schools in Manitoba) among ideologically different parties.

This study seeks to build on and expand the findings of these two studies. The objective of this dissertation is not to advance a completely new or contradictory argument. Rather, the objective is to use the findings advanced by Manzer and Wallner and essentially fill in the gaps so as to gain a fuller understanding of why partisanship does not explain more than it does in relation to education policy outputs.

An additional study on schooling in Canada is a dissertation titled *The Progressive Conservative Government and Education Policy in Alberta: Leadership and Continuity* by Michael Garry Wagner. At its core, this study is focused on providing an account of the education policies of the one party that ruled Alberta for an extended period in the late twentieth century: the Progressive Conservative Party. It argues that the education policies of the Klein government (i.e. in the post 1993 years)—contrary to popular belief—were similar to, and a continuation of, the policies of previous Progressive Conservative governments.

Although it attempts to show the legitimacy of the state autonomy theory (and implicitly the

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19 In terms of Manzer’s *Educational Regimes and Anglo-American Democracy*, in the sections that discuss the education systems of Canadian provinces, there are twenty seven mentions of national and provincial political parties. As with Manzer’s previous study, usually such mentions are contained in distinct paragraphs in which more than one political party is mentioned. In only four of these paragraphs are we informed that there were policy agreements (concerning school board amalgamations in various provinces in the twentieth century and control over curriculum in Ontario in the late twentieth century) or disagreements (concerning control over educational governance in Ontario in the nineteenth century and funding for private schools in Ontario in the late twentieth century) among ideologically different parties, and one mention of policy agreement (concerning centralizing of funding in Ontario and Alberta in the late twentieth century) among ideologically similar parties.

20 All but one are mentions of provincial political parties. The lone exception is a mention of the federal Liberal Party.

21 Wallner, 77.

22 Ibid., 220.

influence of path dependency in public policymaking), it is mostly a historical overview of the education policies of the province as opposed to seeking to test various hypotheses and explaining the causes of policies.

Works produced by political scientists outside of Canada regarding education policies are more numerous, but they too have shortcomings. The first group of such studies primarily sought to “describe and explain differences in the institutional set-up of the educational system. Methodologically, these studies relied on qualitative and historical methods and small-N comparisons.” The contribution that such studies made to our understanding of education policymaking is that “early events matter more than later events, because they have a strong impact on the selection of development paths. Power struggles mediated by institutions (such as the level of decentralization in education systems) at critical junctures in history determine the fate of education systems. What these studies neglect, however, is the role of political actors in the narrow sense, i.e. political parties.”

More recent scholarship has tended to employ quantitative methods and focus on the relationship between government’s ideology and education policy decisions, but only one particular set of decisions: those related to spending. Although such decisions are a crucial component of any government’s influence on the education system of their jurisdiction, it is

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26 Ibid., 416. In a comparative politics textbook, which contains a chapter on the education policies of industrialized countries, there is a brief discussion regarding the impact of partisanship on a particular aspect of education policymaking (the introduction of comprehensive schools). However, what the authors show is that partisanship may not matter; rather it is differences in terms of whether a state is federal or unitary that can help explain differences in terms of the introduction of such schools. Source: Arnold J. Heidenheimer, Hugh Heclo, and Carolyn Teich Adams, *Comparative Public Policy: The Politics of Social Choice in America, Europe, and Japan* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1990), 45-47.
not the only decision that they make. Focusing only on this particular aspect of the sector in determining the influence of partisanship fails to present a complete and nuanced account of the true effect of ideology on education policy outputs.

Some scholars who have undertaken such work have questioned whether the location of the governing party on the political spectrum can explain education spending decisions, due to the apparent difference between this sector and other social policy sectors that comprise a welfare state. As Francis Castles explains,

in the case of many aspects of social spending, it is possible to relate the rhetorical stance of the parties to the diverse stands they take on public expenditure issues. The Socialists, so the argument goes, will spend more because they wish to alleviate the condition of the poor and to foster greater equality; parties of the Right will spend less because they associate public intervention with inefficiency and waste and because, at more [sic] general level, public expenditure is seen as an impediment to economic growth and a self-reliant society. Rhetorical differences in the educational arena are, perhaps, less clear-cut, since the Right rarely challenges the view that the vast majority of the school age population must be educated by the state or that expenditure on (the right types of) education constitutes a productive form of investment in human capital.28

Furthermore, the expectation of left-wing parties being strong advocates of public education, and of right-wing parties opposing this, has also been questioned (especially with respect to the first part of such arguments) due to the fact that “the redistributive potential of education is lower than that of more traditional transfer policies, so that parties on the left should not be expected to expand education at any cost.”29 In addition, some studies have shown that it is a country’s production regime (i.e. whether it is a coordinated market economy [CME] versus a liberal market economy [LME]), in conjunction with the occurrence of deindustrialization, which better explains spending commitments to the sector,

29 Busemeyer and Trampusch, 418.
as opposed to partisanship. Specifically, it has been shown that “the risk of skills redundancy is biggest where the skills specificity of the average worker is biggest, namely in the so-called coordinated market economies. This implies that that the effect of deindustrialization on education is conditioned on the capitalist system in place in a given country: In CMEs deindustrialization entails expansion, in liberal market economies it does not.”\textsuperscript{30} Also, some studies,\textsuperscript{31} have suggested that partisanship allows us to understand differences in terms of commitment to the sector in the past, but that such differences have declined over time.

Overall, however, studies undertaken to determine what contributes to more spending by some governments, as opposed to other governments, have indicated the influence of a government’s ideology; that is, left-wing parties do spend more on education than right-wing parties,\textsuperscript{32} or conversely have argued that the strength of right-wing parties has a negative impact on education spending.\textsuperscript{33} In fact, it has been shown that such differences have not diminished over time.\textsuperscript{34} But such studies have also shown that there are caveats, such as the fact that the influence of left-wing parties (or absence of right-wing parties) on education spending has varied over the decades,\textsuperscript{35} possibly because of changes in policy paradigms. I will return to this point below. Another caveat is that spending has varied across the two


\textsuperscript{32} See for example: Ben W. Ansell, “From the Ballot to the Blackboard: The Redistributive Political Economy of Education” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2006), specifically chapter 7.


main parts of the education sector (kindergarten to grade 12 education versus higher education).\textsuperscript{36}

An additional topic that has received attention by political scientists who have examined the education policy sector is the influence of neoliberalism on education systems and how it has led to policy similarities. Generally, this sub-literature focuses on the increased role of international and supra-national organizations. More precisely, such studies have sought to explain how these types of organizations have taken over some of the policymaking functions previously performed by state actors (e.g. determining the broad objectives of curricula) and championed the appropriateness of structuring public education systems in a manner that is consistent with neoliberalism’s dictates, such as encouraging “choice” (i.e. allowing a greater role for private schooling) or spearheading the adoption by state actors of standardized tests so as to ensure that school systems can be held accountable for the extent to which they are properly teaching students and justifying the high costs associated with public education.

These studies\textsuperscript{37} are mostly descriptive. Consequently, there is no discussion of how different jurisdictions with unique policy legacies have reacted to neoliberalism’s dictates (i.e. whether a historically social democratic jurisdiction has changed its education system less than a historically liberal jurisdiction to reflect the dictates of neoliberalism) or whether certain types of political parties have been more receptive to the dictates of neoliberalism. For example, many of these studies focus on the European Union region, including


Walkenhorst’s. That study, and others like it, fail to discuss how neoliberal reforms were viewed by countries as diverse as Sweden, which has a social democratic welfare state, the United Kingdom, which has a liberal one, or Germany, with its conservative legacies. As a consequence, a shortcoming of such studies is the implicit assumption—an assumption that has not been tested—that neoliberalism has influenced all jurisdictions equally and that policymakers in all jurisdictions have reacted the same way to neoliberalism’s dictates.

Generally, such studies take an ideational approach in that they focus on how policy options or solutions are transmitted, diffused, or transferred across political borders. However, they do not show explicitly how policymakers in different jurisdictions learn about or become aware of the policies of their colleagues elsewhere, meaning that what is lacking are concrete examples to show how ideas spread and influence actors.

A final part of the existing political science literature on education policy outputs is studies that seek to determine the impact of globalization and how it too has caused various jurisdictions to react in a similar way, specifically in terms of spending. Like the studies concerning neoliberalism’s impacts on the education sector, there has not been any comprehensive analysis regarding how globalization’s dictates get filtered in jurisdictions with unique policy legacies and party systems.

One partial exception—partial because it only focuses on one jurisdiction—is a dissertation entitled *Globalization and the Selective Permeability of Public Policy-Making: The Case of K-12 Education in Ontario, 1990-2003* by Celine Mulhern. By examining the policies of the Ontario New Democratic and Progressive Conservative Parties during their

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time in office in the late twentieth century, the study advances two key arguments. First, using Peter Hall’s discussion of three orders of policy paradigms, this study argues that while there were changes in the first two policy orders (settings and programs), there was not a change in the third order (overall goals), meaning that the province did not witness a complete paradigm shift in the education sector during the 1990s—a decade in which both the New Democrats and Tories made significant changes to the sector. As Mulhern explains, “While reform must be observed at all three levels for a paradigm change to have occurred, the ultimate measure of paradigmatic change resides at the third order level of goals: according to Hall, reforms that affect only the first and second orders of policy are not paradigmatic in nature.” In other words, Mulhern seeks to contradict the conventional wisdom that there was a complete paradigm shift in the education sector of Ontario in the 1990s. Instead, she argues that the “programmatic reforms” (i.e. second order reforms) witnessed in the province should not be confused with broad changes in the objectives of the province’s education system (i.e. neither government altered the goals of the education sector): “Although major programmatic reform occurred from 1990 to 2003, there was insufficient movement away from Hall’s third order goals, defined here as post-war welfare state goals, to signal paradigmatic change.”

The second argument that the study advances—an extension of the first—is that the programmatic reforms introduced by both governments did not result in a turn towards a pure liberal, market based approach to the education sector as “globalizationists” argue, and that evidence of partisanship, meaning differences in how ideologically different parties pursued education reform, is present (i.e. globalization did not cause different parties to react in

40 Ibid., 1.
41 Ibid., 6.
exactly the same way when reforming the province’s education system). Evidence of the causal effect of partisanship is shown primarily by evaluating the *reasons* why similar policies were pursued. In terms of similarities, the study argues that there was overlap in three key areas of the sector: the centralization of curricula development; the introduction of standardized testing; and the relationship between the ministry of education and school boards.

What is most interesting about Mulhern’s study is that when discussing the similarities between the approach of the two governments, it argues that this can be attributed to the dominance of new public management—a management philosophy that is closely aligned with the dictates of neoliberalism. Therefore, although not the primary objective of the study, the findings do reveal the role of neoliberalism in forcing two ideologically very different parties to share similarities in terms of their education policies.

In addition to the aforementioned works, *education scholars* have produced a vast literature that focuses on the characteristics of education systems (e.g. spending patterns, private school policies, special education policies, the impacts of neoliberalism and globalization, the increasing role of international and supra-national organizations etc.).[^42] However, such studies are often purely descriptive or historical and do not attempt to explain the key factors, especially political ones, that lead to particular policies. That being the case,

we cannot rely on this literature as a means of gaining a theoretical understanding of why different jurisdictions and parties travel down certain policy paths, while bypassing others, when structuring various aspects of their education systems. Like much of the existing political science literature on education—both domestic and international—the work of education scholars fails to provide a nuanced, causal explanation of education policymaking that takes into account the role of politics.

Finally, it is important to note that although the discussion above has focused on studies with a focus on education policy as a dependent variable (i.e. studies which seek to describe or explain why particular education policies were implemented or did not change or why various education systems share similarities), there have been studies which treat education policies and systems as an independent variable. Such studies are interested in determining the effect of a particular education policy or system on an individual’s or society’s well-being, economic potential, social mobility, academic achievement, etc.). Yet in these studies too “the role of actors, politics and the implementation of education policies are still largely a ‘black box’” in this literature.⁴³

**Partisanship’s Effects on Policy Outputs**

As mentioned above, there are specific literatures in political science which have shown that a governing party’s ideology affects the characteristics of implemented policies. This is why, to reiterate, this study seeks to understand the puzzle regarding the lack of an influence that this supposedly crucial variable has on education policy outputs. One such literature is comprised of studies that examine the welfare states of Western, industrialized countries, i.e. policies concerning unemployment insurance, pensions, childcare, and social assistance.

⁴³ Busemeyer and Tampusch, 432.
It may now seem obvious that the comprehensiveness and characteristics of welfare states are in large part a result of the ideological outlook of governing parties or how such parties are influenced by the ideologies of their opponents in their party systems, but this was not always known. Before the work of scholars such as Walter Korpi and Gosta-Esping-Andersen, “functionalist theories portraying the welfare state as a response to social, economic and demographic change” were the conventional wisdom.\(^{44}\) What Korpi and Esping-Andersen showed,\(^{45}\) and what was later confirmed by numerous other studies, is that the power resources of the working class, mainly expressed via left-wing/social-democratic parties, go a long way towards explaining the origin and characteristics of Western welfare states. Specifically, it was shown by Esping-Andersen that the reason why the welfare states of Nordic countries were established in a far more comprehensive and universal manner than those of other European or Anglo-Saxon countries, was due to the dominance of left-wing/social democratic parties.

It is fair to conclude that much of this literature focuses on how and why particular welfare states or a set of policies that comprise a welfare state were originally created. However, this literature has also focused on how and why welfare states remain distinct after their founding, even in the era of rapid changes in the post-1980 years as governments sought to address budget deficits. Thus, even though some, most notably Paul Pierson, suggested that partisanship no longer is a useful explanatory variable in terms of explaining the characteristics and comprehensiveness of welfare state in recent decades,\(^{46}\) it has


subsequently been shown that when there are changes in government and a left-wing party is replaced by a right-wing party (or vice versa), there is clear evidence of changes in commitment to social programs, or more generally, that left-wing parties as a whole are more committed to protecting welfare states than right-wing parties in the era of retrenchment.48

In terms of focus, welfare state scholars have not just taken a macro approach (i.e. studying and comparing welfare states as a whole). They have also studied specific policy areas. This too reveals the importance of partisanship as a means of understanding differences in specific policy sectors. Left-wing parties are more likely to protect and possibly expand existing programs or be more supportive of decommodification while right-wing parties are more likely to retrench or not emphasize decommodification. Some examples include: childcare policies in Australia, Canada, Finland, and Sweden;49 the labour market policy of Canadian provinces (specifically Quebec, Ontario, Alberta, and British Columbia);50 replacement rates for unemployment benefits and sickness insurance,51 working hour policies,52 public pension income replacement rates,53 and childcare policies in eighteen

47 Evelyne Huber and John D. Stephens, Development and Crisis of the Welfare State: Parties and Policies in Global Markets (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001). What is interesting is that quantitative analysis in this study failed to detect such a difference. Instead, the difference was noted in its qualitative analysis.
industrialized countries; labour market policies in Europe; and the degree to which inequality changes depending on the ideology of governing parties in sixteen countries.

It should be noted, however, that many studies in this literature rely on quantitative methods (e.g. regression analysis) to show the effects of other variables that shape the characteristics of welfare states or indicate under what conditions partisanship is relatively more or less consequential. For example, one of the key findings by scholars who built on the findings of Korpi and Esping-Andersen has been that as much as the ideological outlook of a given government matters, so does the institutional setting in which they operate. Specifically, it has been shown that “constitutional provisions that concentrate power facilitated, and provisions that disperse power obstructed, the passing of major pieces of welfare state legislation. This was true both for the construction of welfare states and for welfare state retrenchment.” Consequently, a social democratic party will have a greater chance of implementing a pro-welfare state policy agenda in a unitary state with a unicameral legislature than in a federal state with a bicameral legislature. This does not mean that the ideology of the governing party is less important; a social democratic party, even in a system with multiple veto points, would still be more progressive in its outlook regarding social policy than a conservative party in a system with few veto points.

In addition, welfare state scholars have closely examined the impact of globalization and whether this has resulted in welfare state policy convergence (i.e. negated the effect of

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partisanship). A key finding of this strand of the literature has been that in addition to other factors—for example policy legacies and the number of veto points—electoral systems, specifically proportional electoral systems, allow for pro-welfare state parties (i.e. social democratic and centrist parties) to be a part of governing coalitions more often; this inhibits welfare state retrenchment. Because of this, partisanship continues to matter in the globalized era for welfare state policies; certain parties are more likely than others to remain committed to spending on, and protecting, social programs.

The studies by party politics scholars form a second key literature which has focused on the relationship between partisanship and the characteristics of policy outputs. In terms of its empirical approach, this literature is very similar to the welfare state literature. In fact, much of this literature references the studies of welfare state scholars. In order to determine whether a governing party’s ideology influences policy outputs, spending patterns are examined, as opposed to detailed qualitative comparisons of the characteristics of policy sectors. One minor difference between this literature and the welfare state literature is that the studies of party politics scholars, in certain instances, focus on spending beyond social policy sectors. For example, a study on spending patterns by the Canadian Liberal and Progressive Conservative/Conservative governments, which covers a 45-year period beginning in 1965, addressed expenditures on defence, economic, and social policies. The findings reveal a higher degree of spending when Liberals were in office, especially when a complete term of a given Liberal government is compared to the complete term of a Conservative government, as opposed to year-to-year comparisons.

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58 For an example of a study that advances such an argument, refer to: Duane Swank, Global Capital, Political Institutions, and Policy Change in Developed Welfare States (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
Studies\textsuperscript{60} that focus on non-defence spending (i.e. spending related to economic and social policies as is done by welfare state scholars) and compare a wide variety of countries also show that non-right-wing parties do spend slightly more, but again, like the foregoing study, differences are noticeable mainly when a party has been in office several years. In addition, it has been shown that even when a specific policy goal is pursued as opposed to simply comparing the spending patterns of ideologically different governments (e.g. increasing productivity of capital and labour) left-wing and right-wing parties implement different policies in order to achieve such goals.\textsuperscript{61} Also, there have been studies\textsuperscript{62} which show that partisanship has the greatest effect in countries with majoritarian electoral systems, where one party can govern independently, as opposed to proportional systems, where coalition governments are the norm.

What this literature has also revealed is that not only do different types of parties approach spending decisions differently, but parties have different ideas concerning what is a salient issue depending on their location on the ideological spectrum.\textsuperscript{63} However, it should not be assumed that there is complete agreement in the literature regarding why political parties differ in terms of their policy positions. Specifically, there is disagreement as to whether party elites take particular positions on various issues due to their desire to attract particular segments of the voting population or whether such elites have a set of beliefs to


begin with and in turn attempt to the shape the thinking of voters (e.g. through a socialization process).\textsuperscript{64}

**Overview of Case Selection**

As was shown in the first section, political scientists, both in Canada and internationally, have produced a number of studies concerning the education systems of industrialized countries. One shortcoming of many of these studies is that when evaluating the causal effect of variables on education policy outputs, usually only one aspect of the sector is examined: decisions related to spending. In order to address this shortcoming and provide a more nuanced explanation, three areas of the education policy sector, in addition to spending decisions, will be examined in this study. Those three are: (1) the objectives of education systems, meaning whether they were and are structured to emphasize specific skills that students should learn in order to succeed in the labour market as opposed to humanistic or progressive education; (2) the relationship between the Ministries\textsuperscript{65} of Education in the provinces and their respective school boards (especially in terms of taxing and decision-making powers); and (3) governments’ policy towards private and charter schools.\textsuperscript{66}

In terms of time-period selection, given the fact that a portion of the existing studies on education systems argue that different jurisdictions implemented similar education policies in recent decades as dominant ideas associated with the emergence of globalization became prominent, namely neoliberalism and human capital theory, it is important to also

\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., 8-9.
\textsuperscript{65} Throughout the history of public education in the provinces, governments have changed the name of the department/ministry responsible for kindergarten to 12 education (and the title of the minister that is responsible for this policy area). I will simply refer to the ministries that have been responsible for kindergarten to 12 education in the three provinces as “ministry(ies) of education” and the minister that has overseen it as “minister of education.”
\textsuperscript{66} In the pages to follow, when using the term “education policy” or “education policies” I am referring to these four aspects.
examine a time period prior to their emergence. Doing so will allow us to see whether similarities were the norm in this sector even before these ideas became dominant. If this is found to be the case, it will suggest that it was not anything unique about the aforementioned globalization-associated ideas that caused the similarities. Instead, we would be able to objectively conclude that it is the dictates of broader ideational forces, irrespective of their association with globalization, that cause similarities in the education policy sector. As such, in addition to focusing on the 1990s and 2000s (up to the 2008 financial crisis), this study will also focus on the 1970s, a period before the emergence globalization, as commonly understood, in which the public education systems of Western industrialized jurisdictions had become fully consolidated and accessible to the masses, including special education and pre-grade one students.

In order to determine whether the ideational forces that are the focus of this study have impacted all jurisdictions in a similar way or if such forces are influenced by unique policy legacies and party systems, three provinces that are often judged to differ significantly in ways that might be expected to affect the policymaking process in general, and education policy in particular, have been selected. In identifying three such most-different cases, Nelson Wiseman’s study on provincial political cultures was used to identify distinct

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67 Nelson Wiseman, *In Search of Canadian Political Culture* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007). Even though many political scientists have written extensively about Canadian political culture, most have done so in a manner in which a national analysis is undertaken (i.e. analysis of Canadian political culture as whole in comparison with other national political cultures, as opposed to the various sub-political cultures in the country). Since I am focused on the sub-national level, such analyses are not useful for my purposes. For examples of such works, refer to: Gad Horowitz, “Conservatism, Liberalism, and Socialism in Canada: An Interpretation,” *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* 32, no. 2 (1966): 143-171; Seymour Martin Lipset, *Continental Divide: The Values and Institutions of the United States and Canada* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Neil Nevitte, *The Decline of Deference: Canadian Value Change in Cross-National Perspective* (Peterborough, On: Broadview Press, 1996). Another problem is that some studies that focus on sub-national Canadian political cultures focus on provinces that are not the focus of my study. See for example: Ian Stewart, *Roasting Chestnuts: The Mythology of Maritime Political Culture* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1994). It should also be noted that some have argued that provincial boundaries do not serve a useful purpose in terms of determining sub-national political cultures, if political culture is defined
provinces. His study, which employs a historical method, identifies Saskatchewan as a predominantly left-wing, collectivist, and social democratic province; Ontario as a predominantly centrist, moderate province; and Alberta as a predominantly right-wing, individualistic, and conservative province. It is important to stress that such characterizations do not mean that other ideologies, and by extension political parties which promote other ideologies, cannot exist or be elected in each of these provinces. Rather, such a characterization of a given province is meant to illustrate the general ideological landscape, and which types of political parties, with particular policy prescriptions, are more likely to have success.

Relying on a historical analysis as a means of identifying the general ideological characteristics of provinces, as Wiseman does, is not the only means of identifying such differences. A more quantitative approach can also be used. For example, we can examine the attitudes and beliefs of citizens of the provinces regarding key policy issues or their outlooks regarding various political parties. Such an analysis can be undertaken by examining the results of Canadian Election Study surveys.

An election study that was undertaken two years prior to the beginning of the first period that this study is focused on (the 1970s), reveals some interesting information. When respondents were asked which “party [is] closest to your views on welfare” 10.8% of

strictly as differences in political attitudes and behaviours. Regional clusters (i.e. clusters of Canadians based on similarity in terms of demographic characteristics, thus spanning provincial boundaries) have been shown to explain such differences as effectively as provincial boundaries. For an elaboration of this point, refer to: Ailsa Henderson, “Regional Political Cultures in Canada,” Canadian Journal of Political Science 37, no. 3 (2004): 595-615. Nevertheless, since my focus is on a policy sector in which provincial governments are a key actor and provincial boundaries do serve as real divisions in terms of the types of policies that affect a given population and not another, analysis and discussion of provincial political cultures will be the focus of my study.

68 More precisely, in order to “search” for the various political cultures in Canada, Wiseman takes a historical approach by relying on the fragment theory of Louis Hartz and Gad Horowitz, Seymour Martin Lipset’s formative or founding events theory, but supplemented with his own “quake” theory, as well as Marxist class and Innisian (i.e. staples theory) political economic perspectives, all of which are complemented with an analysis of various immigration patterns throughout Canadian history.
respondents from Saskatchewan indicated the NDP, while only 3% of Albertans did so and 8% of Ontarians. In contrast, only 2.9% Saskatchewanians indicated that the Progressive Conservative Party was closest to their views on welfare, while 8.5% and 6.4% of Albertans and Ontarians, respectively, identified with the Progressive Conservative Party regarding welfare policy. As such, consistent with the characterization of the provincial culture being more collectivist than the other provinces, more respondents in Saskatchewan identified with a party that had and continues to have a more progressive outlook regarding welfare and less so with the party that would be less progressive in its policy prescriptions related to welfare. Also consistent with the above characterization, Alberta is the province in which more respondents identified with the party that would stress a more limited approach to welfare, which is consistent with the less collectivist political culture of the province. Ontario, as we would expect, occupies a middle position relative to these two provinces (i.e. more respondents selected the NDP as the party that reflects their outlook regarding welfare than in Alberta, but less so than respondents from Saskatchewan, with the reverse being true regarding the Progressive Conservative Party).  

Election studies undertaken during the second period also support the aforementioned conclusions regarding the provincial political cultures. For example, in the 1997 election study, respondents were asked whether spending cuts initiated by the federal Liberal Party after they came into office in 1993 were fair or unfair. In Saskatchewan 42.7% of

69 By examining another question, this from the 1979 election study, we again see that the above findings regarding the political culture of the provinces are not an anomaly. When respondents were asked whether the government should or should not provide “welfare services for anyone who needs them,” 87.3% of respondents from Saskatchewan indicated that the government should provide such services versus 12.7% of those who said the government should not. In Ontario, 84.1% of respondents believed the government should provide welfare services versus 15.9% that indicated the government should not, while the percentages for Alberta were 78.2% and 21.8%, respectively. Clearly, we are able to conclude that Saskatchewan is more collectivist given that its residents are more in favour of government policies that require expenditure to help the most disadvantaged in the society, while those in Ontario and Alberta are less so.
respondents said that the cuts were fair, with the same percentage saying they are unfair. In Alberta and Ontario, 51.4% and 50.3%, respectively, said that cuts are fair, while 35.1% of Albertans and 37.3% of Ontarians said the cuts are unfair. This again suggests that residents of Saskatchewan are more collectivists given that the cuts initiated during the 1990s reduced transfers given to the provinces for various social and health programs and thus reduced services for the most in need. Hence, it makes sense that a collectivist province would find the cuts more unfair than the other two provinces that have a more individualist outlook.

These three provinces, with different political cultures, have distinct party systems. During the periods examined in this study, Alberta was characterized as having a one party system—the one party being the Progressive Conservative (PC) Party, Ontario as having a multi-party system, and Saskatchewan a (mostly) two party system.

In Alberta, at the start of the first period, the Social Credit Party was in office, having been elected in 1935. In August of 1971, the PC Party was elected into office and remained

70 These findings are further reinforced by a question (from the same election study) that asked: “which party would be best at improving health care?” We would expect a collectivist province like Saskatchewan to pick parties that would (in theory) be more likely to strongly support the publicly funded universal health care system and seek to improve the health care system of Canada by not undermining the Canada Health Act, while a more individualistic province like Alberta would most likely favour parties that believe improving health care in Canada can be achieved by possibly introducing a parallel private system. The respondents’ answers largely reflect these assumptions. In the case of Saskatchewan, 62.4% of respondents picked the two federal parties (the Liberals [14%] and NDP [48.4%]) that would be more prone to support the public system and seek to strengthen it, while only 23.7% of respondents picked the parties (the now defunct Progressive Conservative Party [4.3%] and the Canadian Alliance [19.4%]) that would favour the latter method of improving health care—in particular the Canadian Alliance. In Alberta, the numbers are—as expected—the reverse: 47.6% of respondents selected the Progressive Conservative Party (8.4%) and the Canadian Alliance (39.2%) as the parties that would do the best job of improving health care, while only 41.4% of respondents selected the Liberals (16.5%) and NDP (24.9%). Ontario occupies the expected middle-ground position, but is far closer to Saskatchewan than to Alberta: (59.4% of respondents selected the Liberals [28.3%] and NDP [31.1%] as opposed to 25.7% that selected the Progressive Conservative Party [10.9%] and the Canadian Alliance [14.8%]).


72 Ibid., 106.

the governing party until 2015. During the two periods that are the focus of this study, the Social Credit Party was a viable opposition party only in the first period, while the New Democratic Party and the Liberal Party were viable in both periods.

Turning to Ontario, although characterized as having a multi-party system, for most of the latter half of the twentieth century (1943-1985) only one party was in office, the PC Party, which until the 1990s was more of a red-tory conservative party (i.e. moderate and communitarian in its outlook). Although the Liberal Party (a mostly centrist party) and New Democratic Party (which adheres to a traditional social democratic ideology in principle) were in office from 1985-1995, the PCs then returned to office for eight years, at which point the Liberals returned to office.

In Saskatchewan, the party system is divided into classic left and right camps, which is why the province “has long been viewed as having a more polarized political environment than any other province in Canada.” Although such a classification of the province’s party system may be an exaggeration—just as all classifications of two party systems tend to be—given that the province “in the last half-century has seen a coalescence of political views where flexibility has become a guiding ideology [resulting in political parties becoming] undifferentiated as they have positioned themselves to create coalitions to appeal to as many voters as possible,” this characterization is the most appropriate due to the workings of the province’s politics.

The NDP represents the left (just as the CCF did before it), while the opposition to these two parties “coalesced, adopting whatever partisan mantle was convenient and

75 Ibid., 166.
unsullied.” The parties that logically represented the right side of the ideological spectrum so as to give voters an alternative to the CCF/NDP were (in order of dominance) the Liberals until the 1970s, then the PC Party, followed by the Saskatchewan Party in the new century.

However, the Saskatchewan Party, which favours classical liberal economic policy prescriptions and created by former Liberal and PC Members of the Legislative Assembly and some federal Reform Party members, has had to keep in mind that unlike other right-of-centre parties in the country, it operates in a unique province given the nature of the province’s political culture. As a consequence, in the lead up to the 2007 provincial election, the party “began a process of moderating their policies both in recognition of the endurance of the province’s social democratic traditions and to avoid a repeat of the 2003 campaign” in which the party’s position on privatization contradicted the outlook of many voters. Therefore, it is important to recognize that although clearly a right-wing party, the Saskatchewan Party is not the radical, populist party that it had been when it was created. Since Brad Wall became leader in 2004, which led the Party to undergo a re-branding and re-thinking of its positions, it has become a more pragmatic, right-wing party.

**Overview of Explanatory Variables**

As mentioned above, ideational forces are the key explanatory variable in this study. However, the literature on this topic is not in complete agreement regarding the manner in

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76 Wiseman, 228.
77 Blake, 169.
78 O’Fee, 193.
79 Blake, 184.
which abstract notions that structure policymaking should be described. Peter Hall, for example, describes these abstract notions in the following manner:

Policymakers customarily work within a framework of ideas and standards that specifies not only the goals of policy and the kind of instruments that can be used to attain them, but also the very nature of the problems they are meant to be addressing. Like the Gestalt, this framework is embedded in the very terminology through which policymakers communicate about their work, and it is influential precisely because so much of it is taken for granted and unamenable to scrutiny as a whole. I am going to call this interpretive framework a policy paradigm.  

For Hall, then, an interpretive framework (of ideas) is synonymous with a policy paradigm. Eric Bleich, another key scholar in the ideas literature, uses the term “frames” to refer to the same abstract notion(s) that guide policymaking:

Although many types of ideas influence political outcomes, some are more easily integrated into policy-making models than others. In particular, the concept of frames has drawn scholarly attention for its ability to clarify political developments in a variety of spheres. A frame is a set of cognitive and moral maps that orients an actor within a policy sphere. Frames help actors identify problems and specify and prioritize their interests and goals, they point actors toward causal and normative judgements about effective and appropriate policies in ways that tend to propel policy down a particular path and to reinforce it once on that path, and they can endow actors deemed to have moral authority or expert status with added power in a policy field.  

It is clear that both scholars are describing the same variable, but using different terms. For the purposes of my study, the former term (i.e. policy paradigm) will be used since it is more prevalent in the wider public policy literature. The manner in which I use this term is similar to Hall and Bleich’s conceptualization. On that account, a policy paradigm is

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the broad ideational context in which policymaking takes place, meaning how the terms of policy problems, options, and goals are defined. It also determines who gets a say in the policy process, and ultimately which policies are implemented.

In the two periods that I have chosen to focus on, policymaking in the education sector of the three provinces was not detached from influences in the broader policy consensuses that were in place. This means that it is important to recognize that although there were specific policy paradigms that existed in the education sectors in each period, we can only make sense of these paradigms by connecting them to the two overarching policy consensuses that have existed in the post World War II era in industrialized countries. In the 1970s, the consensus that existed can be referred to as Keynesianism. This was replaced in the second period by neoliberalism.

Keynesianism was guided by the principle that it is important for the state to ensure that every citizen’s basic human needs be provided for, meaning that a basic safety net should exist. It dictated an interventionist state, where comprehensive and universal social programs were to be implemented, particularly in areas that the market or private sector could or would not provide such programs at a satisfactory level due to the lack of a profit incentive. According to Keynesianism, an activist state—in addition to providing a social safety net—was also needed to smooth out fluctuations in the business cycle. More precisely, given the history of Western economies in trying to deal with a depression in the 1930s, which was marked by low demand, “social policies—the welfare state—could be justified on the grounds that they contributed to maintaining high levels of aggregate demand.”

However, this emphasis on maintaining high demand in the economy via government

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spending contributed to ever increasing budget deficits and debt, leading to questions about the viability of Keynesianism.

This caused a new consensus to emerge, but the change was not abrupt.¹⁸⁴ Rather, it was a gradual process. “The Keynesian post-war consensus was in its heyday from 1945 until about 1975. . . . Since then, neoliberalism has” come to be the consensus of the recent decades and thus “altered the entire context within which public policy was conceived.”¹⁸⁵ Neoliberalism emphasized a new set of doctrines: “That government is too large, that deficits are unacceptable, that the tax system is in need of reform, and that spending priorities are in need of revision.”¹⁸⁶ The reason these policy prescriptions came to be seen as necessary was due to the emergence of a key phenomenon that emerged in the twentieth century: globalization. At its core, this phenomenon emphasized the need for states to be attractive investment environments as capital became mobile (i.e. globalization allowed for neoliberalism to gain legitimacy). The aforementioned prescriptions were, and continue to be, seen as a means of ensuring that a jurisdiction is attractive to mobile capital. As a consequence, there was a complete overhaul in thinking about how governments should go about providing public goods and services. More will be said about globalization and its implications for policymaking below.

The Keynesian and neoliberal consensuses—which affected all four aforementioned aspects of the sector—also allowed specific policy paradigms in the education sector to emerge and these paradigms impacted one of the four aspects: the objectives of provincial education systems (i.e. the topic of chapter two). The paradigm that was dominant during the

¹⁸⁴ For example, Stephen McBride has argued that neoliberalism came about and consolidated over a nine year period (1975 to 1984) in Canada. Ibid., 97.
¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 95.
¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 99.
first period that this study is focused on (the 1970s) will be referred to—based on Ronald Manzer’s terminology—as the person-regarding paradigm. This paradigm stressed the importance of viewing the education of children as requiring attention to the distinctive needs of each student as opposed to approaching the policy sector in terms of the overall benefit that education provides to society as a whole. As a result, “policies for person-regarding education shift[ed] the argument for accessibility of education, from a criterion of equal educational opportunity in order to pursue economic success to a criterion of individual self-development. ‘Child-centred’ or ‘student-centered’ schools are seen to contribute to individual development by providing learning experiences that meet the complex needs of each person in school.”

The person-regarding paradigm was eventually replaced by another one, which structured educational policymaking in the second period. The old paradigm was abandoned for the same reason that many other policy paradigms are replaced: due to real and apparent policy failures and the inability of the paradigm to provide a convincing response to shortcomings in the policy area. It should be noted, however, that although the person-regarding paradigm and its dictates were no longer dominant in the second period, it would be incorrect to conclude that education systems based on such a paradigm were completely dismantled and rebuilt from scratch so as to reflect only the dictates of a new paradigm. This is simply not how programs and services in any policy sector, including education, change.

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88 As Peter Hall explains, “instances of policy experimentation and policy failure are likely to play a key role in the movement from one paradigm to another. Like scientific paradigms, a policy paradigm can be threatened by the appearance of anomalies, namely by developments that are not fully comprehensible, even as puzzles, within the terms of the paradigm. As these accumulate, ad hoc attempts are generally made to stretch the terms of the paradigm to cover them, but this gradually undermines the intellectual coherence and precision of the original paradigm. Efforts to deal with such anomalies may also entail experiments to adjust existing lines of policy, but if the paradigm is genuinely incapable of dealing with anomalous developments, these experiments will result in policy failures that gradually undermine the authority of the existing paradigm.” Hall, 280.
and evolve. Instead, what happens is that although the overall focus of the sector changes with a new paradigm, vestiges of the old paradigm that are seen to be acceptable by policymakers are maintained and new policies that are consistent with the dictates of a new paradigm are added on to existing ones and are given priority. This is exactly what happened in the education policy sector when a new paradigm, with dictates that emphasized different objectives for the sector, had become dominant by the start of the second period. I will refer to this latter paradigm as the accountability paradigm.

This new paradigm stressed the importance of correcting the alleged failures of the previous paradigm, but also of ensuring that the education system performed in a manner that justified the large costs of public education. This led to a return of standardized tests during the period, since these tests show—some would say crudely—whether the education system is teaching students what is deemed important. In other words, “student success, as measured by test scores, is used to measure the ‘value added’ by education.”89 The emphasis now was on completely reforming public education so that the end objective would be the transfer of basic knowledge and skills to students. This would happen irrespective of whether the education system was providing an education that individual students wanted. It reflected the perceived needs on the part of policy actors to spend money wisely and so as to produce a workforce that would meet the requirements of the knowledge-based economy.90 More about these two policy paradigms will be said below and in chapters two and three.

But how exactly do these two paradigms reflect the overarching policy consensuses (Keynesianism and neoliberalism) that influenced policy actors? The person-regarding paradigm—which as mentioned above advocates an education system that places emphasis

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90 Manzer, *Public Schools and Political Ideas: Canadian Educational Policy in Historical Perspective*, 213.
on the benefit of public education for each and every student—requires policies that provide the resources (e.g. financial) that will allow for such an education system to be established. Such an objective was achievable because this era of policymaking in Canada—and other countries—emphasized the need for “substantial increases in public expenditures, and hence taxes, to finance a major expansion in the quantity and quality of public educational services. The welfare state”—which was a core aspect of Keynesianism—also “implied substantial restructuring of educational provision and governance in order to achieve comprehensiveness in coverage, appropriateness of fit, and responsiveness of decision making to meet the educational needs of all young citizens.”

The accountability paradigm, in contrast, reflects the restrictions imposed by neoliberalism because the latter dictates that state spending should be kept to a minimum and that any dollars spent must produce clear, tangible benefits so as to justify the costs. Hence the use of tests in order to determine how effectively the education system is performing becomes crucial. More precisely, neoliberalism challenged various aspects of education systems, in particular: “the content of the curricula and the academic organization of schools”; the restructuring of “primary and secondary educational governance to fit the political economy of the global capitalism”; the means by which public education could be reformed while at the same time “preserving prior commitments to principles of the welfare state and pluralist society that had been diversely embedded in the public philosophies and policies” of the education sector; and challenged the “financial costs of educational programs that were undertaken to realize the one-time ideals of the welfare state and pluralist

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91 Manzer, Educational Regimes and Anglo-American Democracy, 181.
society."\textsuperscript{92} By challenging these aspects of the education systems in Canada, neoliberalism allowed for an accountability paradigm to hold sway.

In addition to the aforementioned ideational influences, we will see that the re-emergence of globalization near the end of the twentieth century paved the way for another idea, besides neoliberalism, to become prominent in the second period: human capital theory. This ideational force caused policymakers in the provinces to recognize the importance of investing in their education systems, especially after budget deficits were addressed, as a means of ensuring economic success in a globalized era, which contributed to policy similarities across the provinces in that aspect of the sector (i.e. spending, which is the focus of chapter three).

Before advancing, an explanation of why a focus on globalization is warranted in a study such as this. To begin, the relationship between globalization and public policy has become a key focus of various social science literatures, since it is viewed as the “master concept of our time.”\textsuperscript{93} However, we should not assume that this phenomenon is anything new. For example, economic globalization, which is one form of the broader phenomenon along with others such as cultural globalization or military globalization dates back to the middle of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, and it has ebbed and flowed since then.\textsuperscript{94} As such, it is better to argue that globalization—of recent decades—has re-emerged or entered a new phase, as opposed to being a completely new phenomenon.

\textsuperscript{92} Ibid., 247-249. Manzer does not use the term neoliberal to describe the new period which challenged the fundamentals of the education sector. Instead he uses the term “global capitalism.” Nevertheless he is describing the same phenomenon/process that I have described when using the former term, thus making his discussion regarding the impacts of global capitalism applicable.


But what exactly is globalization? Although it is a term that is widely used by academics, political and business actors, the media, and the general public, “little of this discussion stands on firm scientific ground however, as far more people have an opinion about globalization than a deep understanding of the concept.”\textsuperscript{95} What contributes to the confusion surrounding the term is that definitions of one form of it (e.g. economic globalization) differ than other forms (e.g. cultural globalization). Although a detailed discussion of the intricacies of this definitional debate is outside the scope of this study, it is necessary, before advancing, to make it clear how the term will be used in the pages that follow. For the purposes of this study, the economic form of globalization is of interest, which can be understood as follows: it is a “historical process, the result of human innovation and technological progress. It refers to the increasing integration of economies around the world, particularly through the movement of goods, services and capital across borders. The term sometimes also refers to the movement of people (labor) and knowledge (technology) across international borders.”\textsuperscript{96}

It goes without saying that there has not been agreement in the varied literatures in the social sciences regarding the relationship between globalization and domestic policymaking.\textsuperscript{97} Some social scientists\textsuperscript{98} have argued that globalization has fundamentally


\textsuperscript{97} It should be noted that although sometimes neoliberalism and globalization are discussed in conjunction in the sense that the former is the ideological underpinning of the latter, we should not assume that the two phenomena are the same, meaning they should be thought of as distinct. In other words, “neoliberalism is a particular element of globalization in that it constitutes the form through which domestic and global economic relations are structured. Yet, neoliberalism is only one dimension of globalization, which is to say, it is not to be seen as identical to the phenomenon of globalization as such. Globalisation is a much broader phenomenon in that should neoliberalism not have replaced Keynesianism as the dominant economic discourse of western nations, it would still constitute a significant process. This is the sense that it has partly occurred as a consequence of changes in technology and science, which have brought many parts of the world closer together.
altered the nature of domestic policymaking by dictating the sorts of policies that can and should be pursued by domestic state actors. Specifically, they argue that this phenomenon has forced state actors to only implement policies that would attract foreign capital (e.g. reducing social programs so as to reduce government spending, in turn allowing for the reduction of taxes), resulting in all governments, regardless of ideological stripe, to adopt a retrenchment policy outlook. Other scholars\(^9\) have argued that globalization has not forced governments to go down a retrenchment path. Their argument has been labelled the “compensation thesis” in the literature. This thesis “argues that governments respond to economic internationalisation not by lowering public spending, but by increasing it. In something like a ‘virtuous circle’ governments expand the welfare state to cushion the deleterious impact of economic openness and external risk”\(^1\). Put another way, as a result of the challenges posed by an economic system in which open borders and free flow of labour, capital, goods, and services are the norm, governments have to remain financially committed to certain policy sectors in order to ensure that their citizens are able to be active participants in their jurisdiction’s workforce (e.g. ensure that workers, whose jobs have been eliminated due to the relocation of manufacturers to jurisdictions with cheaper labour, are able to re-train or have income support programs in place while they obtain a new job).

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It is for this reason that in the above sections it has been argued that globalization paved the way for two quite distinct sets of ideas to become prevalent in the second period that is the focus of this study. Unlike neoliberalism, which emphasizes reduced government spending, low taxes, minimal regulations, etc., human capital theory emphasizes the need for governments to spend wisely in areas that will allow them to be competitive in a globalized world where mobile capital is a key feature. Essentially, human capital theory argues that there has been a transition from a labour-intensive, manufacturing-based economy, which was the hallmark of the first few decades after World War II, to a knowledge-based economy. These types of economies are “defined by the OECD as ‘economies which are directly based on the production, distribution and use of knowledge and information’…. Consequently, it legitimates policies in support of enhancing ‘knowledge diffusion’, ‘upgrading human capital’ and ‘promoting organizational change.’”\textsuperscript{101} Due to this, analysis regarding education systems and how they have been affected by globalization can be a useful means of testing and legitimizing the “compensation thesis.” In fact, as will be shown, because of the impact of human capital theory, which gained legitimacy and became dominant when globalization re-emerged, we will see that governments in all three provinces maintained a strong financial commitment to the sector. This is because, to reiterate, human capital theory essentially posits that in order for states and sub-states to be competitive investment environments, a key requirement is a skilled, educated workforce. As such, unlike the dictates of neoliberalism, pressure on governments to reduce spending will be counteracted by the dictates of human capital theory in the second period. Accordingly, this study will show that the aforementioned “compensation thesis” is a convincing argument.

In terms of explaining how the aforementioned ideas were able to influence the decisions of policy makers in a similar manner in the education sectors of the three jurisdictions being studied, I will rely on the concept of policy transfer. This concept shares a great deal with a related concept: policy diffusion. In fact, the latter was utilized by Wallner to explain education policy similarities in Canada.

In this study, I propose to utilize the former concept because I believe it can allow us to better understand how exactly the three provinces came to adopt similar policies that reflected the constraints and dictates of dominant ideas. This is because the diffusion concept suffers from a major shortcoming: “‘It reveals nothing about the content of new policies. Its fascination is with process not substance.’” More precisely, “diffusion studies typically start out from a rather general perspective. While analyses of policy transfer investigate the underlying causes and contents of singular processes of bilateral policy exchange, the dependent variable in diffusion research refers to general patterns characterizing the spread of innovations within or across political systems. The diffusion literature focuses more on the spatial, structural and socioeconomic reasons for particular adoption patterns rather than on the reasons for individual adoptions as such.” In addition, it fails to seriously take into account the role of agency. Taking into account agency is important because as Vivien Schmidt has argued, “ideas do not ‘float freely.’ Ideas cannot be discussed without pointing to the agents who, as the ‘carriers’ of ideas and articulators of the discourse, serve as drivers of change.”

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Clearly, it is logical to rely on the policy transfer concept because with it we can gain a more substantive insight into policy similarities. In addition, this study is sensitive to the relevance of the transfer concept because I have relied on interviews with former policymakers—that is, key agents—as a means of understanding how and why certain ideas influenced them in the process of implementing education policies.

Methodological Approach

Broadly speaking, this study will rely on a qualitative approach. More precisely, I will rely on the insights, analytical tools, and methods of a well-established and regarded qualitative approach in the social sciences: comparative historical analysis (CHA). This approach to the study of social phenomena is beneficial because it allows for nuanced and detailed analyses of various research puzzles that are characterized by causal variables that—although they can be coded in a manner that would allow regression analysis and other statistical methods to be utilized—require a narrative in order to explain why and how they impact dependent variables. Given that my study utilizes such variables, it is logical to use CHA.

But what exactly is CHA? According to two main proponents of this approach, it can be described as “a distinctive kind of research defined by relatively specific characteristics. While not unified by one theory or one method, all work in this tradition does share a concern with causal analysis, an emphasis on processes over time, and the use of systematic

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105 As James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer explain: “Comparative historical analysis has a long and distinguished history in the social sciences. Those whom we now regards as the founders of modern social sciences, from Adam Smith to Alexis de Tocqueville to Karl Marx, all pursued comparative historical analysis as a central mode of investigation.” James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, “Comparative Historical Analysis: Achievements and Agendas,” in Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences, ed. James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 3.

106 For example, although a quantitative method can be used to decipher the impact of partisanship on education policy outputs, given that I seek to examine how a particular party evolved over time in terms of the ideology and thinking of particular leaders or policy positions as described in party platforms or policy documents, a qualitative approach of the sort that I describe is apt.
and contextualized comparisons” (emphasis added). This is a further reason why the use of CHA is a logical choice, since my study focuses on causality as opposed to simply description, seeks to understand a specific puzzle by analyzing causal variables and outcomes across two periods, and attempts to do so by comparing three cases.

With respect to methods of CHA, the most relevant for my purposes is process-tracing. A key aspect of this method is that it “attempts to identify the intervening causal process—the causal chain and causal mechanism—between an independent variable (or variables) and the outcome of the dependent variable.” This emphasis on causal chains and mechanisms makes this method superior to others because it allows for nuance since it recognizes that to fully understand a particular outcome, we cannot simply jump from an independent variable to a dependent variable, but rather seek out the specific means by which the former directly impacts the latter. Furthermore,

Process-tracing offers an alternative way for making causal inferences when it is not possible to do so through the method of controlled comparison. In fact, process-tracing can serve to make up for the limitations of a particular controlled comparison. When it is not possible to find cases similar in every respect but one—the basic requirement of controlled comparisons—one or more of the several independent variables identified may have causal impact. Process-tracing can help to assess whether each of the potential causal variables in the imperfectly matched cases can, or cannot, be ruled out as having causal significance.

As such, since the cases in my study are not similar in every respect but one, preventing the use of a controlled comparison, process-tracing is an obvious choice.

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107 James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, 10.
110 George and Bennett, 214.
Process-tracing itself is an umbrella term for a variety of approaches. One approach is simply a detailed, descriptive narrative, a second is one that uses hypotheses and seeks to present generalizations, a third is interested in analytical explanations, and a final approach is mostly interested in presenting general explanations.¹¹¹ For the purposes of this study, which is interested in examining and advancing theoretical claims, the third approach is the most relevant because, unlike the other approaches, it “converts a historical narrative into an analytical causal explanation couched in explicit theoretical forms.”¹¹²

In terms of how I will obtain the relevant information required to reach conclusions, I will rely on four main sources: interviews with policymakers; policy documents (archival and non-archival); newspaper articles;¹¹³ and the secondary literature related to the topic of this study. In terms of interviews, former senior officials (i.e. deputy ministers, ministers of education, premiers) from Ontario (five in total) and Saskatchewan (three in total) were interviewed. (Eight officials from Alberta were contacted. They either did not respond to a request for an interview or declined to participate.) All those interviewed served during the second period. In order for interviewees to remain anonymous, their names and positions will not be revealed.

**Organization of Study**

In the chapters that will follow, the four key aspect of the education sector of the provinces mentioned above will be analyzed. Specifically, chapter two will examine the objectives of the education systems, chapter three will analyze spending on education, chapter four will

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¹¹¹ Ibid., 210-212.
¹¹² Ibid., 211.
¹¹³ Newspaper articles were obtained by searching various search phrases in two newspaper databases: Factiva and Canadian Newsstand. In terms of citations, the page numbers of the articles are included when they were provided in the electronic versions of the articles.
focus on the relationship between the provincial governments and school boards, while chapter five will deal with the provinces’ policies regarding private and charter schools. Chapter six will present evidence of policy transfer, and the final chapter will tie the analysis together and discuss how future scholarship can build on the findings of this study.\textsuperscript{114}

\textsuperscript{114} Before advancing, two points about style should be clarified. First, when square brackets are used within a quotation, it signifies my own words; round brackets in a quotation are in the original text. Second, when quoting a source and material is omitted, ellipses will be used. An ellipsis which includes a fourth period signifies that material was omitted from more than one sentence. Also, when quoting a source and the passage contains a parenthetical citation, the citation will be omitted and replaced by an ellipsis.
Chapter 2

Objectives of Provincial Education Systems

In the course of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the overall objectives of the education systems of Canadian provinces and other Western jurisdictions went through various phases. Generally, when changes in the focus of education systems have been made by policymakers, the choice has been between conceiving of education as a way to satisfy the individual needs and interests of students or, alternatively, viewing it as a mechanism for ensuring that the economy has a set of workers with specific skills. These different emphases correspond to how the overall curricula in the provinces are structured. This is because the objectives of an education system directly relate to what subjects students are required to learn and how they are taught, in addition to whether standardized tests and close monitoring of student achievement become a priority for governments.

Given the implications of this particular aspect of the education policy sector for the economy and society in general, it is one which governments pay particular attention to. Furthermore, it is an aspect of the sector that many interest groups, media, and the general public constantly seek to shape and influence. For example, there has been, and continues to be, constant rhetoric and debate regarding whether a more progressive education, which emphasizes what each student desires to learn, with few government-determined requirements, comes at the expense of “the basics” (e.g. reading, writing, arithmetic). This in turn makes it difficult for policymakers to settle on a particular policy that satisfies every group, resulting in a situation where the implemented policy is constantly criticized and questioned. Accordingly, the objectives of an education system are never completely settled.
This is why at times we have seen sudden and drastic changes made to the goals of kindergarten to grade 12 education, which makes it an interesting area of the sector to analyze. Having said that, when one policy paradigm, with its own unique policy dictates, becomes dominant, this does not mean that all of the dictates of a previous paradigm are abandoned because they are all perceived as being flawed by policymakers. This is an important point to keep in mind because although the discussion below will analyze two distinct paradigms that existed in the periods that are the focus of this study, we need to keep in mind that when the first one emerged in the 1970s (i.e. the person-regarding paradigm), it did not mean that schooling based on the previous paradigm, which emphasized traditional subjects and methods, completely ceased to exist. Similarly, in the second period, certain elements of schooling that were consistent with the “old” person-regarding paradigm could be identified, though such elements were fewer given that emphasis was given to policies that were consistent with the dictates of the paradigm that had become dominant by the start of the second period (i.e. the accountability paradigm).

As noted in the previous chapter, the two aforementioned general objectives of education systems are underpinned by specific ideological outlooks. The former is associated with a more progressive ideology, since it requires a greater financial commitment and an open-minded approach to what schooling entails. In contrast, the latter is associated with a conservative one, because it emphasizes minimal spending and viewing schooling purely as a means of transmitting knowledge in “essential” subjects, as opposed to focusing on other objectives such as satisfying the interests of all students, especially those who desire non-traditional teaching methods, or the inclusion of non-traditional subjects (e.g. the arts) as part of their education. This sharp distinction will allow us to examine whether the education
systems of provinces were primarily shaped by the ideologies of governing parties or whether there were contradictions between the objectives chosen for the education system and the ideological outlook of governing parties. As we will see—first with an analysis of policymaking in the 1970s in the next section, then shifting to the post-1990 years in the second section—the three provinces generally structured the objectives of their education systems similarly within each period. The evidence that will be presented will prove that it was the dictates of policy paradigms, the person-regarding in the first period and the accountability in the second, based on the broader policy consensuses, Keynesianism and neoliberalism, respectively, that explain this outcome. On that account, partisanship will be shown to be an unsatisfactory means of understanding the similarities in the overall objectives of schooling in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Ontario during the two periods under examination.

Objectives of Provincial Education Systems in the First Period

In the years leading up to the 1970s, many provincial education systems made major changes in what they wanted schooling to achieve. According to Ronald Manzer, up to that point, “Canadian public policies for educational curriculum and school organization in the twentieth century [were]…marked by their growing assumption that the focus of schooling, if not its main aim, is preparing young people for work.”¹¹⁵ But slowly, in a process that began over a number of years, a new paradigm took hold in the sector. Consequently, “official statements of the aims of education were rewritten, and fundamental curricular reforms were achieved as provincial examinations were dropped and credit systems with

¹¹⁵ Ronald Manzer, Public Schools and Political Ideas: Canadian Educational Policy in Historical Perspective (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 37.
individual timetables and subject promotion replaced more occupational class-structured programs.”

What caused this change? A few different developments contributed to it.

Right from the beginning of the twentieth century an emerging critique of existing school systems across North America had coalesced fairly rapidly into a substantive program of education reform. That program was rooted in three central ideas. First, urbanization and industrialization demanded a new sort of curriculum more relevant to the modern world and to a more complex economy. Second, the emergence of the discipline of psychology as an experimental science generated new theories about children’s mental and physical development that challenged the traditional organization and pedagogy of the classroom. And third, the widening of democracy in society at large prompted calls for parallel progress in education, especially with respect to a more extended education for all young people and the democratization of the school itself. Singularly or in conjunction these ideas gave rise to a multitude of innovations such as the expansion of vocational education [so as to meet the needs/interests of those students who were not academically inclined], the introduction of new subjects like domestic science and manual training, and the extension of the school-leaving age. They also contributed to a new impetus to older reform initiatives such as school consolidation. But more important, they constituted the intellectual underpinnings of a movement known in North America as “educational progressivism.” By the 1920s and 1930s this reform program was enormously influential in the United States, and it aroused considerable enthusiasm amongst many Canadian educators.

If the seeds of educational reform were laid in the 1920s and 1930s, they did not bear substantial fruits in Canada until the 1960s. Evidence of a new form of orthodoxy in the education sector in Canada can be found in three influential provincial reports on education which espoused the tenets of progressivism: Quebec’s Royal Commission of Inquiry on Education, which published its final report in five volumes between 1963 to 1966; Ontario’s Provincial Committee on Aims and Objectives in the Schools of Ontario, which published its final report in 1968; and Alberta’s Commission on Educational Planning, which submitted its final report in 1972. These reports were influential because their policy implications were not

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116 Ibid., 148-149.
just confined to the three provinces, but rather “reached across the country.” By advancing arguments for a different type of schooling, these reports—and the policies that were implemented by governments based on their recommendations—allowed for the dissemination of the aforementioned new policy paradigm, which can be best described as person-regarding.

This paradigm “shift[s] the argument for accessibility of education, from a criterion of equal educational opportunity in order to pursue economic success to a criterion of individual self-development. ‘Child-centered’ or ‘student-centered’ schools are seen to contribute to individual development by providing learning experiences that meet the complex needs of each person in school while de-emphasizing the ranking and competition that inevitably accompany the function of selection.” As a result, in an education system organized according to the dictates of such a paradigm, traditional subjects and skills, such as the “three R’s”, which are often referred to as “the basics,” are not necessarily given as much emphasis as in “traditional” schooling. This is because “in the theory of the person-regarding education the developmental needs and learning experiences of each individual determine, at least in principle if not always in practice, the choice of curriculum” as opposed to required subjects and skills being predetermined by policymakers and school officials without any input from individual students. Hence, when the person-regarding paradigm emerged, we saw “the introduction of the ‘course credit’ system which gave students a wider variety of options and reduced the average amount of time spent by students on basic subjects such as English, French, mathematics, social studies and the physical sciences in order to matriculate; and the use of varying levels of difficulty for each subject in any one

118 Manzer, Public Schools and Political Ideas: Canadian Educational Policy in Historical Perspective, 149.
119 Ibid., 148.
120 Ibid., 222.
grade, so that students could obtain credit for particular subjects even though their performance level was not up to that required in more advanced sections of that grade.”

This paradigm reflected the overall policy consensus—Keynesianism—in place during the first period. This is because “the Keynesian settlement in most liberal democracies had meant that education was a principal means for ensuring social justice, meritocracy and social cohesion. In that settlement the state, through public policy, intervened against the market in providing ‘social protection’ for vulnerable citizens and equality of opportunity for all.” This is why the person-regarding paradigm emphasized the need for students to determine the type of education that they wanted. Traditional education, before this paradigm became entrenched, essentially provided one form of schooling—focused on the basics and structured and taught in a way that favoured the academically inclined—that was not conducive to the abilities and interests of some students. In contrast, the new consensus emphasized social justice and equal opportunity, allowing for an education paradigm that stressed the importance of all students’ needs and interests. Accordingly, it would no longer be acceptable to have an education system structured in such a way that those students who had unique interests or were not likely to succeed when exposed to traditional teaching methods to be ignored or left to struggle. Individuality and decision making regarding how to structure the education system from the perspective of the needs of the students, as opposed to the needs of the economy, became paramount. Furthermore, given the fact that the Keynesian consensus emphasized government expenditures as a means of increasing demand, it allowed for an education paradigm that dictated a more individualized education system, with more programs, subjects, equipment, and specially designed schools with

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122 Fazal Rizvi and Bob Lingard, Globalizing Education Policy (London: Routledge, 2010), 185.
features such as open classrooms—all of which required governments to allocate more funding to the sector.

Although all three of the aforementioned reports were consequential, Ontario’s stands apart. The final report, titled *Living and Learning*—but better known as the Hall-Dennis Report (E.M. Hall and Lloyd A. Dennis were the two chairmen of the Committee)—“had a remarkable reception. Critical enough to reflect the extant dissatisfaction with schools, alert to the disaffection of many young people and to the portents of the cultural upheaval of the late 1960s, the report rode the crest of a wave of enthusiasm for educational reform. Within sixteen months of publication it sold 60,000 copies, something unprecedented in the annals of government reports. It attracted attention across the country and indeed the continent.”¹²³ In terms of what it recommended for the objectives of the education system, it was nothing short of revolutionary.

At its core, it “was fiercely critical of what it called traditionalist or conservative educational thought and practice.”¹²⁴ This was mainly because “emphasis upon the needs and interests of the individual child is the very essence of [the] Report.”¹²⁵ The opening chapter of the report explicitly states that “the lock-step structure of past time must give way to a system in which the child will progress from year to year throughout the school system without the hazards and frustrations of failure. His natural curiosity and initiative must be recognized and developed. New methods of assessment and promotion must be devised….The atmosphere within the classroom must be positive and encouraging. The fixed positions of pupil and teacher, the insistence on silence, and the punitive approach must give

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¹²³ Gidney, 75.
¹²⁴ Ibid., 72.
way to a more relaxed teacher-pupil relationship which will encourage discussion, inquiry, and experimentation, and enhance the dignity of the individual.”

In terms of the process of learning, the report argued that “the curriculum must be structured so as to give the pupil headway in those subjects or activities in which he can fulfill himself, even though unable to make progress in all the disciplines.” Although this seems to be a very innocuous proposal, it is very significant because it essentially is arguing that instead of the then common practice of dictating to students what they should learn without providing much freedom, the education system should allow students to decide for themselves what is a proper education entails. Later on in the report, this viewpoint is stated more explicitly by the authors: “The curriculum of the future must be child-oriented and must provide opportunities for choice within broadly defined limits. Teachers at every level, supported by qualified counsellors, will be required to guide each child along his own critically determined path, far more flexible than a computer guide, but critical in the sense that the learning programs initiated and developed will best meet the needs of each child at the time best suited to his development.”

In the chapter on the “Aims of Education,” the authors further explain how a reformed education system should be structured, which sharply contrasted with the traditional system in place at that time: “The atmosphere of the school must be kindly, cooperative, and purposeful…. There must be provision for individual differences, permitting some measure of success for every child. The graded school system must not be rigid and thought should be given to its modification. The wisdom of promotion examinations, failure, and retardation is questioned. In appraising results the teacher should first look to see

126 Ibid., 14.
127 Ibid., 12.
128 Ibid., 59.
whether pupils are alert and living in cheerful, healthy surroundings, then satisfy himself that they are acquiring necessary skills, and above all be concerned with the interests and attitudes they are developing.” These passages from the report clearly signify the extent to which it was an argument in support of the person-regarding paradigm.

The report was readily accepted by the Progressive Conservative government because the ideas which informed its recommendations were already adopted by the ministry during the years the Committee was researching and writing the report. This should not be interpreted as meaning that the report was pointless. This is because it served an important purpose: “It gave that approach [i.e. the one adopted by the ministry] a degree of legitimacy it might not otherwise have had.”

The Hall-Dennis Report also had a great impact on the outlook of an influential report of one of the other province’s being studied: Alberta’s Commission on Educational Planning, whose report was titled A Future of Choices, A Choice of Futures, and referred to simply as the Worth Report, after the name of its sole commissioner, Walter H. Worth. Alberta established its commission because of the Hall-Dennis Report. The ministry’s then deputy minister wanted to have a similar study done regarding Alberta’s education system. Moreover, the influence of the Hall-Dennis Report on the Worth Report is obvious when we analyze its tone and content. Like Ontario’s report, it advanced an overall argument in favour of a person-regarding paradigm for the province’s education system.

129 Ibid., 71.
130 Gidney, 76-77.
131 Ibid., 77.
In fact, the very start of the report describes two types of societies that could be envisaged: a “second-phase industrial society” or a “person-centred society.”134 In the case of the former, the central values and goals are “dominance of economic values which lead to goals such as continuing expansion of goods, increased consumption which subordinates individual needs to the requirements of industry and technology”; and the education system is marked by “continued segregation…from the mainstream society[,] strong reliance on behaviour control and behaviour-shaping approaches to education[,] and] acquisition of specific vocational skills, continuation of the importance of grading and provision of credentials.”135

In contrast, the latter society, according to the authors, stresses the “dominance of person-centered values which emphasize goals of individual fulfillment and subordination of industrial system to human needs,” with an education system that is very different since education would have a central role in “society as it becomes a lifelong process and as the occupation of the student becomes a valid one” and where there would be “utilization of new approaches to education which emphasize the development of self-learning skills in the person and creation of conditions which foster spontaneous learning [and] more diversity in educational pursuits together with less emphasis on grading, credentials.”136 The report explicitly argues that the latter society is the one that should be pursued since “the realization of a second-phase industrial society is undesirable, if not self-destructive.”137

The report argued that “our institutions for learning must support the conception of man as curious, restless, concerned about more than his physical appetites, capable of

135 Ibid., 31.
136 Ibid.
137 Ibid., 33.
enormous effort—educational and intellectual—for nothing more than the real pleasure of proving to himself and his immediate society that he can do it…. Personalization will not rule out competition in learning. But it will have to be the kind of competition that is largely of the learner’s own choosing in its goals, its intervals, its intensities. It will permit competition with the self. It will encourage stimulation through peer evaluation instead of external evaluation…. To accomplish self-actualization we must redefine educational opportunity in terms of those conditions that permit each individual to move on to the next state of development with ease. One of these conditions ought to be that the individual shares in selecting learning experiences suitable for him in reconnoitering his future.”

Furthermore, the report argued that there is a “need for a fundamental shift in viewpoint—from conceiving of schooling as shaping the individual’s behaviour to fit predetermined roles, to the view that recurrent education seeks to help the learner acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and interests that will enable him to constantly influence his environment to achieve his purposes.” These statements from the Report clearly show the extent to which it sought to advance an education system which would reflect the dictates of the person-regarding paradigm.

However, the Alberta government did not completely embrace the recommendations and outlook of the Commission. “Certainly some recommendations were initially implemented, … but most of the recommendations seem to have been ignored. It does seem significant that the Worth Commission had been appointed by the Social Credit government (the idea having originated with young supporters of Harry Strom), which had been replaced

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138 Ibid., 166.  
139 Ibid., 170.
by the time that the Commission reported. The Progressive Conservative government was skeptical of at least some aspects of the report.”

Nevertheless, even though the government did not completely accept the reforms advanced in the Worth Report—and thus did not completely accept the dictates of the person-regarding paradigm which informed it—we do see evidence of the paradigm influencing the province’s education policy. For example, when we consider the goals of education that the ministry produced in 1974 (i.e. after the release of the Worth Report) there is evidence of the person-regarding paradigm in the document. The goals were as follows: “Learn to be a good citizen; learn about and try to understand the changes that take place in the world; develop skills in communication; learn how to organize, analyze and use information in a critical and objective manner; learn to respect and to get along with others; learn about the world of work; develop management skills; develop a desire for learning; learn how to use leisure time; practice and understand the ideas of health and fitness; appreciate culture and beauty in the world; [and] develop basic and special knowledge competencies.” Clearly, the province was interested in establishing an education system with an objective beyond teaching students just “the basics” or “the three R’s.”

Turning to Saskatchewan, although it did not have an influential government report in the 1960s or 1970s concerning how the objectives of its education system should be reformed, the province nevertheless also was influenced by the person-regarding paradigm as it transformed the objectives of its education system. For example, a 1968 report by the then deputy minister stated that “at the risk of over-simplification of a definition of current aims and objectives of education in Saskatchewan, it can be said of the present that they are

140 Wagner, 63.
141 Provincial Archives of Alberta, Records Created by Deputy Minister and Assistant Deputy Minister of Instruction and Support, GR1983.0091, Box 24, File: 261.
predicated on the proposition that youth and adults of the province, irrespective of talent and other personal attributes, or of other circumstances and condition, are entitled to such educational experience as may ensure maximum development as an individual."

In a document produced by the curriculum branch in 1969, the aims and objectives of schooling were spelt out in great detail—aims and objectives which were to be the guiding principles for the province’s education system. In terms of the aims, they were listed as being “the fullest realization of the potentialities of every boy and girl[;] the preservation and improvement of our democratic social order…[; and] the understanding, utilization, and improvement of our physical environment.” The objectives for the province’s education system were to be:

1. **Personal development:** (a) **Physical and mental health:** to give such instruction and training as may be necessary to ensure not only the maintenance of good health, both physical and mental, but also the development of physical fitness (b) **Intellectual achievement:** to think rationally, to express thought clearly, to read and listen with understanding; to develop an understanding of political, social, and economic structure of modern society; an understanding of the methods of science, its major findings, and its influence on human affairs; a broad understanding of the principles of mathematics and their importance in daily living; an appreciation of other cultures through the medium of foreign languages; an understanding of common tools and machines which may be turned to productive work when the need arises; an appreciation of the achievements of mankind in religion, literature, art, music, and drama; development of character manifested in sound habits of social behaviour; the development of a pattern of values, attitudes, and ideals which will activate the individual towards habits of thinking and doing compatible with the good life.

2. **Growth towards competence in citizenship:** To develop in pupils such personal qualities as honesty, integrity, sincerity, and tolerance.

3. **Social development:** To assist the child in learning acceptable group behaviour.

4. **Moral and spiritual development:** To develop a sensitivity to what is right and good. To help pupils discover that life has meaning and purpose, to encourage respect for human values, to develop ethical behaviour based on a sense of moral and spiritual values, and to establish a desire to serve God and one’s fellow-man.

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142 The Saskatchewan Archives, J. C. McIsaac, R-66, File: 1J (General).
5. Occupational preparation: To develop early in students a sensitivity to the world of work and the desire to make a contribution to it through sound preparation.

6. Growth in desirable attitudes and appreciations: Reverence, self-integrity, respect for personality, responsibility, open-mindedness, co-operation, respect for constitutional authority, attitude of mastery of what is attempted, wholesome attitude to success and failure, etc., appreciations for high standard of conduct for the achievement of great thinkers, for humour, for shared activity, etc. 143

As can be seen, the education system would not simply be focused on teaching students specific subjects and skills to succeed ultimately as future workers—even if students were not interested in these predetermined subjects and skills. Instead, the focus would be—as per the dictates of the person-regarding paradigm—on ensuring that students were well-rounded, healthy, compassionate, cosmopolitan, and moral individuals.

In additional to structuring education so as to reflect the needs and interests of each individual student, another key feature of the person-regarding paradigm was the emphasis on the need to abolish standardized tests and examinations as a means of measuring student performance, both in terms of specific subjects and as a measure of their overall education (e.g. examinations that were administered at the end of high school to determine placements in universities). These types of tests and examinations, according to proponents of the person-regarding paradigm, were problematic. This is because an education system where rigid standards were set by the ministry or school boards—specifying itemized subjects and skills that had to be learned, and where the classroom teacher or education officials would judge students based on such standards—would not allow evaluation to take into account an individual student’s circumstances and capacities.

143 The Saskatchewan Archives, Department of Education: Program Development Branch, R-1234, File: 2.4 (Curriculum—Western Conferences).
The Hall-Dennis Report, for example, argued that standardized tests and examinations “provide a crude instrument which penalizes and obscures depth, subtlety, and creativity in the respondent, and the classifying of students by such tests can be, at best, only rough and superficial.”\textsuperscript{144} The Worth Report stated that “external examinations, as presently conceived and used, simply distort the whole process of schooling. They inhibit learners, restrict teachers, perpetuate corrosive and artificial subject and program distinctions, and subvert the more meaningful goals of education.”\textsuperscript{145} This is why the person-regarding paradigm emphasized the need for student evaluation and achievement to be structured in such a way that teachers, when evaluating students, focus more on whether each student was progressing as a human being and developing into a complete, happy, and satisfied person, as opposed to judging them based on their scores on non-contextualized assignments, tests, and examinations.

It is not surprising, then, that in all three provinces being studied, non-classroom based tests and examinations were abolished when the person-regarding paradigm was dominant. For example, in 1966, Ontario announced that “departmental examinations”—which “were a set of province-wide, subject-by-subject, centrally set and marked examinations written at the end of the grade 13 school year,”\textsuperscript{146} and which were important in terms of determining whether students would be accepted to university or the university of their choice and also provided a “measure of accountability, [by] reassuring the community that its high schools were providing the quality of educated expected of them, or alerting trustees, principals, and parents alike that changes were called for”\textsuperscript{147}—would be abolished.

\textsuperscript{144} Provincial Committee on Aims and Objectives in the Schools of Ontario, 166.
\textsuperscript{145} Commission on Educational Planning, 206.
\textsuperscript{146} Gidney, 20
\textsuperscript{147} Ibid.
after 1967. In 1972, Saskatchewan decided that it would abolish its “departmental examinations for all except a few students whose teachers were not accredited,” while Alberta completely abolished them the following year. This approach to testing and examinations is markedly different than that dictated by the paradigm in place in the second period, which will be discussed below.

Another key feature of the person-regarding paradigm was the emphasis on the need to establish comprehensive (sometimes referred to as composite) high schools. These types of high schools allow students “the opportunity to draw from a variety of courses and to switch between different programs or tracks. Instead of being streamed by external exams at the end of elementary school, students—usually in conjunction with their parents and teachers—choose the program best suited to their needs and interests.”

The reason why comprehensive high schools were seen as the most desirable when the person-regarding paradigm was dominant is that “the system privileges inclusiveness and flexibility over subject specialization and targeted labour market training…[and it] is underpinned by a commitment to extend flexibility to students; it affords them considerable time to determine where their strengths and skills lie before sending them down a particular path.”

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148 Ibid., 68
150 Ibid., 115.
151 Jennifer Wallner, *Learning to School: Federalism and Public Schooling in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 67. The other types of high schools are partite and bilateral. “In the partite system, separate buildings house each major type of secondary program—vocational and general—and students are streamed into these at the conclusion of their elementary studies; this streaming is often determined by external exams. Vocational schools prepare students for careers in fields such as agriculture, industry, commerce and the domestic arts. General secondary schools provide advanced education that prepares students bound for university. One practical concern with this model is that a school district must have a fairly large population in order for physically separate schools to make sense. In a more pragmatic variation, bilateral schools house academic and vocational programs in the same building while simultaneously adhering to the streaming principle. Both the partite and bilateral systems call for highly specialized programs for particular career paths; as a consequence, once a student starts on a given pathway, transferring to an alternative program becomes difficult.” Source: Wallner, 67.
These types of high schools allowed individual students to be at the centre of decision-making and allowed them to experiment and try to obtain a wide-ranging education on subjects and skills that they were interested in learning about—all of which are seen as essential principles by the paradigm and its advocates. For example, it is not surprising that the Hall-Dennis Report stated that “every pupil enrolled in a course or courses during this period [i.e. secondary grades] will have an individual timetable, and his choice of courses will be limited only by his interest and ability. Under no circumstances will he be restricted to a vocational, academic, or otherwise designated program or stream, since these divisions, like the barriers of grades, will be non-existent.” Accordingly, from the late 1960s to the early 1970s, all Canadian provinces implemented the comprehensive model of secondary schooling. Although comprehensive schools would continue to exist in the post-1980 years, the core tenets of the person-regarding paradigm, specifically individual self-fulfillment and minimal requirements by provincial governments as to how the schooling of each student should progress, began to be abandoned, as we will see below.

Before advancing, it should be noted that the implementation of a person-regarding education system in the provinces being studied would have taken place even if ideologically different parties were in office. This being the case, we should not assume that partisanship

152 Ibid., 53-54.
153 Provincial Committee on Aims and Objectives in the Schools of Ontario, 82.
154 Manzer, Public Schools and Political Ideas: Canadian Educational Policy in Historical Perspective, 155-156, 158. In Saskatchewan, for example, a new secondary school program was implemented beginning in the 1970-1971 school year. One of its core objectives, according to an internal ministry report, was to “break down tracks and streams and eliminate the distinctions that have developed among students on the basis of program orientation. In general all electives are open to all students whatever their program orientation may be.” Furthermore, there would be a “reduction in the number of [predetermined] subject credits required for grade standing and high school graduation” which would have the advantage of relieving “the student’s load and permit him to concentrate on fewer subjects. It is also intended to allow additional time free of direct instruction in the laboratory and classroom. Periods set aside for independent study, small group discussion, free reading and individual study in the instructional resource centre, or individual work in the laboratory or shop areas will permit the student pursue his special interests and to explore these in depth. Source: The Saskatchewan Archives, Department of Education: Program Development Branch, R-1234, File: 4.13 (General Advisory Committees).
explains the characteristics of the education systems in Ontario, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. After all, even though Alberta and Ontario were governed by Progressive Conservative parties during the 1970s (the Alberta Tories came into office in August of 1971), Saskatchewan was governed by the social-democratic New Democratic Party—from June of 1971 onwards—yet this did not result in a unique education system being implemented in that province. All governments, irrespective of their ideologies, were guided by the same dictates: those associated with a person-regarding education system.

There is further proof that partisanship is not a useful explanatory variable when evaluating the policies that were implemented concerning the overall objectives of provincial education systems in the first period: none of the major opposition parties in the three provinces put forth policy proposals indicating that they would implement education systems that would have different overall objectives than those already in place. That is, they did not advocate proposals that were inconsistent with the person-regarding paradigm. The absence of such proposals is noteworthy because the adversarial Westminster parliamentary system used by the provinces encourages opposition parties to present alternative policies and criticize the existing policies of governments. As such, the lack of alternative visions for their education systems indicates that opposition parties in the provinces would have implemented similar policies concerning this aspect of the education policy sector.

In some instances, there are explicit statements by opposition parties in the three provinces that confirm their support of an education system based on the person-regarding paradigm. For example, in Ontario, the New Democratic Party, in its 1971 election platform had this to say regarding how it viewed the objective of education: “Not only must education be available to all, but the process of educating must be an inspiring, liberating experience
developing the minds, the creative abilities, and the critical awareness of the members of the community. Education must be seen as more than mere economic investment. It has a responsibility to improve the quality of life and to relate our lives to a world-wide civilization…. The concept that children should pursue a continuous path from kindergarten to the end of their post-secondary education needs to be re-examined…. Rigid grading systems and mark-conscious report cards must be replaced by a freer atmosphere in which the child is more able to follow his own inclinations with closer personal attention from the teacher.”

The NDP’s position regarding the objectives of the province’s education system and its consistently with the dictates of the paradigm of the first period is also evident when a party’s member had this to say about the purpose of education during a debate in the legislature regarding funding for education: “The government has to meet the individual needs of each child in education, and it has to fund it properly.”

Similarly, the Alberta New Democratic Party, in a 1974 policy paper prepared the year prior to a provincial election, had this to say about its vision of the education sector: “Education must be transformed from education for jobs to education for living. Whilst facilities for vocationals [sic] education should be increased, nevertheless vocational education should not be treated as a substitute for a general education; creative and leisure time activities should become an integral part of the curriculum; the high school matriculation programme should be made more flexible to enable a greater number of students to pursue their particular interests and aptitudes to university level…”

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155 New Democratic Party of Ontario, Program for Ontario, 1971, 7-8. (Electronic versions of political party platforms can be obtained from www.poltext.org.)
157 New Democratic Party of Alberta, The Party and its Programme, 1974, 52-53. (This policy document—and others like it by different parties, which will be cited throughout this study—can be obtained from www.poltext.org.)
Alberta Liberals, in their 1975 platform, also put forth a similar vision: “A Liberal government would try to change the orientation of our whole education system from one that educates for a job and money making ability under the impression that the youth of our society are goal oriented in a financial sense rather than wanting to play a role in cooperative framework to make this a better land in which to live.”158

These examples strongly suggest that opposition parties would have implemented the same sorts of policies as governing parties because they too were supportive of education systems based on the person-regarding paradigm. It is for this reason that attempting to utilize a partisanship approach as an explanatory variable to explain education policies in Canadian provinces is not useful. The dominance of particular ideas caused political actors of various ideological persuasions to perceive only particular policy options as legitimate, as opposed to basing policy decisions strictly on their party’s ideological principles.

Objectives of Provincial Education Systems in the Second Period

As the 1980s progressed, it was clear to any observer of the education systems of Canadian provinces that how these systems were structured, in terms of their objectives, was changing. By 1990, the changes were complete. A new paradigm had become fully entrenched. It can best be described as the accountability paradigm. Unlike the previous one, which allowed the education of each student to go down the path of the student’s choosing—especially in the secondary grades—with little requirements from provincial governments as to what students needed to learn in order to advance from one grade to the next, this paradigm would lead to more structured and orchestrated education systems. Before advancing, it is important to reiterate that although schooling based on the dictates of the accountability paradigm was the

norm in the second period, this does not mean that schooling no longer was structured in a manner that would completely ignore the needs and interests of individual students, which was the main priority when the person-regarding paradigm was dominant in the first period. Rather, what needs to be recognized is that this latter form of schooling was given less priority in favour of structuring education in a manner that reflected the dictates of the new paradigm.

At its core, the new paradigm stressed the importance of structuring an education system with clear standards and predetermined curriculum requirements (i.e. specific subjects and skills that all students had to learn). It also implied having a means to determine whether those standards were being met (e.g. by using standardized tests and examinations) so that students and teachers could be held accountable by policymakers for what they were required to learn and teach, respectively, and so that the policymakers in turn could be held accountable by the public for how adequately the education system prepared students for post-secondary education and employment, and for whether public education justified its high cost.

For this paradigm to become dominant, principles such as standards, testing, and accountability began to be viewed as important, at least more important than during the previous period. Why did this happen? There are two main reasons: the loss of faith in the previous paradigm and changes in the broader policy consensus. The remainder of this section will discuss these reasons and how exactly the paradigm, which they fostered as the dominant one for education, manifested itself, i.e. how the objectives of the provincial education systems differed when compared to the previous period.
Beginning with the first reason, as the previous section illustrated, all three provinces’ governments—as, indeed, those in other provinces in Canada, not to mention jurisdictions outside of Canada—transformed their education systems so that they reflected the person-regarding paradigm. However, this transformation was short lived. Almost as soon as the paradigm was formally adopted and entrenched, it began to be abandoned by the provinces beginning in the late 1970s.

This is because certain segments of the population in each province—in particular parent groups, universities, business groups, and segments of the media159—during the first period either became skeptical of its dictates or never accepted it as legitimate or effective. “As government [was]… attempting to address [the]… clamour for a broader, fairer, and more ‘inclusionary’ concept of schooling, it was also besieged by new demands for other kinds of accountability to do with school costs and academic performance. By the mid-1970s, this accountability movement had made its presence felt in government circles.”160

What is interesting is that those who advanced the “education system is sub-par” argument in the provinces, especially politicians, often based it on anecdotal evidence as opposed to reliable data. In fact, some studies showed that student achievement had not suffered when education was changed from a traditional approach to a person-centred one.161 But this did not matter because authoritative members of the public, academia, the press, and politics came to view education systems that were based on the person-regarding paradigm as not educating students sufficiently.

161 As Gidney writes (106), regarding Ontario: “The vociferous complaints of some academics about falling standards need to be approached with scepticism. Whatever else the Interface study had shown, it nailed down the fact that senior high school marks in the mid-1970s remained as good a predictor of success in first-year university as they had in the past—as good as in the golden age of the much-vaunted grade 13 departmentals.”
An influential report commissioned by the Government of Ontario in the 1980s captures the educational mood of the post-person-regarding years. Written by George Radwanski, and released to the public in early 1988, the report, titled *Ontario Study of the Relevance of Education, and the Issue of Dropouts*, stated that “we live in a very different world from the one that existed—or, at least, was thought to exist, two decades ago when the Hall-Dennis Report lyrically pronounced that ‘the underlying aim of education is to further man’s unending search for truth’ and prescribed a system in which ‘what confronts the learner will not be exclusively or mainly subject matter prearranged to meet requirements of adult logic, but opportunities to pursue with zest what he can appreciate for its interest and value in the vibrant world of today.’”\(^{162}\) This led to a situation where the education system was “not good enough—not clear enough in purpose, not effective enough in teaching, not successful enough in student outcomes—to meet the imperatives of the present, let alone the complex challenges of the future.”\(^{163}\)

As a result, the report argued that the key dictate of the previous paradigm—individual self-fulfillment—was no longer acceptable because “we live in an era when the prosperity of societies and the well-being of individuals will increasingly depend on the possession not merely of various affective attributes but of specific, identifiable knowledge and skills.”\(^{164}\) It is for this reason that the report’s first recommendation was “that the emphasis of educational philosophy...be shifted from process to outcomes, and that the objectives of education be defined in terms of the acquisition of specified demonstrable

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\(^{163}\) Ibid., 1.

\(^{164}\) Ibid., 2.
knowledge and skills by all children, through the application of pedagogical techniques appropriate to each child’s needs.”

The provinces, one by one, began to implement new policies. In Ontario, for example, “By the early 1980s, the new ‘philosophy’ [i.e. the person-regarding paradigm] was in retreat and its ‘mechanisms’ were being dismantled. In part, this shift may have arisen from the perceived impact of the changes themselves. But it was also the result of more difficult economic circumstances, which encouraged people to wonder if they were getting their money’s worth from schools; to other new expectations in tough times; and, following the broad educational and social changes of the 1960s, to a more conservative, critical assessment of their consequences.”

A ministry report, which resulted from the Secondary Education Review Project (SERP), published in October 1981, laid the groundwork for the abandonment of the person-regarding paradigm in the province. Based on the feedback that the committee of the Review Project received, it advanced a few key findings. “The first is that people expect the schools to provide students with a solid, useful, basic education that prepared them either for direct entry into employment or for post-secondary education. Second, while still wanting schools to take into account the variation in students’ needs, interests and abilities, most people proposed that the curriculum be more prescriptive.... Third, the feeling is widespread that schools ought to impose much stricter discipline than they are imagined to do at present, and finally, the public wants to be assured that standards are being maintained.” These preferences for an education system contrast sharply with the one offered by the Hall-Dennis Report. The committee’s report resulted in the ministry responding “through The Renewal of

165 Ibid., 37.
166 Gidney, 86.
167 Quoted in Ibid., 98. Emphasis in original.
Secondary Education in Ontario. And ROSE, as it came to be known, not only accepted, in whole or in part, nearly all of the main SERP programmatic recommendations, but laid out the implementation process as well. “This meant that the dictates of the person-regarding paradigm had come to be seen as not useful—by the ministry and the general public—in terms of determining the objectives for the education system.

In Saskatchewan, there was also concern about the objectives of the province’s education system beginning in the late 1970s, even among educators. The minister of education received letters from concerned citizens about whether the education system was deemphasizing “the basics” or traditional subjects too much. In one response to such a letter, written in June, 1977, the minister essentially argued that “the basics” and an education system guided by the dictates of the person-regarding paradigm are not mutually exclusive: “In Saskatchewan, we have never forsaken the basics; they continue to be placed emphatically at the core of every curriculum. The fact that we encourage teachers to treat students as individuals, and to pace instruction to the capability of the individual, in no way negates a concern for high standards of achievement in the basic skills.”

Nevertheless, because of the increasing concern about the direction of the province’s education system, “Saskatchewan Education sponsored a conference in 1979 at Fort Qu’Appelle of representatives from the various educational institutions in Saskatchewan. The delegates to this conference generated the idea for an overall review of education. In response, Doug McArthur, the NDP minister of education, brought together twenty-four

168 Ibid., 99.
170 The Saskatchewan Archives, E. L. Tchorzewski Papers, R-485, File: 30A (Curriculum Development).
people to form the Minister’s Advisory Committee on Curriculum and Instructional Review, or the C & I Review Committee, which first met in Saskatoon, November 1981.”

In 1984, the Review Committee released a report, entitled *Directions: The Final Report*. Although it did not explicitly mention the person-regarding paradigm, the report nevertheless argued that the education system based on its dictates had led to less than desired results: “From very early in the project, it became evident that the student was the focus of concern. Inadequacies in the system were thought to be reflected in some students’ inability to take charge of their lives or conduct themselves independently after graduation. The universities, for example, commented that many students’ [sic] are unable to analyze material and express their own ideas in university classes. The business community expressed concern about graduates not having the right attitudes and social skills to conduct themselves in the work place. The system, then, does not seem to be equipping some students to cope with life beyond high school.”

When advancing its recommendations, the Committee did not entirely turn its back on the person-regarding paradigm, given that when outlining what the new goals of the province’s education system should be, it began by stating that the goals “recognize the inherent worth and value of each individual. Education, then, should develop the potential of each person to the fullest extent.” However, one of the Committees’ key recommendations was that the education system should be more structured, with a curriculum that included required subjects for all students, as opposed to letting students chart their own path. Thus, although the Committee paid homage to the person-regarding paradigm, it paved the way for

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172 Minister’s Advisory Committee on Curriculum and Instructional Review, *Directions: The Final Report* (Regina: Government of Saskatchewan, 1984), 16.
173 Ibid., 26.
174 Ibid., 31.
the government to implement policies based on its recommendations (discussed below), which would lead to the abandonment of that same paradigm.

Even in Alberta, where the government did not change the education system to completely reflect the dictates of the person-regarding paradigm by adopting all the recommendations of the Worth Report, it nevertheless decided to reverse the changes it had put in place. This was mainly because the general public was unhappy with the quality and objectives of the province’s education system—a problem which the ministry was well aware of. This is evident because in a 1976 interview with the Alberta Teachers’ Association, the then deputy minister was asked what “the department’s response [is] to the popular demand for a return to teaching of the ‘basics’ in schools?” He responded by saying that “the Department has an obligation to treat the demand very seriously. It represents, after all, the judgement of a significant proportion of the population, the teaching profession included. But we know, too, that assertions about falling standards are not new. They seem to recur on a fairly constant basis and I suspect that were they all well-founded none of us would now be literate. What seems to be very clear at this time is that both the teaching profession and the general public want clearer and more specific statements regarding what schools are expected to do and how well they are doing it.”

It was clear that the government knew that it needed to change direction regarding the objectives for the province’s education system.

The slow abandonment of the person-regarding paradigm in Alberta began in 1976, when the Curriculum Policies Board was established. “One of the specific policy areas for which the Board was to be responsible was recommendations concerning the goals of

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175 Provincial Archives of Alberta, Records of the Deputy Minister and Assistant Deputy Minister of Instruction and Support Including Records on ACCESS Project, Accreditation, Association, Societies, Boards, and Committees, GR1996.0016, Box 14.
education for children in Grades 1-12.” Soon after, the Board created a document that contained “the ‘Goals of Basic Education for Alberta’ which was publicly released by the Education Minister in October 1977. The media portrayed it as reflecting a ‘back to the basics’ perspective. The proposed goals made a clear distinction between the goals of schooling and the goals of education…. In April 1978 the Minister tabled a document of the same title in the Legislature. It was essentially the same as the one released previously. The following month he made a motion to adopt the statement and on May 15 the Legislature approved the motion.”

The document differentiated between goals of schooling and goals of education. It stated that “education refers to all the learning experiences the individual has in interacting with the physical and social environment; it is a continuing and lifelong process. Schooling, which has a more limited purpose, refers to the learning activities planned and conducted by a formally structured agency which influences individuals during a specified period.” The new goals for schools were to be ensuring that students:

-Develop competencies in reading, writing, speaking, listening and viewing.
-Acquire basic knowledge and develop skills and attitudes in mathematics, the practical and fine arts, the sciences, and the social studies (including history and geography), with appropriate local, national, and international emphases in each.
-Develop the learning skills of finding, organizing, analyzing, and applying information in a constructive and objective manner.
-Acquire knowledge and develop skills, attitudes and habits which contribute to physical, mental, and social well-being.
-Develop an understanding of the meaning, responsibilities, and benefits of active citizenship at the local, national and international levels.
-Acquire knowledge and develop skills, attitudes, and habits required to respond to the opportunities and expectations of the world of work.

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176 Wagner, 127-128.
177 Ibid., 129-130.
178 Provincial Archives of Alberta, Minister of Education Hon. J. Koziak’s Files, GR1979.0200, Box 4, File: 38.
179 Ibid.
Although subtle, these goals—and the fact that there are so few of them—illustrate the movement away from the person-regarding paradigm, especially when compared to the goals that the province had outlined in 1974, which were discussed above. It was a clear signal on the part of the provincial government that the dictates of the old paradigm lacked legitimacy, necessitating the need to be responsive to the dictates of a new paradigm. It should be noted that even though the goals of education (as opposed to schools, which were discussed above) were broader and stressed individual fulfillment,\(^\text{180}\) they are not relevant because they were goals which the “community” (e.g. the home, the church, community organizations) as a whole was responsible for and had to strive to meet, not just the public education system.

It may seem odd that a supposedly dominant paradigm was abandoned so quickly and easily. However, we need to keep in mind that policy paradigms in any sector, even when dominant, are not without their critics. As such, from the moment that they begin to gain legitimacy with policy actors, they are, at the same time, questioned and undermined by others who see problems with the dictates of the paradigm in terms of policy goals or means. This basic fact concerning policy paradigms applies to the one that was dominant in the 1960s and early 1970s in the education sector.

\(^{180}\) The goals were to: “Develop intellectual curiosity and a desire for lifelong learning[;] Develop the ability to get along with people of varying backgrounds, beliefs and lifestyles[;] Develop a sense of community responsibility which embraces respect for law and authority, public and private property, and the rights of others[;] Develop self-discipline, self-understanding, and a positive self-concept through realistic appraisal of one’s capabilities and limitations[;] Develop an appreciation for tradition and the ability to understand and respond to change as it occurs in personal life and in society[;] Develop skills for effective utilization of financial resources and leisure time and for constructive involvement in community endeavours[;] Develop an appreciation for the role of the family in society[;] Develop an interest in cultural and recreational pursuits[;] Develop a commitment to the careful use of natural resources and to the preservation and improvement of the physical environment[;] Develop a sense of purpose in life and ethical or spiritual values which respect the worth of the individual, justice, fair play and fundamental rights, responsibilities and freedoms.” Source: Ibid.
As briefly mentioned above, there was always concern among certain segments of the population that the paradigm’s emphasis on individuality and lack of formal requirements for schooling (i.e. emphasis on specific skills and subjects that students should learn, such as the “three R’s”) was problematic. For example, in a November 1974 speech to the Ontario Association for Curriculum Development, Ontario’s then education minister stated that “groups as diverse as the Ontario Home and School and the Ontario Chamber of Commerce come to the Minister of Education and the Government asking that something be done to reemphasize the teaching of the 3 R’s.”

It is because of such criticism of the paradigm and its dictates that policymakers began to look for other policy solutions; and it is for this reason that in the years leading up to the second period, the objectives of provincial education systems began to reflect the dictates of an emerging, new paradigm.

The second reason—in addition to the loss of faith in the person-regarding paradigm—why standards, testing, and accountability began to be seen as important in the post 1980 years, allowing the accountability paradigm which reflected these principles to become entrenched, is the emergence of a new consensus: neoliberalism. Unlike the previous consensus, this one was “dismissive of the notions of both ‘equality’ and ‘social justice’” which, needless to say, would have a profound effect on how the objectives of education systems were to be structured. Furthermore, neoliberalism emphasized greatly, as part of its policy prescriptions, limited state intervention in all policy sectors and careful consideration and evaluation of how money is spent. These tenets in turn are related to the concept of performativity.

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This “is a term that is increasingly widely used in policy analysis and writing, but it is not always used in its full and proper sense.”\(^{183}\) Essentially it is “a key mechanism of neoliberal management, a form of hands-off management that uses comparisons and judgements in place of intervention and direction.”\(^{184}\) Furthermore, it “facilitates and requires the reflexive redesign of organizations, organizational relationships and organizational ecologies. In effect organizations are ‘enabled’ to think about themselves differently, in terms of, or in relation to their performance.”\(^{185}\) The effect of performativity on education policy “is to reorient pedagogical and scholarly activities towards those which are likely to have a positive impact on measurable performance outcomes for the group, for the institution and increasingly for the nation, and as such is a deflection of attention away from aspects of social, emotional or moral development that have no immediate measurable performative value.”\(^{186}\)

*It is for this reason that the accountability paradigm, which is based on the neoliberal consensus, stressed the need for education systems to be based on outcome-based curricula, which would allow for standardized testing to be reintroduced.* The consensus’ emphasis on “competition for the best output drives the education system to constantly improve in efficiency and results…. The central government issues a standardized curriculum, a set of national standards for all students, or both.”\(^{187}\) This has the added benefit because “when local education authorities or schools fail to meet predetermined outcomes, responsibility devolves onto the schools rather than the centralized governments that created

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\(^{184}\) Ibid.
\(^{185}\) Ibid., 30.
\(^{186}\) Ibid., 32.
and instituted the policies. This phenomenon is in keeping with the neoliberal idea that individuals and institutions succeed or fail because of the choices they make with the resources available to them, rather than because of any systemic inequity."

Beginning with standardized tests (the implementation of common curricula will be discussed below), according to a former official from Ontario who served during the early 1990s, one of the reasons why testing was seen to be important was to make sure the major financial commitment to the sector produced desired results (i.e. the tests would provide a sort of “independent evidence” according to the official) so as to justify the high levels of public funding dedicated to it. Similarly, a former official from Saskatchewan stated that since they spent so much on education (second only to health care), tests were implemented to ensure that the education system was producing desired results (i.e. teaching students adequately) so as to justify the high costs. (The official was explicitly asked whether this was the reason for the tests; the response was “yes.”) Such statements clearly say a great deal about the consensus and the impact its dictates had on the decisions of policymakers, since one of neoliberalism’s core tenets is that governments should spend as little as possible, and that any spending should be justified. That is, the spending should produce a valuable result or program or service, and be determined via a performance-tracking system.

Standardized testing, as discussed in the previous section, was seen to be inconsistent with the dictates of the person-regarding paradigm. As such, these tests were abandoned in the first period. However, beginning in the years leading up to the second

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188 Ibid., 7-8.
189 Personal interview, November 13th, 2014.
190 Personal interview, November 22nd, 2014.
191 Refer to Ball’s discussion of “performativity” discussed above for more on this point.
period, they were reintroduced by provincial governments. Alberta, “in 1982… introduced the Achievement Testing Program to assess the core subjects (English language arts, social studies, mathematics, science) of students in grades 3, 6, and 9. Each year one of these subjects [was] assessed. In 1984, the Diploma Examinations Program at grade 12 was reinstated as a requirement for high school graduation.”\(^\text{192}\) The province changed the testing program in 1995 so that grade three students would be tested on their language arts and mathematics knowledge, and grade six and nine students tested on their language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies knowledge. In short, the Klein government increased the number of tests. Prior to the implementation of the new testing program in 1995, the education minister appeared before a committee of the legislature and directly connected the need for tests with ensuring accountability, and by extension with value for the money being spent, in the province’s education system; this shows the influence of neoliberalism’s dictates on policymakers: “It's important that we have a sound, strong accountability framework for education in this province. The framework will result in Albertans being better informed about how well students, schools, and the education system are performing. In June of this year we will introduce our expanded provincial achievement testing program in grades three, six, and nine. The program will provide educators and all Albertans with a more detailed assessment of student performance measured against provincial standards.”\(^\text{193}\)

Ontario also began to introduce assessments in the 1980s. “In 1986, the Ministry of Education embarked on a series of program reviews, using sampling, to evaluate the


effectiveness of various programs and to provide information for focusing program
improvement efforts. The Ministry of Education adopted a review model…that included
assessing intended curriculum (analysis of curriculum documents), implemented curriculum
(teacher report of resources used, time use, instructional strategies, concepts covered, etc.),
and attained curriculum (student performance on tests and performance tasks) as a basis for
identifying program weaknesses that can influence reforms in curriculum and instruction”
(emphasis in original).194

Furthermore, in 1987, the Liberal government announced that it “would establish
‘new provincial benchmarks for literacy and numeracy in grades 3 and 6,’ and would
‘develop more effective ways of measuring student achievement against those
benchmarks.”195 However, the policy was not fully implemented by the time the Liberals
were removed from office. In 1991, the NDP government signalled that it was interested in
following through and creating benchmarks (for grades three, six, and nine), with
mathematics being given a priority. This policy was eventually implemented in 1993 when
the then education minister, Dave Cooke, “ordered that a planned provincial review of grade
9 reading and writing skills, based upon a sample of pupils, be rejigged to include a system-
wide assessment of every grade 9 student in the province.”196 Neoliberalism was a key
influence on the thinking of the government when making this decision. This is evident
because while appearing before the estimates committee of the provincial legislature in
November of 1993, Cooke, argued that such tests are needed so as to “provide important
information about the learning success of individual students and about education in general

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194 Lorna M. Earl, “Assessment and Accountability in Education in Ontario” Canadian Journal of Education
195 Gidney, 202. In 1989, the government announced that “diagnostic tests” would be administered in grades
three and six. Source: Gidney, 204.
196 Ibid.
in Ontario.”197 This is a clear manifestation of performativity, which is a mechanism of neoliberal management, as discussed above. In addition, when the policy was first announced, the education minister linked the need for tests with the need to ensure accountability in the province’s education system: “There has to be an accountability framework that tells people, parents as well as educators, how well our schools are doing.”198

The government did not introduce any further tests because it waited to see what the Royal Commission on Learning, which was established in 1993, would have to say about the issue. The Commission, which released its final report in 1995, “circled” the issue “warily, however, attempting, without much success to keep accountability and the evaluation of individual student achievement in air-tight compartments….Yet, in the end, for both educational and political reasons, they gave it a reluctant endorsement.”199 Soon after the report was released, the government announced that “there would be annual, mandatory testing in reading, writing, and mathematics for all students in grades 3, 6, 9, and 11—a degree of universal testing wildly beyond anything the commissioners were willing to countenance. The government, on the other hand, found the arguments for an independent testing agency [which the Commission recommended] compelling, creating the Education Quality and Accountability Office, and assigning it the responsibility for test construction, administration, and reporting.”200

In October of 1995, at which time the NDP were replaced by the Tories in office, the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) “submitted its first

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199 Gidney, 229.
200 Ibid., 232.
report…recommending a much scaled-down version of [the NDP’s] … testing regime. Instead of universal testing in grades 3, 6, 9, and 11, it was to be restricted to grades 3 and 11; only sample testing…was to be carried out in grades 6 and 9.”^201 However this proposal also was changed so that when testing was introduced by the EQAO, there would be reading, writing, and mathematics tests for grades three and six, mathematics tests for grade nine students, and a literacy test for grade ten students. There is no doubt that dictates of neoliberalism was a guiding factor in causing the government to implement such tests. For example, while appearing before a committee of the provincial legislature in June of 1996, the then education minister John Snobelen stated the following when justifying the need for standardized tests: “An independent, comprehensive assessment program is key to achieving a responsive and effective education system in which taxpayers can see value for their investment, and Ontario's young people can achieve excellence in their education.”^202 Therefore, just as neoliberalism influenced the NDP government’s adoption of the “benchmark tests” in 1993, it also influenced the thinking of the PC government’s adoption of more formalized standardized tests in 1995. This shows the importance of neoliberalism in the second period in this area of the education sector, and by extension why partisanship is not a consequential variable. Parties as distinct as the Ontario NDP and Tories followed the same dictates and provided similar justifications for a specific education policy, in this case, the need for standardized tests.

As for Saskatchewan, after it withdrew from an inter-provincial testing program in the early 1990s (to be discussed below), the government faced pressures from the business community and groups such as the Citizens for Accountability and Excellence in Education

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^201 Ibid., 237.
to introduce testing so that the province could have a means of determining student achievement.\textsuperscript{203} Due to such demands, “the province instituted in 1993 its own education indicators program, the Provincial Learning Assessment Program (PLAP), intended, among other things, to measure the success of Saskatchewan’s K–12 educational system both in terms of student outcomes and their opportunities to learn.”\textsuperscript{204} This is confirmed by a former official, who stated that although the government implemented testing as a means of determining whether “the curriculum was working [given the fact that the province had recently had curriculum renewal, which will be discussed below], did we have teaching issues and so on and so forth,” it also implemented its own testing program at that time as a response to the aforementioned pressure and pressure from actors in the United States and the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development who stressed the importance of testing.\textsuperscript{205} Not very surprisingly—given its lack of enthusiasm for testing—the government decided that testing program would be voluntary and only a sample of students would be tested. In 1994, the first test was administered; its focus was on “language arts, with mathematics being assessed in the following year. It was intended that students from grades 5, 8, and 11 take part in the study annually.”\textsuperscript{206} In 2002, a new testing program was established, which was mandatory. Students in grades four, seven, and ten wrote reading tests in April and students in grades five, eight, and eleven wrote a writing test in April and a


\textsuperscript{204} Ibid., 7.

\textsuperscript{205} Personal interview, January 9\textsuperscript{th}, 2015.

\textsuperscript{206} Allan, 8.
mathematics test in June. As in Alberta and Ontario, the Saskatchewan case once again shows the influence of neoliberalism on policymaker’s decision to implement standardized tests in the second period. Although the NDP government was not a strong supporter of standardized tests, it nevertheless felt pressure to introduce them because the dominance of the prevailing ideational climate necessitated this. The party could not refuse to go down this path by sticking to its principles. This also is further evidence of why partisanship is not a useful variable when examining this aspect of the education sector in the second period.

In addition to provincial governments creating and administering their own standardized tests, they also began to take part in national and international tests in the years after the first period. In terms of national tests, the most well known is the School Achievement Indicators Program (SAIP) administered by the Council of Ministers of Education (CMEC). SAIP was created in 1989 with the first test administered in 1993. Thirteen and 16 year-old students wrote tests assessing their mathematics, reading and writing, and science knowledge on an ongoing cycle, meaning that in a given year both age groups would write a test in one of the core areas, and the other two core areas would be covered in tests in the subsequent two years.

What is interesting is that two of the provinces being studied, Ontario and Saskatchewan, at one point decided not take part in the SAIP. Ontario had originally agreed to participate in the testing when the Liberals were in office in the late 1980s. However, when the NDP came into office in 1990, their first education minister, Marion Boyd,

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208 In 2003, the CMEC created a new testing program, the Pan-Canadian Assessment Program (PCAP). The first test was administered in 2007. Every three years, 13 year olds are tested in a major area (mathematics, reading and writing, and science) and two minor areas (the two areas that are not the major area for that test year).
reversed the decision. She withdrew the province from the program “because the tests [would]…not be linked to its curriculum and the test sample will not reflect Ontario’s ethnic diversity.”

However, “Boyd discovered that the leader of her party, a party that had long opposed standardized testing, was rapidly coming to favour standardized testing. Indeed, standardized testing was one of the few concrete educational-policy reforms that Premier Rae consistently supported during the NDP term.” The Premier believed that in order to reform and improve the province’s education system, clear standards needed to be set and tests administered in order to track the performance of students. Rae argued that there is nothing “elitist or right wing” about such a policy, indicating that times had changed and such dictates had become the new norm. In addition, he was influenced by a similar policy implemented by New Brunswick’s Frank McKenna. (This is a clear indication of the role of policy transfer, which will be discussed in detail in chapter six.) In late 1991, there was a cabinet shuffle, including a new education minister, Tony Silipo. Upon taking office, one of his first actions was reversing Boyd’s decision and announcing that Ontario would take part in the SAIP.

As for Saskatchewan, when the Program was created, the province was governed by the Progressive Conservatives who had agreed to take part in the testing. However, after the NDP was elected in 1991, they pulled the province out of the Program. This was done because according “the then Minister of Education, Carol Teichrob, blamed the program’s

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209 Lila Sarick, “Ontario’s Refusal to Participate in a Standardized National Test Has Started a Fiery Debate Over Such Programs’ Worth; To Test or Not to Test: That is the Question,” The Globe and Mail, 14 May 1991, A1.
212 Gidney, 218.
cost—estimated to be $2.8 million nationally and less than $200,000 (or some 0.02 per cent of the province’s K–12 expenditures) for Saskatchewan—and argued that the tests would not be particularly effective”\(^{213}\) without stating exactly why the test would not be effective.

As such, it would be fair to assume that the province decided not to participate at least partly for ideological reasons,\(^{214}\) given the fact that its reason for withdrawing was not very convincing because $200,000 can hardly be considered a costly expenditure, even for a small province like Saskatchewan. The minister was also quoted as saying at that time that “it’s not appropriate for us to be dissipating our efforts in a national test at this moment,.... We just think there are some other issues in education that are much more important than standardized testing.”\(^{215}\) This also indicates that the withdrawal was partially, if not completely, due to ideological reasons, because the NDP government believed that such a program was more of a distraction than a sound policy. In addition, according to a former official, the province felt that the testing program created by CMEC was an American initiative that was not necessary.\(^{216}\) The official stated that an agency in Washington had pushed CMEC to institute the program. However, she could not recall the name of the agency. (It should be noted that no other official from any of the provinces mentioned such a reason for the testing program, nor was there any indication of this cause in media coverage, the secondary literature, or archival material that the author has reviewed.) However, in 1996, with the NDP still in office, the policy was reversed and Saskatchewan joined the other

\(^{213}\) Allan, 5.

\(^{214}\) Generally, parties on the left have been opposed to standardized tests because they argue that: they do a poor job of taking into account the demographics and learning abilities of students in different schools; force teachers to “teach to the test”; may be used as a means of evaluating teachers who do not have much control over how well students do on tests; and the questions on tests may not be consistent with what students are taught.

\(^{215}\) Quoted in Manzer, *Public Schools and Political Ideas: Canadian Educational Policy in Historical Perspective*, 246.

\(^{216}\) Personal interview, January 9\(^{\text{th}}\), 2015.
provinces in the testing program. According to a former official, this decision was made because they had monitored the program and became “comfortable” with the nature of the testing. This is further evidence of the impact of the accountability paradigm based on the neoliberal consensus on policymakers. Clearly, the Saskatchewan NDP initially were not enthusiastic supporters of standardized tests. Even though they tried to ignore this particular dictate, they eventually relented and joined the CMEC testing program because it had become a necessary—and unavoidable—aspect of provincial education systems.

The provinces have also taken part in a wide variety of international tests since the 1980s, in particular two main testing programs. The first testing program is administered by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). Canadian provinces began to take part in 1982. The first two provinces were Ontario and British Columbia. In subsequent years, the other two provinces began to participate in the various IEA tests. The second international testing program that the provinces have participated in is the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development’s Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), which was first administered in 2000 and takes places every three years, testing students between 15 years 3 months and 16 years 2 months of age at the time of the test on reading, mathematical and scientific literacy.

However, in order for standardized tests to be administered—specifically those tests administered by the provinces themselves as opposed to international organizations—there has to be a common curriculum so that the same test could be given to all students in the

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217 Personal interview, January 9th, 2015.
219 For an overview of the various IEA tests, refer to: Ibid.
province. Such curricula mean that every student has to take particular subjects and learn essential skills, specifically in the secondary grades, based on what policymakers at the provincial level—given that this process became relatively centralized, as will be discussed in chapter four—determine are essential subjects and skills that students need to know. However, provincial government involvement in curricula development to a greater extent than in the past may seem to contradict the dictates of neoliberalism. After all, “neoliberalism is committed to the primacy of the free market, to freedom from government constraint, and an attendant drastic reduction of government responsibility for the provision of public services such as education. That this set of priorities should facilitate a strong state-mandated curriculum—or indeed any strong state structure—makes no sense unless the curriculum is seen as a mechanism for allowing competitive comparisons to be made; for this to be possible that curriculum must be expressed in terms of standards and benchmarks and must be accompanied by large-scale testing.”

However, even without the introduction of standardized tests, common curricula are seen to be attractive because in the neoliberal era governments want to ensure that their students are learning the basic subjects, which are essential for their success in post-secondary education and the workforce. Not having common curricula with mandatory courses could result in many students in the secondary grades receiving many credits required for graduation by taking subjects deemed to be frivolous (e.g. art, music, drama, physical education); they might then leave the education system with the state having spent thousands of dollars on their education, without a strong grasp of the basics or the three R’s. This problem is avoided when there are common curricula. This is an important point.

because as we will see below, one of the provinces (Saskatchewan) implemented a common curriculum well before it introduced standardized tests.

As a result, individual course selection and an education system based on what individual students wanted to learn, which was characteristic of the person-regarding paradigm, was no longer seen to be acceptable. Each of the three provinces being studied established common curricula in the years after the first period when the person-regarding paradigm began to be replaced as the dominant paradigm in the sector. Although a certain number of course requirements have always been dictated by provincial governments—even when the person-regarding paradigm was dominant—the point being advanced is that such requirements were increased as compared to the past.

The Ontario government, for example, after the aforementioned SERP, released a document based on the SERP recommendation, titled *Ontario Schools: Intermediate and Senior* (OSIS). It was a common curriculum for grade seven to OAC and came into force in 1984. When the New Democrats came into office they introduced a new common curriculum (*Everybody’s Schools: The Common Curriculum*) in 1992. After revisions over the next few years, the final version of the document was introduced in 1995.

In Saskatchewan, after the report from the C & I Review Committee, discussed above, the provincial government decided to act on one of the Committee’s recommendation, which was for the province to have a common curriculum. Consequently, in early 1985, the government established the Core Curriculum Policy Advisory Committee. After an initial report in 1986, which was followed by public consultations, a final report was released in

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221 Gidney, 99.
late 1987.\textsuperscript{222} The new curriculum “included two basic components: required areas of study and common essential learnings.”\textsuperscript{223}

Alberta also implemented a common curriculum in the 1980s. The process began in 1984 when the government announced that it would review the curriculum of the secondary grades. “A Minister’s Advisory Committee was set up to oversee the first part of the review, and was to be aided by a Project Team from the Department of Education.”\textsuperscript{224} The following year the Committee released its report, \textit{Foundation for the Future}. A key reason given in the report was the need “to make the secondary program more focused, and more challenging for students.”\textsuperscript{225}

Based on the Committee’s report, which was revised after it invited the public and interest groups to respond,\textsuperscript{226} the government presented its new secondary curriculum in June of 1985. Like \textit{Foundation for the Future}, the new policy document, \textit{Secondary Education in Alberta}, stressed the importance of making the secondary curriculum demanding and focusing on “the basics.”\textsuperscript{227} For example, “a number of optional courses were dropped, more time was to be spent on the core subjects, and the requirements for passing from one grade to another were increased.”\textsuperscript{228}

As in the previous period, it is clear that it is ideas (i.e. the dictates of the accountability paradigm), as opposed to partisanship, that helps us to understand why the provinces implemented policies concerning the objectives of schooling in the manner that they did. After all, the three provinces were governed by very distinct parties throughout the

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\textsuperscript{222} Robinson, 211-213.  
\textsuperscript{223} Ibid., 213.  
\textsuperscript{224} Wagner, 135.  
\textsuperscript{225} Ibid., 138.  
\textsuperscript{226} Ibid., 140  
\textsuperscript{227} Ibid., 142.  
\textsuperscript{228} Ibid., 143.

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second period. In Alberta, the Progressive Conservative Party was in office during all the years of the second period. In Ontario, the Liberals were in office at the start of the period when the NDP was elected in September of 1990 and remained in office until June of 1995, when the PC Party was elected. They governed the province until October of 2003. At that point the Liberal Party returned to office. In Saskatchewan, the PC Party was in office until October 1991. At that point the NDP was elected and remained in office until November of 2007, when the Saskatchewan Party was elected.229

If the policies in this area of the education sector were influenced by the ideology of governing parties, we should have seen variation in policy outputs in the three provinces. However, as was shown above, governments in all three provinces in the post-1990 years were guided by the dictates of the accountability paradigm as they went about setting the objectives of their education systems. There is no other explanation for why governing parties as distinct, for example, as the Ontario New Democrats and the Alberta Progressive Conservatives structured their respective education systems in a similar way.

In addition, we should not assume that policies inconsistent with the accountability paradigm would have been implemented if the opposition parties were in office during the second period in the three provinces. As in the first period, in some instances, there is explicit mention by some of opposition parties in the three provinces confirming their

229 It should be noted that after the 1999 election, the NDP won exactly half of the 58 seats in the provincial legislature, thus needing the support of at least one opposition member to maintain the confidence of the legislature. The NDP formed a coalition with the Liberal Party (which had won three seats). The three Liberals were given cabinet positions (one of whom subsequently resigned and sat as an independent). The leader of the party, Jim Melenchuk, became the education minister. When a new Liberal leader was chosen in 2001, he instructed the two Liberals still part of the cabinet to resign. They did not and decided to leave the party. In the next election, in 2003, the two cabinet ministers ran as members of the NDP, but both were defeated. Even though a Liberal member was in such a pivotal position (i.e. minister of education), it should not be assumed that policymaking in the education sector during these years was one that did not reflect the wishes or ideology of the NDP. After all, not only did the two Liberals join the NDP, but they could not have proposed policies that would not have been approved by others in the cabinet, which overwhelmingly was comprised of NDP members.
support for an education system based on the accountability paradigm. For example, the Ontario Liberals, just like the governing NDP and PCs, also stated in the 1990s, while they were in opposition, that they too would be supportive of standardized tests, which is a key feature of the accountability paradigm.\textsuperscript{230} For example, in the provincial legislative, a Liberal member argued that “the question of testing must be a key component of any sound educational policy.”\textsuperscript{231} Also, during a committee hearing on education matters, a Liberal member of the legislature stated that “we'd certainly like to see these kinds of things...Curriculum with clear standards that are meaningful and inclusive... [And] measures to evaluate the achievement of each child that are realistic and reflect the diversity of the children,”\textsuperscript{232} clearly indicating that the party accepted the dictates of the accountability paradigm regarding the need to ensure that performance measurements were an integral component of the province’s education system. More broadly, the then Liberal Opposition Leader, Dalton McGuinty, had this to say when presenting his party’s views regarding education in the provincial legislature in 2002: “We believe our public education system and individual schools must be accountable. We believe that individual schools should be inspected on an ongoing, regular basis, but we also believe that a school should be compared against itself. What we should be looking for is improvement year over year.”\textsuperscript{233}

In Saskatchewan, the main opposition party (the Saskatchewan Party) in their 1999 election platform argued that their vision for the province’s education system would involve

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\textsuperscript{231} Ontario, Legislative Assembly, \textit{Legislative Debates (Hansard)}, 35\textsuperscript{th} Legislative, 3\textsuperscript{rd} Session, April 29, 1993 (Charles Beer), http://hansardindex.ontla.on.ca/hansardeissue/35-3/1011.htm.
\textsuperscript{233} Ontario, Legislative Assembly, \textit{Legislative Debates (Hansard)}, 37\textsuperscript{th} Legislature, 3\textsuperscript{rd} Session, October 8, 2002 (Dalton McGuinty), http://hansardindex.ontla.on.ca/hansardtitle/37-3/039a-41.html.
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“launching a comprehensive K-12 curriculum review to ensure students are graduating with the tools they need to compete nationally and internationally for post-secondary education opportunities and jobs in the 21st century economy.” This is a far cry from the previous period when political parties were stressing the need for schooling to be structured in a manner so that the needs and desires of individual students were being met, as opposed to education being a means to an (economic) end. The influence of the paradigm of the second period on the Party’s position is also clear in a proposal they advanced in 1999, specifically a private member’s bill in the provincial legislature, that was appropriately title the Education Accountability Act, which sought to make school boards more accountable.235

In Alberta, the Liberals, in a 1993 policy paper on education expressed their support of testing and standards in the province’s education system.236 For example, in a debate in the provincial legislature in the early 1990s, when discussing the merits of supposedly flawed testing program for early primary grades, a Liberal Member of the Legislative Assembly did not advocate that the government abandon testing, but instead asked the minister of education how the testing program would improve.237 This indicates that the Liberals were supportive of the idea of the necessity of testing in the province’s education system and sought to improve the province’s testing program. Likewise, the Alberta NDP, in the same debate concerning the testing of early primary grades took the same position; that is, testing

is acceptable, even if a specific aspect of the province’s program requires reform.\textsuperscript{238} Undeniably, there was wide acceptance of the necessity of structuring education based on the accountability paradigm across the political spectrum in all three provinces.

Conclusion

The discussion in the above sections has shown that the dictates of specific education policy paradigms, based on broader policy consensuses, is what helps explain why the provincial governments of the three provinces, during both periods studied, structured the objectives of their education systems as they did. The evidence presented, whether it was government reports, memos, or the words of officials, indicate that they implemented policies based on the dominance of the policy options that were given legitimacy by the paradigms. Governments were limited in terms of the specific policy paths they could pursue. They were not free to consider policy options that were only aligned with their ideological principles; they were faced with a limited set of options—options which were determined by the dominant policy paradigms in each period. Although it was not the focus of this chapter, there is no question (as will be shown in chapter six) that policymakers in the three jurisdictions, and many other in Western countries, were very aware of these policy options based on the discussions they would have with one another at conferences and meetings, and that they also evaluated what other jurisdictions were doing. As such, there was a mechanism in place for the policy options based on specific paradigms to be transmitted so as to be influential in different settings.

\textsuperscript{238} Alberta, Legislative Assembly, \textit{Legislative Debates (Hansard)}, 22\textsuperscript{nd} Legislature, 2\textsuperscript{nd} Session, May 16, 1991 (Stan Woloshyn), http://www.assembly.ab.ca/Documents/isysquery/425bf4c6-0b3b-4086-a46b-8c402b1707bd/133/doc/.
Had it not been for the ideational factors discussed above, we would have seen different policy outputs in the provinces. For example, if political parties had a causal effect, Saskatchewan’s policy regarding the objectives of its education system would have emphasized, more so than those of the other two provinces, a person-centered type of schooling in the first period due to its more progressive governing party at that time, while Ontario and Alberta, due to their more conservative governing parties, would have emphasized such a schooling much less than they actually did. In the second period, had political parties had an impact, we would not have seen Saskatchewan—again due to the progressive governing party in office—follow the dictates of the accountability paradigm to the extent that it did and structure its education system much like Ontario and Alberta did. In the following chapter, we will continue to see the influence of ideational forces on another aspect of the education sector.
Chapter 3

Provincial Spending on Education

In terms of understanding whether the provinces’ approach to education has changed over the past four decades, one would be hard pressed to find more revealing evidence than the amounts provincial governments spend on their education systems. There is no clearer way to gain an insight into the level of commitment to the sector by governments. Generally, spending on education is closely related not only to the economic (i.e. whether the economy is expanding or contracting) and financial (i.e. whether there is a budget surplus or deficit) health of a jurisdiction, but also its demographics, in particular the size of the school age population. However, other variables can also reveal why there are differences in the extent to which provinces commit to the sector, such as the party system of a jurisdiction, or the dominance of a prevailing ideological belief system, which can overwhelm a jurisdiction’s unique qualities (e.g. a progressive policy legacy).

To assess which of these variables is most important, this chapter examines: spending per student as a percentage of GDP per capita, adjusted for inflation; whether major expansions and investments were made by governments to their education systems to allow pre-grade one students to enter the public schools of their provinces; and teacher to student ratios. Regarding the last item, a lower ratio signifies more of a commitment to the sector and, therefore, is another indication of whether one province or party within a particular province was more committed than another to the sector.

The first section below builds on the brief discussion in chapter one regarding the impact of dominant ideas in each period. This will be done so as to indicate their relevance
for the three indicators of financial commitment to the sector outlined in the foregoing paragraph. The second section will examine spending per student for each province for both periods. The subsequent section will focus on the provinces’ policies related to kindergarten. The next section will analyze teacher to student ratios.

As we will see, the political party variable will allow us to understand some of the spending patterns in the provinces. Specifically, we will see that when neoliberal parties were in office in the second period, they spent less than other types of parties. However, in order to gain a full understanding of the general pattern of financial commitment to the sector across the provinces in both periods, and why all three generally reduced and expanded their commitments to the sector at particular times, we need to take into account the dictates of dominant ideas. It is only by taking into account the causal effect of these ideas that we will be able to understand why the provinces’ spending policies evolved in a broadly similar manner. More precisely, it will be shown that there was expansion in all areas in period one, reflecting the Keynesian consensus. In the second period, there were some cutbacks, but no sustained reductions in spending by the most telling measure (spending per student), and even some expansion in the other areas (kindergarten policies and teacher to student ratios). Consequently, although policymakers in all three provinces in the post-1990 years were influenced by the competing dictates of neoliberalism and human capital theory, both of which became important due to globalization, it will be shown that the overall effect was that these two ideational forces offset one another.

The Implications of Dominant Ideas
As discussed in the previous chapters, the Keynesian consensus emphasised state spending, even deficit spending, in order to ensure strong demand in the economy. This meant that states had to have a strong financial commitment to the education sector because “education was perceived after the war [i.e. World War II] as the optimum means for enhancing productivity and economic efficiency.”239 Moreover, the need to ensure strong demand and by extension full employment and high growth rates brought about state “interventions that included…the creation of the welfare state…. [T]his manifested through the rapid expansion of education, health provision, social care and other state-funded institutional provisions and arrangements.”240 *In this context, education became one of the sectors that governments in Western industrialized countries came to see as a priority.* This is why it is not surprising that, as we will see below, there was a steady increase in financial commitments by all three provincial governments throughout the 1970s and a widening scope and breadth for the sector.

As such, it would be incorrect to assume that the governments in the provinces increased spending on education in the 1970s only because of the baby boom, which increased the school age population, and thus the need for more teachers, staff, and schools—all of which cost a great deal of money. That would only explain part of the increase in education spending, and none of the commitment to expand the sector to new types of students. Instead, we need to also take into account the impact of the consensus that was dominant in that decade, which had clear policy prescriptions for the education sector—prescriptions that encouraged both financial and programmatic expansions. During the Keynesianism era, “education was one of the central means by which the ‘quality of capital

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240 Ibid., 62.
and labour’ was to be improved. The generous funding of education institutions in this period had been made on the basis of the belief that knowledge and education were valuable to the state and society for the purposes of defence and for ensuring that all members of the society were able to participate and to contribute.”

Turning to neoliberalism, although it began to emerge during the 1970s, it was not fully entrenched until the 1980s. For example, “the turn to neoliberalism in both Britain (under Thatcher) and the US (under Reagan) [took place] in the 1980s” and even in parts of the developing world, such as Africa, neoliberal policies began to be introduced only in that decade. This is also true in the case of Canada. Neoliberalism began to influence policy making beginning in the early 1980s under the Trudeau Liberals, but it was not until the election of the Progressive Conservative Brian Mulroney government in 1984 that it became the preeminent ideology in this country. As discussed in the introductory chapter, neoliberalism became a key policy consensus as policymakers came to see the need to adjust the manner in which they taxed, spent, regulated, and prioritized policy sectors so as to be able to compete in a much more globalized world economy.

In contrast to the Keynesian consensus, the core dictates of the neoliberal consensus stressed the need for states to reduce taxes, spending, and intervention in the economy so that the private sector could flourish. Generally, the old consensus (i.e. Keynesianism) “came under attack from advocates of” the new consensus. “For the most part, this assault on Keynesianism was launched by organized business, corporate-funded think tanks, and a

242 David Harvey, A Brief History of Neoliberalism (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 9.
243 Ibid., 11.
generation of ‘new right’ politicians.”  Unlike the first period in which deficits and high debts were not key concerns for policymakers, in the second period, because of the dictates of neoliberalism, they became a top priority. As a result, in all sectors, especially education, provincial governments in the second period faced mounting pressure to reduce spending so as to reduce deficits and debt, given the fact that education, in all provinces, is the sector that governments spend most on after healthcare.

However, as mentioned in the introductory chapter, in addition to neoliberalism, globalization paved the way for another idea to guide education policymaking in the second period: human capital theory. To reiterate, this theory essentially argues that although it is commonly believed that the “globalization of economic activity has called into question the future role of the nation-state and how it can secure economic growth and shared prosperity,” this does not mean that the state has no role to play in the modern globalized world. This is because “the quality of a nation’s education and training system is seen to hold the key to future economic prosperity” and it is in this area that states can play an important role by ensuring, for example, that their education systems emphasize relevant skills and that they have the capacity to do so (i.e. have sufficient funding).

Accordingly, as we will see below, although there was some restraint in terms of spending and the introduction of new programs in the second period, there were no severe or dramatic cutbacks put in place. In fact, there was a move towards restoring funding after a period of cutbacks. Therefore, the contradictory policy prescriptions of these two ideational forces (i.e. neoliberalism and human capital theory) led to cutbacks when there had to be

247 Ibid.
cutbacks (e.g. when the provinces were dealing with large budget deficits in the 1990s), but not abandonment of the sector (i.e. not implementing further cuts when fiscal health improved).\textsuperscript{248} For example, after the Klein government in Alberta had dealt with the deficit, it began to make “reinvestments” in certain policy areas, one of which was education. This was done because the government believed that ensuring that students are properly educated was not only important to help them “achieve their individual potential” but also because it would “contribute to Alberta’s prosperity” according to the then education minister. The government wanted to make “people development” a key priority.\textsuperscript{249} Similarly, Saskatchewan also reinvested in education after it balanced its books. The NDP government argued in 1999 that this was necessary “to ensure our young people learn the skills they’ll need to find their place in the new economy.”\textsuperscript{250} These examples show why the “compensation thesis,” discussed in chapter one, is a convincing theory.

Provincial governments knew that they could, and should, not undermine their public education systems if they wanted to succeed in the post-industrial, knowledge-based economy of the late 20\textsuperscript{th} and 21\textsuperscript{st} centuries. Accordingly, this meant that the objectives of education systems had to “be redesigned to take account of the emergence of a global economy driven by technological change and international competition. Because of this

\textsuperscript{248} In some cases, even when there was a deficit, it did not necessarily mean the sector was abandoned by its government. For example, in Ontario, when the Liberals came into office in 2003 and discovered that they had to address a deficit of over $5 billion, the education minister stated that “this is about choices we do have to make. We do have, as you’ve heard, a deficit, but that is not going to be a deficit that stops us in terms of education.” Source: The Canadian Press, “Ontario Education Promise Will Be Kept, Kennedy Vows,” \textit{Kitchener-Waterloo Record}, 16 March 2004, A3.


\textsuperscript{250} Government of Saskatchewan, \textit{Speech from the Throne}, 23\textsuperscript{rd} Legislature, 4\textsuperscript{th} Session, 1999. (Throne speeches can be obtained from www.poltext.org.)
economic transformation, individual and collective economic well-being are now determined to an unprecedented degree by the type and quality of education provided at all levels.”

Although ideational forces are instrumental in allowing us to understand spending in the second period, partisanship, as discussed previously, is also a partially useful explanatory variable. Specifically, we will see that when neoliberal parties came into office in the three provinces in the post-1990 years, they spent less than other parties. However, due to the dictates of the two ideational forces in place during the second period (i.e. neoliberalism and human capital theory), governments, regardless of their ideologies, followed the same spending patterns. As such, even though neoliberal parties in the three provinces spent less than other types of governing parties when cutbacks were made to the sector—when provinces were focused on reducing budget deficits in the 1990s—all parties reduced spending; the New Democratic governments in Saskatchewan and Ontario reduced spending just as the neoliberal Progressive Conservative governments in Ontario and Alberta did, but the former less so than the latter. Similarly, when financial circumstances allowed for more commitments to the sector (i.e. when provincial economies and budgets had improved), all parties increased spending, as dictated by the requirements of human capital theory, not just centrist or left-wing parties; that is, the neoliberal Progressive Conservative Party in Alberta increased spending just like the New Democratic government in Saskatchewan and the Liberal government in Ontario.

Needless to say, this should not be interpreted to mean that in the second period, governments funded schools to the extent that many public school advocates, opposition parties, or school boards would have liked. After all, during that period, many schools were

251 Ronald Manzer, Public Schools and Political Ideas: Canadian Educational Policy in Historical Perspective (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 236.
forced to implement fees for supplies and materials. For example, in the case of Alberta, such fees were even used to cover the cost of essential supplies such as textbooks.\textsuperscript{252}

However, it would not be fair to argue that because a school board, regardless of province, was struggling to maintain programs and balance its budget,\textsuperscript{253} that this contradicts the discussion of the implications of human capital theory stated above. We need to remember that neoliberalism and human capital theory both had an impact on policymaking and had conflicting policy dictates for the education sector—dictates that policymakers had to balance. Neoliberalism, to reiterate, emphasized addressing deficits, limited taxes, low spending, and balanced budgets so as to attract investment; human capital theory, by stressing the importance of a strong education system, necessitated continued financial commitments to the sector. Given these competing agendas, it would be fair to say that the governments of all three provinces did as much as possible to not retrench and undermine their education systems.

Before advancing, it should be noted that this was not the first time in the history of Canadian education that there were arguments concerning the connection between education and the economy. “Early in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, as Canada began to move toward industrialization, political ideology began a corresponding shift toward economic liberalism. As the purpose of education became refocused on meeting the requirements of industrial


\textsuperscript{253} This has been, is, and will continue to be a problem regardless of how much funding provinces provide school boards. Even when there is a government in place that is very committed to the sector and substantially increases funding, such the the McGuinty Liberal government in Ontario, there will still be school boards that will struggle to fund programs and balance their books, which was the case with the Ottawa Public School Board in 2007. Source: Randall Denley, “Schools Victims of Liberal Fantasy,” \textit{Ottawa Citizen}, 22 March 2007.
expansion, access to education became equated with access to jobs.\textsuperscript{254} Hence, we should not assume that arguments and policies based on education as a means of contributing to economic prosperity were a new phenomenon; they have always existed. Rather, the argument being advanced here is that this belief, and policies based on it, after a period in which they were not emphasized as guiding objectives of education systems, gained new currency when globalization re-emerged and was the lens through which policymakers viewed education. In the following sections, data will be presented and analyzed to substantiate the argument of this chapter.

**Financial Commitments to Education**

The most revealing measure of financial commitment to the sector is the extent of funding per student in each province. This data can be somewhat misleading because not all the funding is provided and determined by \textit{provincial} governments, because a portion of it is comprised of education property taxes set by trustees (which are part of the figures that are to be presented below) for certain years that this study covers in Alberta and Ontario,\textsuperscript{255} and for all years in Saskatchewan. (The reason why Saskatchewan differs from the other two provinces in terms of education property taxes will be discussed in detail in chapter four.) Nevertheless, funding per student figures are the best indicators of how the three provinces differed in terms of financial commitment to the sector.\textsuperscript{256} Table 3.1 reports annual spending


\textsuperscript{255} Alberta trustees had the power to determine the education portion of property taxes until 1994; Ontario trustees had such a power until 1997. In both cases, the provincial governments thereafter took control over the setting of local education property tax rates.

\textsuperscript{256} It should be noted that funding for education was not based on simple per pupil grants; such grants only were part of the funding given to school boards. However, it makes sense to present total spending divided by the number of student because it allows for a simple and clear comparison. Moreover, the number and types of grants are always different—not just across provinces, but within provinces as well.
per student for each province as a percentage of gross domestic product per capita, which is the standard manner to report spending on education and referred to as the “financing effort.” This is followed by a table that presents provincial deficit figures as a percentage of gross domestic product. This information is provided because the provinces’ fiscal situation will be an important aspect of the analysis below.

Table 3.1

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<td>Ontario</td>
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<td>Saskatchewan</td>
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### Table 3.2

**Provincial Deficit Figures as a Percentage of Gross Domestic Product**

- **Alberta**
  - 1990: 17%
  - 1991: 18%
  - 1992: 17%
  - 1993: 15%
  - 1994: 12%
  - 1995: 13%
  - 1996: 13%
  - 1997: 13%
  - 1998: 12%
  - 1999: 12%

- **Ontario**
  - 1990: 20%
  - 1991: 22%
  - 1992: 23%
  - 1993: 22%
  - 1994: 21%
  - 1995: 20%
  - 1996: 19%
  - 1997: 18%
  - 1998: 18%
  - 1999: 17%

- **Saskatchewan**
  - 1990: 20%
  - 1991: 21%
  - 1992: 21%
  - 1993: 19%
  - 1994: 18%
  - 1995: 17%
  - 1996: 16%
  - 1997: 17%
  - 1998: 17%
  - 1999: 17%

- **Alberta**
  - 2000: 16%
  - 2001: 16%
  - 2002: 16%
  - 2003: 17%
  - 2004: 18%
  - 2005: 18%
  - 2006: 18%
  - 2007: 19%
  - 2008: 19%

- **Ontario**
  - 2000: 16%
  - 2001: 16%
  - 2002: 16%
  - 2003: 17%
  - 2004: 18%
  - 2005: 18%
  - 2006: 18%
  - 2007: 19%
  - 2008: 19%

- **Saskatchewan**
  - 2000: 16%
  - 2001: 18%
  - 2002: 18%
  - 2003: 18%
  - 2004: 17%
  - 2005: 16%
  - 2006: 17%
  - 2007: 17%
  - 2008: 14%

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259 GDP figures for the years 1970 to 1979 were obtained from: Statistics Canada, *Selected Economic Indicators* (table 384-0035), CANSIM. GDP figures for 1990 to 2008 were obtained from: Statistics Canada, *Gross Domestic Product, Income-Based, Provincial and Territorial* (table 384-0037), CANSIM. Deficit figures for the years 1970 to 1979 were obtained from: Statistics Canada, *Provincial Government Revenue and Expenditure* (table 384-0023), CANSIM. Deficit figures for the years 1990 to 2008 were obtained from: Statistics Canada, *Consolidated Federal, Provincial, Territorial and Local Government Revenue and Expenditures* (table 385-0001), CANSIM. Years in which no percentage figures are provided denote a surplus.
Beginning with the first period, by examining the figures in table 3.1, we see that there are clear differences in the extent to which the provinces were committed to the sector. Except for the first four years (when it was either in the middle position or tied for first or second), Alberta spent less than the others provinces, and significantly so by the end of the decade. As for Saskatchewan, it was the top spender or tied for first in nine of the years. Ontario likewise generally spent more than Alberta (from 1973 onwards) and often spent the same amount as Saskatchewan, especially in the latter half of the decade in which it and Saskatchewan spent relatively the same amount. This is despite the fact that Ontario was governed by a conservative party (the Progressive Conservatives) and Saskatchewan by a social democratic party (the New Democratic Party). This illustrates the fact that partisanship is not a useful explanatory variable.

However, does Alberta’s more conservative political party system—relative to the more progressive political party systems of Saskatchewan and Ontario—explain its spending figures? The answer is no. This is because we need to take into account the wider economic and geopolitical developments in the 1970s. In 1973, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) put in place an oil embargo. This caused the price of oil to rise, which greatly helped non-OPEC oil exporters, of which Alberta was one. Due to the increase in the price of oil, the provincial government’s coffers increased dramatically, as did the province’s gross domestic product. Specifically, the province’s revenues increased from

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<td>Saskatchewan</td>
<td>0.02%</td>
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$1.051 billion in 1970 to $3.358 billion in 1975 to $7.387 billion in 1979.\textsuperscript{260} In terms of the province’s gross domestic product, it increased from $7.097 billion in 1970 to $18.598 billion in 1975, and had increased to $35.480 billion by the end of the decade.\textsuperscript{261} As a result, it would be a mistake to infer from the data in table 3.1 that the government reduced spending on education as there was an increase in the province’s gross domestic product as the 1970s progressed, when the opposite is actually the case; that is, the government dramatically increased spending on education in the oil boom years (1973-1979) as evidenced by looking at the raw per student figures which are outlined in table 3.3.

Table 3.3

| Expenditures Per Student in 2002 Dollars ($)\textsuperscript{262} |
|-------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Ontario | 4003 | 4148 | 4306 | 4156 | 4174 | 4547 | 4999 | 5112 | 5121 | 5126 |
| Saskatchewan | 3135 | 3174 | 3321 | 3391 | 3674 | 4068 | 4491 | 4546 | 4737 | 4721 |
| Alberta | 3869 | 4005 | 4052 | 4148 | 4242 | 4852 | 4785 | 4977 | 5084 | 5146 |

We can see that in all three provinces, including Alberta, there was increasing commitment to the sector. In fact, by looking at the figures in table 3.3, we can see that Alberta spent more per student than Saskatchewan. A counterargument would be that since the province’s gross domestic product was increasing, the government should have contributed even more to the sector. However, this assumes that governments should simply increase spending even if there is no justifiable reason. After all, the province’s education system, in terms of how much each student was being funded, was among the best financed

\textsuperscript{260} Statistics Canada, \textit{Provincial Government Revenue and Expenditure} (table 384-0023), CANSIM.
\textsuperscript{261} Statistics Canada, \textit{Selected Economic Indicators} (table 384-0035), CANSIM.
\textsuperscript{262} The sources of the enrolment and expenditure figures are specified in footnote 258.
in the country. Moreover, as we will see in chapter four, the province’s share of education funding increased from approximately 60% in 1973 to 70% in 1974 (with the remainder being provided by education property taxes). Clearly, Alberta was funding education greatly; an argument could be made that any other increase would have meant spending money just for the sake of spending it, as opposed to achieving a legitimate objective or addressing a particular need.

In terms of how the figures in the table 3.1 correspond to the consensus in place during the first period, a surprising finding emerges. As discussed above, the dominant guiding consensus in the first period, Keynesianism, dictated that governments increase spending so as to stimulate demand. However, if we look at average spending for each period, the result is 15.7% spending per student as a percentage of gross domestic product per capita for all the provinces combined in the first period, compared to 16.5% in the second period when neoliberalism was one of the dominant ideas in place.

But does this mean that the consensus in place during the first period has no causal effect? Not exactly. By examining the fiscal realities in the provinces, we see the effect of the consensus. For example, in Ontario, a report submitted to the cabinet in 1976 by the Management Board and the Ministry of Treasury, the province’s fiscal situation was described as follows: “The difficulties experienced by the Province in limiting and controlling spending growth have resulted in a rapid escalation in Provincial deficit levels. Continuing in-year deterioration in expenditure relative to original budget targets is perceived by the financial community to reflect an inability to exercise responsible financial management.”

263 Archives of Ontario, Files of Tom Wells, Minister of Education, RG 2-151, Box 2, B420260.
However, what is interesting, and says a lot about the consensus of the period, is that when the government did settle on a plan to address the deficit, it did not pursue cutbacks. Instead the government recommended that spending be increased by 10% in 1976-1977, which was consistent with the rate of inflation in those years. The province even had a legitimate reason to make dramatic cuts to the sector because enrolment was declining throughout the decade. In fact, the government set up a commission to study the matter (the Commission on Declining School Enrolments), which made its recommendations in a report released in January of 1979. Furthermore, the ministry even considered what American states did to deal with declining enrolments. As such, there was clearly an issue that the ministry was fully aware of, and was studying and wanting to address, that directly related to expenditures; this would have allowed them to make a strong case to the public to justify education funding cuts. However, the PC government did not decide to save money by making severe cuts to the education system, because the consensus in place at the time did not stress such an approach to government spending decisions. This is obvious if we examine the per student figures from Table 3.3. The figure went from $4003 in 1970 to $4547 in 1975, to $5126 in 1979. There is no doubt that the person-regarding paradigm, based on the Keynesian consensus—which dictated high financial commitment to the sector on the part of policymakers so as to provide a comprehensive education system to meet the individual needs of all students—influenced the Ontario government. For example, appearing before a legislative committee, the then education minister had this to say in 1975 regarding how the government viewed the purpose of education:

264 Ibid.
265 Archives of Ontario, Files of the Assistant Deputy Minister of the Program Division of the Ministry of Education, RG 2-264, B137362.
In looking at spending in education, we also have to talk about the purpose or goal of education.... No matter where you go, I think that from any source two ideas emerge. The first is that there is a social purpose to education. We educate so that people can contribute to society and can live responsibly and in harmony with others. But there is also an individual purpose to education. We educate so that the individual can pursue those goals that have personal significance.... There is much rhetoric surrounding the phrase, 'equal educational opportunity for all.' In Ontario, we are taking the rhetoric seriously. We've taken realistic and effective steps to serve a larger and larger proportion of all age groups, and we have done so through a time of unprecedented population growth. In fact, from 1965 to 1970 we were building classrooms at a rate of five a day. But the challenge could not be met only by enlarging the system. Each increase in the percentage of the age group being served bought a proportionate increase in the range of needs to be met. To make sure that equality of opportunity was not a mockery we had to ensure that the exceptional needs were met. We had to ensure that the variety of programmes matched the variety of pupils' abilities and interests, and that the ways in which schools assisted learning matched the many different ways in which people could learn.266

A similar policy was implemented in Alberta; spending, including grants to school boards, for the fiscal year 1977-1978 was set to increase by 10% compared to the previous fiscal year.267 However, the situation in that province was slightly different since there were no deficits after 1973. Rather, the issue confronting the government in Alberta was high inflation. The government could have reduced spending, including the money it gave to school boards, for a very legitimate reason (i.e. reducing overall public sector spending to combat inflation), but it did not. Instead it wanted to ensure that Alberta’s “hospitals, schools, universities, colleges and municipalities will be able to provide the highest level of services in Canada.”268 Again, this says more about the policy consensus in place at that time, rather than the unique party system of a province. In addition, the Alberta government decided to follow some of the recommendations of the aforementioned Worth Report, which as discussed in the previous chapter advocated a person-regarding education system based on

267 Provincial Archives of Alberta, Records of the Deputy Minister and Assistant Deputy Minister of Instruction and Support Including Records on ACCESS Project, Accreditation, Association, Societies, Boards, and Committees, GR1996.0016, Box 14.
268 Ibid.
the Keynesian consensus. This type of education system, to reiterate, required major financial commitments on the part of governments to ensure the needs of individual students would be met. As the then minister of education argued in 1973 in the legislature during a debate on the budget: “We endorse in general the ten principles set forth in the Worth Report, recognizing however, in many instances especially when we’re dealing with the principles of efficiency and equity in personalization and quality, it’s not always possible to fully implement those principles but they must be strived for.”269

Taking into account the views of opposition parties in the provinces also reveals the dominance of the Keynesian consensus. If such an ideational force was not consequential, we would have seen opposition parties propose policies that were inconsistent with what governing parties were implementing based on the dictates of the consensus. Instead, in each province, opposition parties were promising to implement similar policies. For example, the Ontario Liberals,270 the Saskatchewan Liberals271 and Tories,272 and the Alberta NDP273 in their 1971 election platforms all promised to increase provincial funding for education. Also, the Alberta Social Credit Party signaled that it too would have spent more on education than the governing Tories. For example, during a debate on the governing Progressive Conservative Party’s first budget in 1972, a member of the Social Credit Party had this to say: “Children in areas and categories of less than equal opportunity need and deserve the best of day care, pre-school and school facilities, the best, not the worst. They need the actions of a vigorous government, not just empty words of a Throne Speech or a Bill of

271 Liberal Party of Saskatchewan, The Liberal Program, 1971, no page numbers provided.
Rights, but evidence in the budget that they will receive equal rights through equal opportunity."274 Clearly, the Social Credit Party felt that the Tories were not planning to spend enough on education to ensure that all of the province’s students were receiving an adequate education.

Such evidence is significant because it implies that these parties believed, consistent with the dictates of the Keynesian consensus, that governments should continually increase financial support for essential public services such as education, even if their province’s fiscal and economic situation were not good, which was true for all provinces at one time or another in the 1970s. Also, the fact that these parties wanted to increase the provincial share of funding for education, as opposed to maintaining existing levels and leaving it to individual school boards to increase funding via education property taxes, signifies the importance these parties placed on ensuring that high quality and comprehensive education was offered to all students in all areas of the province. This is because the greater share of education funding that is comprised of revenue from education property taxes, the greater will be inequalities and differences in program and service quality across school boards. This is because boards in areas with low property values cannot raise the necessary funds to offer the same type of education as boards in areas with high property values.

In addition, and as discussed in chapter two, the Ontario NDP275 in their 1971 election platform and the Alberta Liberals276 in their 1975 platform argued that education

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274 Alberta, Legislative Assembly, Legislative Debates (Hansard), 17th Legislature, 1st Session, March 22, 1972 (Roy Wilson), http://www.assembly.ab.ca/Documents/sysquery/76acb694-6e1c-4622-b4ab-597243a598c7/13/doc/.

275 As quoted in chapter two, the party stated: “Not only must education be available to all, but the process of educating must be an inspiring, liberating experience developing the minds, the creative abilities, and the critical awareness of the members of the community. Education must be seen as more than mere economic investment. It has a responsibility to improve the quality of life and to relate our lives to a world-wide civilization…. The concept that children should pursue a continuous path from kindergarten to the end of their post-secondary education needs to be re-examined…. Rigid grading systems and mark-conscious report cards
systems should be structured based on the person-regarding paradigm, which is reflective of the Keynesian consensus. This implies that if they were in office, they too would have funded education to the same or greater extent than the governing Ontario Tories and Alberta Tories, respectively. It is normal for opposition parties to propose alternative policies to those implemented by governing parties. However, in the case of education in the 1970s, all parties were swayed by the same ideational winds.

Before advancing, an obvious counterargument should be addressed: could the baby boom explain the financial commitment to the sector by various governments in the three provinces in the 1970s (i.e. the supposed increase in the number of students, due to high birth rates in the post-World War II years, entering the provincial education systems) as opposed to the Keynesian consensus? The answer is no for one main reason: the number of students, which will be outlined in detail below in the third section of this chapter, was virtually the same in both periods that are the focus of this study in Ontario (i.e. in the 1970s, there were not more students in the province’s education system compared to the second period) and actually increased in Alberta by an average of over 100,000 students in the post-1990 years compared with the 1970s. Enrolments only decreased in Saskatchewan in the second period relative to the first period. As such, arguments based on demographics as the reason behind spending commitments to the sector in the first period would only be true if there were substantially more student in all provinces in the first period than in the second period. This type of argument may partially apply to Saskatchewan, though it is unlikely, but it definitely

must be replaced by a freer atmosphere in which the child is more able to follow his own inclinations with closer personal attention from the teacher.” Source: New Democratic Party Ontario, Program for Ontario, 1971, 7-8.

270 As quoted in chapter two, the party stated: “A Liberal government would try to change the orientation of our whole education system from one that educates for a job and money making ability under the impression that the youth of our society are goal oriented in a financial sense rather than wanting to play a role in cooperative framework to make this a better land in which to live.” Source: Liberal Party of Alberta, Policy Statements, 1975, 12.
does not apply to Ontario and Alberta. A more plausible explanation is the one offered above regarding the influence of the Keynesian consensus since it applies to all three provinces.

Turning to the second period, Ontario and Saskatchewan spent more than Alberta. This is confirmed even if we look at the raw per student figures for the second period, which are provided in table 3.4, and show that Alberta spent less than the other two provinces in 10 of the years.

Table 3.4

<p>| Expenditures Per Student in 2002 Dollars ($) |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>------------------</th>
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<th>------------------</th>
<th>------------------</th>
<th>------------------</th>
<th>------------------</th>
<th>------------------</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ontario</td>
<td>7338</td>
<td>7572</td>
<td>7683</td>
<td>7459</td>
<td>7546</td>
<td>7190</td>
<td>7050</td>
<td>6869</td>
<td>6953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saskatchewan</td>
<td>5641</td>
<td>5579</td>
<td>5496</td>
<td>5372</td>
<td>5352</td>
<td>5323</td>
<td>5314</td>
<td>5570</td>
<td>5601</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alberta</td>
<td>6059</td>
<td>6112</td>
<td>6279</td>
<td>6366</td>
<td>6305</td>
<td>5935</td>
<td>5776</td>
<td>5584</td>
<td>5591</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although Saskatchewan and Ontario spent more than Alberta in the post-1990 years, and in the case of Ontario spending was higher when the left-wing New Democratic Party and centrist Liberal Party were in office, compared to when the neoliberal Progressive Conservative Party was in office, we nevertheless should not assume that the partisanship variable tells the whole story. This is because all three provinces made cutbacks in the 1990s when budget deficits became a top priority. This is perfectly illustrated if we look at the

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277 The sources of the enrolment and expenditure figures are specified in footnote 258.
figures from 1992 to 1995 in tables 3.1 and 3.4—a period in which significant reductions were made in all three provinces even though in two (Saskatchewan and Ontario), New Democratic Parties were in office. For example, if we look at table 3.1, we see that in Ontario, spending decreased from 23% (spending per student as a percentage of gross domestic product per capita) in 1992 to 20% in 1995 (the last year in which the NDP was in office), eventually decreasing to 16% by 2000 when the Tories were in office. In terms of total expenditures, table 3.4 shows that spending per student declined from a high of $7683 in 1992 to $6698 in 2000. In Saskatchewan, a similar picture emerges. Spending decreased from 21% (spending per student as a percentage of gross domestic product per capita) in 1992 to 18% in 1994 (the last year in which there was a deficit in the 1990s). Total expenditures per student was $5496 in 1992, but declined to $5352 in 1994.

However, as argued above, neoliberal parties, in particular the Ontario and Alberta Tories, cut spending more dramatically. For example, although the Ontario New Democrats were reducing spending as their term progressed and the province’s fiscal situation continued to deteriorate, they maintained spending as a percentage of gross domestic product above 20% and above $7000 per student. However, when the Tories came into office, those figures declined well below 20% and $7000, respectively, and only began to increase when Liberals came into office in 2003.

In the case of Alberta, although it was governed by the same neoliberal party throughout the second period, we can see the effect of partisanship if we compare its spending patterns with that of Saskatchewan, which was governed by a social democratic party for the vast majority of the second period. As already stated, all governments reduced spending in the early 1990s as a means of addressing budget deficits. Yet, examining the
spending per student figures in table 3.3 reveals that ideologically distinct parties in the two neighbouring provinces differed in the extent to which they reduced spending. Table 3.2 shows that both provinces had budget deficits between 1990 to 1994. The average deficit as a percentage of gross domestic product figures for Saskatchewan during that period was 2.56%; for Alberta it was 2.68%. As such, both provinces had similar budget deficit challenges. However, during those years and in the subsequent years when governments were trying to maintain budget surpluses, spending per student was reduced from a high of $5641 in 1990 to $5323 in 1996 in Saskatchewan. This represents a reduction of 5.8%. In Alberta, spending per student declined from a high of $6366 in 1993 to $5584 in 1997, which represents a reduction of 12.3%. Clearly, although both provincial governments sought to reduce education spending so as to tackle their budget deficits, the neoliberal Tories in Alberta reduced spending far more than the social democratic New Democrats in Saskatchewan.

In terms of the influence of the dictates of neoliberalism, there is no doubt that governments in all three provinces were influenced by such dictates in the 1990s as they made decisions regarding expenditures. Specifically, policymakers became convinced by its dictate that reducing overall spending, including spending on education, which is the second highest expenditure for provinces, was imperative as a means of addressing high budget deficits. The fact that governments were forced to address deficits, as opposed to maintaining or increasing spending levels, is confirmed if we evaluate how politicians in all three provinces—regardless of political stripe—in the 1990s, when deficits were high, justified their policies. For example, a former NDP official from Ontario stated that when they were in office, the fact that there was a major deficit and that they had to address it meant that some
programs that they wanted to implement—such as funding for education only from provincial revenues as opposed to also relying on property taxes—had to be abandoned. They “could not do it right then” because addressing the deficit by reducing spending and not expanding programs was the key priority.\(^{278}\)

There are other obvious examples of the Ontario NDP government having to prioritize reducing the deficit as opposed to emphasizing other policy goals. We only need to consider that government’s Social Contract and the fact that the government put in place that cost-cutting program because they got the message from proponents of neoliberalism that such priority was essential. For example, in a speech prior to the implementation of the Social Contract, the NDP Premier, Bob Rae, stressed to a group of University of Toronto students, as reported in the media at that time, the importance of “the need to control the deficit and to make government more efficient. The premier had just come back from Davos, Switzerland, where he had attended meetings of the World Economic Forum. There, he told his student audience, he had heard international business leaders despair over government deficits and inefficiencies in Europe.”\(^{279}\)

When the Tories replaced the New Democrats in 1995, they also continued to prioritize cutting the deficit; in fact, their whole agenda for their first term was centred around this issue. Consistent with the dictates of neoliberalism, they saw the solution to the problem as addressing a “spending crisis”\(^ {280}\) (i.e. reducing government spending) as opposed to contemplating the raising of taxes to reduce the deficit. In fact, the government reduced income taxes by 30% while it was reducing the deficit.

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278 Personal interview, November 13\(^{th}\), 2013.
Similarly, the Saskatchewan NDP, which was in office in the 1990s, was also forced to tackle its deficit and make it a top priority above all else. This is because the government was getting the message from investors that they would no longer help finance its deficits. As the then finance minister stated in 1992, “credit agencies have ‘expressed concern about the capacity of the province to service its growing debt. We recognized that concern and that's why we feel we have to bring it under control.’”\textsuperscript{281} The province’s premier was also concerned about this, especially since “the number of institutions willing to handle Saskatchewan bonds had dropped from 150 to 25” in the span of ten years.\textsuperscript{282} Clearly, as in Ontario, key proponents of the neoliberal consensus were telling policymakers in Saskatchewan that they had to address their deficit, which the province went on to do.

Alberta also implemented policies consistent with the dictates of neoliberalism. This was done because it believed that addressing the deficit and lowering taxes, key tenets of neoliberalism, were essential because putting in place such policies was paramount in order to ensure that investors found the province an attractive place to do business.\textsuperscript{283} They had no choice, according to their argument, but to follow these dictates. In fact, they argued that even without a deficit, they would have to implement fiscal policies that reflected the dictates of neoliberalism. Without using this term, they nevertheless made such an argument in their 1994 budget: “There are also reasons beyond deficit reduction that make it necessary for us to restructure our spending. The world around us is changing too rapidly for governments to

\textsuperscript{282} Martell, 115.
keep on as they have in the past.”  The government was clearly arguing that it was no longer acceptable for governments to spend freely without sound justifications in the neoliberal era; this is connected with the discussion in the previous chapter regarding the need to introduce standardized tests in the second period as a means of ensuring that the education system was producing results so as to justify the high costs.

By taking into account the position of opposition parties, we can also see the influence of neoliberalism in shaping the views of political actors regarding how to approach spending decisions, including how to fund education. We have already seen how the Ontario NDP and Tories were guided by the dictates of neoliberalism in the 1990s while in office. But the Liberals, who were in opposition during the decade also advanced policies which signified that they too would have implemented policies similar to their counterparts, because they were also influenced by neoliberalism. For example, in their 1995 election platform, they did not mention that they would increase financial support for education. Instead, not only did they argue the need for the province to rely on standardized tests, which as discussed in chapter two is consistent with the accountability paradigm, and which is based on neoliberal dictates, but they also argued that they would allocate less money for education, although they argued that the cuts would be geared towards reducing “administration.”

In Alberta, the NDP argued in its 1993 platform that reducing spending by cutting “waste and unnecessary spending” was required because “with a $3 billion deficit and a $20 billion debt, all Albertans must share in the measures necessary to balance the budget.” In the section of the platform dedicated to education, they unsurprisingly did not propose increasing

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money for education, only saying they would study education financing.\textsuperscript{286} This indicates that the party would have most likely implemented cuts to education, just like the governing Tories, not to mention their fellow party members in Ontario and Saskatchewan. The Alberta Liberals also advanced a similar position in a 1994 policy paper on education. Indicating the influence of the neoliberal consensus, the paper argued that the Party would not abandon education, but “we recognize the fiscal constraints that currently bind us…. [Therefore] we will scrutinize every expenditure through a tough auditing process that ensures taxpayers are getting value for their money.”\textsuperscript{287} Implicitly, like the New Democrats, the Liberals were indicating that they too might reduce spending on education.

Similarly, in Saskatchewan, the three main opposition parties were also influenced by the dictates of neoliberalism, and thus, they too would have focused on addressing the province’s budget deficit by reducing spending, like the governing New Democratic Party. We know this because, for example, in the introduction to their 1995 election platform, the Liberal Party made it clear what their main focus would be if elected into office: “This Liberal Action Plan details the problems and outlines Liberal solutions. Our goal is simple. A Liberal Government will restore health to Saskatchewan. Fiscal health and economic well-being will be restored by taking a tough approach to reducing government spending, lowering taxes and the Provincial debt.”\textsuperscript{288} Later on in the document, they criticized the NDP government for not reducing the size of government,\textsuperscript{289} and as part of their four point Action Plan, they listed “trimming the fat from government”\textsuperscript{290} as one of their main objectives, thus

\textsuperscript{289} Ibid., 8.
\textsuperscript{290} Ibid., 11.
leaving no doubts that they would have reduced spending if they were in office. The Progressive Conservative Party also signaled that it too would have put in place policies consistent with neoliberalism’s dictates. In their 1995 election platform, the party stated that it would reduce government spending by 5%. Similarly, the Saskatchewan Party, which became the province’s main opposition party soon after it was created in 1997, presented a governing agenda that made it clear that it was also influenced by neoliberalism. In their 2003 election platform, they criticized the NDP government for not putting the province’s fiscal house in order and pledged that if elected, they would cut “waste and mismanagement in government” by undertaking a “efficiency review” across all government departments, boards, agencies, commissions, and Crown Corporations. Clearly, all three opposition parties would have reduced spending on education. This is because all three pledged to reduce spending as a means of addressing budget deficits, which could only be done by including the second highest cost-driver (i.e. education spending) as part of spending reductions.

Just as all provinces reduced education spending so as to address budget deficits, they all increased spending beginning in the late 1990s and early 2000s as budget deficits were reduced or eliminated, even though two (Alberta and Ontario) were governed by neoliberal parties, while the third was governed by a social democratic party. For example, expenditures per student in Alberta increased from $6305 in 1994 (the last year in which there was a deficit in the second period in that province) to $8009 in 2008. The spending per student as a percentage of gross domestic product per capita figures for Alberta during these years show a decline from 16% in 1994 to 11% in 2008. However, similar to the first period and as
discussed above, the province prospered as a result of an oil boom, resulting in a high gross domestic product figure, making it appear that there was a decrease in spending on education, when there was an increase, but not enough to match the dramatic increase in the gross domestic product for the province. Specifically, the province’s gross domestic product increased from $75.284 billion in 1990 to $146.939 billion in 2000 to $296.072 billion by 2008.\(^2\)

In Ontario, expenditures per student increased from $6681 in 1999 (the last year in which there was a deficit for a period of few years, and much more manageable budget deficits as a percentage of gross domestic product when the province began to have deficits again in 2002) to $8004 in 2008. The spending per student as a percentage of gross domestic product per capita increased from 17% in 1999 to 19% in 2008. In Saskatchewan, expenditures per student increased from $5352 in 1994 (the last year in which there was a deficit for a period of few years, and much more manageable budget deficits as a percentage of gross domestic product when the province began to have deficits again in 2000) to $8351 in 2008. The spending per student as a percentage of gross domestic product per capita figures for Saskatchewan during these years show a decline from 18% in 1994 to 14% in 2008. However, as in Alberta, the province prospered due to an oil boom, resulting in a high gross domestic product figure, making it appear that there was a decrease in spending on education.

It should be noted that although there were deficits in the post-1990 years in two of the three provinces (Ontario and Saskatchewan), there were qualitative and quantitative differences between the deficits of the pre- and post-2000 years. Qualitatively, in the 1990s,

\[2\] Statistics Canada, *Gross Domestic Product, Income-Based, Provincial and Territorial* (table 384-0037), CANSIM.
there was a crisis atmosphere surrounding budget deficits. Famously, *The Wall Street Journal* published an editorial in early 1995 and argued Canada had become “an honorary member of the Third World” due to the high deficits and debt in the country. Contrary to popular belief, the editorial was not simply about the poor fiscal situation at the federal level; it also noted the “debt trap” at the provincial level. Although the fiscal situation at both levels had been poor for many years before the editorial was published, it nevertheless made headlines in Canada and served as a wake-up call. One reason why the Journal possibly felt that such an editorial was needed, and why the arguments advanced in it were so readily accepted and repeated, is because government finances in the provinces and Ottawa were reaching a tipping point; the trajectory of government finances had to change if the eleven jurisdictions were to avoid insolvency. Between the time the editorial was published and the new millennium, governments, including Ontario’s and Saskatchewan’s, did change the trajectory. As a result, when those provinces had deficits in the new millennium, there was no longer a crisis atmosphere; overall deficit and debt levels as percentage of gross domestic product were decreasing and both governments had decreased spending. Quantitatively, if we examine the average deficits of Ontario and Saskatchewan in the 1990s with those of the post-2000 years, it is clear that the latter were minor and manageable. In Ontario, the average deficits were 2.24% as a percentage of gross domestic product in the 1990s; in the new millennium, they were 0.54%. In Saskatchewan, the numbers were 2.56% and 0.96%, respectively. These numbers illustrate the fact that governments in both provinces were able to spend on priority areas (e.g. education) without making across the board cuts as in the 1990s; both governments were able to use a scalpel as opposed to a sledgehammer to eliminate red ink.

But in order to truly understand why there was a restoration of funding for education to some extent after budget deficits were addressed in the 1990s, as opposed to cuts being maintained or increased year after year (i.e. why education was one of the policy areas that was prioritized by governments, even by those that had small deficits in the 2000s), we need to look to the other ideational force that was consequential in the second period: human capital theory. As discussed above, the dictates of this theory caused governments, beginning in the 1980s, to view their education systems as a vital component of ensuring economic prosperity. This resulted in governments remaining committed to the sector as opposed to abandoning it in order to simply follow the dictates of neoliberalism as was the case in other sectors (e.g. social assistance). As such, human capital theory, and its policy dictates concerning the need for states to have policies to ensure economic competitiveness and prosperity by having strong education systems, was a key contributing factor in accounting for why provinces did not undermine the sector as they did other sectors.\textsuperscript{295} There is no doubt that policymakers in the provinces were influenced by the dictates of human capital theory as they sought to restore funding to their education systems. For example, in Alberta, an influential ministry of education report from 1991, \textit{Vision for the Nineties: A Plan of Action} argued that “education is the key to our people being full partners in shaping a global future…. Business and community leaders, parents, and people from all walks of life are saying that if we want to be able to compete in the world of the future, we need to lay that

\textsuperscript{295} Needless to say, the support of education among the middle classes and the fact that there were strong unions, specifically teachers’ unions, fighting for government commitment to the sector also helps explain why governments in the second period did not undermine this particular sector to the same extent as other sectors.
groundwork now. And that groundwork comes from an education system which is second to none."

Justifications such as this (i.e. the connection between a strong education system and being able to prosper in a globalized, knowledge-based economy of the 21st century) were also offered by the Ontario PC Party, such as in their 1995 election platform regarding their vision for the education sector: “In today's world, a top-quality education is not a luxury—it's an absolute necessity. We have to make sure that our education system gives students the skills and knowledge they will need to lead fulfilling lives and to compete and win in a competitive global economy.”

Similarly, the justification for the costliest new policy in any of the three provinces in the second period—full day kindergarten in Ontario—was worded as follows by the then Liberal premier of the province, who spearheaded the initiative: “In a highly competitive, global knowledge-based economy, it’s absolutely essential that we invest in the younger generation to ensure that we build a powerful workforce that can compete and win against the best anywhere on this planet.”

It should not be assumed that such a belief regarding the need to use education as just a means of satisfying the needs of the knowledge-based economy is something that only centrist or right-wing politicians and parties came to accept. Even politicians on the left accepted this perspective. For example, the Saskatchewan NDP, in its throne speech to begin the second session of the twenty-fourth legislature in 2001, had this to say regarding the

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knowledge-based economy and its relation to education: “The key to success for our young people in the knowledge-based economy is good education and work training, and these are priorities for this government.”

We can also see the popularity of human capital theory—and the fact that it is not just these governing parties that followed its dictates—by examining the positions of opposition parties in the three provinces. For example, in their 2003 election platform, the Ontario NDP indicated that they accepted the requirements of human capital theory—meaning viewing education as a means to an economic end—by not advocating structuring an education system that only sought to satisfy the needs of students. Instead, they argued that if elected, they would “work closely with employer groups and trade unions to create school-based programs that clearly respond to the needs of today’s knowledge-based society.”

Similarly, in Saskatchewan, the Liberals’ 1995 election platform signalled that they too viewed the importance of structuring the province’s education system in a manner that would help the economy: “Education and training are essential in an economy and society in rapid change. The training systems of the universities, colleges and schools are not keeping pace with the changes…. The ties between the economy, society, education, government and business are too distant. Where they do exist, they are rigid and often only work through government as an intermediary. A Liberal government has an interest in seeing the education and labour training markets work better.” Likewise, the Progressive Conservative Party, in its 1995 election platform, indicated that it too was influenced by human capital theory in terms of how it viewed the role and objective of education. They pledged to “reform the

education system” so as to “better prepare our young people for the changing demands of the job market....”\textsuperscript{302} The Saskatchewan Party, also advanced a position regarding the province’s education system consistent with the dictates of human capital theory. For example, in their 1999 election platform they argued that they would reform the province’s curriculum so that students were learning the skills needed to “compete nationally and internationally for post-secondary education opportunities and jobs in the 21\textsuperscript{st} century economy.”\textsuperscript{303}

In Alberta, the two main opposition parties also put forth positions indicating that they too would be guided by the dictates of human capital theory. The Liberals, in their 2001 platform argued that “a strong public education system is central to Alberta's success. Excellence in education shapes the future of our province and gives our young people the tools they need to strengthen our society and our economy. It provides a place for life-long learning so our workforce remains innovative and competitive in the global economy.”\textsuperscript{304} Similarly, the NDP, in its 1993 platform argued that “education is our passport to the world economy. If we don't educate and retrain Albertans to keep up with changing times, we are courting disaster.”\textsuperscript{305}

Overall, we can see that in the second period, the competing dictates of the ideas associated with globalization—neoliberalism and human-capital theory— influenced policymakers importantly, but in two distinct phases of this period. Each affected the thinking and worldview of politicians of various ideological backgrounds, the former predominating during the high-deficit years of the 1990s, the latter in the subsequent years of relative budgetary balance. The result was that the education sectors of the provinces did not

\textsuperscript{302} Progressive Conservative Party of Saskatchewan, \textit{Focus on Fairness}, 1995, no page numbers provided.  
\textsuperscript{304} Liberal Party of Alberta, \textit{Power to People}, 2001, no page numbers provided.  
suffer the same fate—retrenchment—as other policy sectors (e.g. social assistance) in which neoliberalism was the only ideational influence on policymakers in the post-1990 years.

**Programmatic Commitments to Education**

In a chapter on spending on education by provincial governments, programmatic commitments have to also be analyzed because expansions to an education system inevitably require additional funding. The focus will be on one type of expansion: funding for kindergarten. It is justifiable to focus on this type of expansion because it was an area of education that gained much attention in the post-World War II years as one that public education should prioritize. Part of the reason for this was what was happening in the United States. Specifically,

the American ‘War on Poverty’ in the middle sixties threw up an enormous number of experiments designed to help black and other disadvantaged children succeed at school by offering ‘head-start’ programs aimed at three- and four-year-olds. The interest in ‘compensatory education’ quickly spilled over into Canada. Academic research, which grew in volume throughout the 1960s and 1970s, reaffirmed the critical importance of the pre-school years in establishing learning-readiness, not just for the disadvantaged but for all children. Middle-class parents responded with enthusiasm, sending their children to Montessori schools, organizing co-operative nursery schools, or making use of those established by other private or charitable agencies.³⁰⁶

Even government appointed commissions in Canada argued the case for kindergarten funding. For example, the Royal Commission on Education in Ontario (known as the Hope Commission), in its final report in 1950 declared that “there can be no doubt that kindergarten training serves a most useful purpose in supplementing home training, in assisting the child in the transition from home to school life, and that it helps progress and

achievement through the regular grades. We are convinced of the value of kindergarten programs for 5-year-old children, and believe that they should be more generally available.” Similarly, Alberta’s Royal Commission on Education (known as the Cameron Commission) “indicated that the absence of kindergartens is a serious omission of educational effort and that a serious study would be required to devise ways of incorporating kindergartens as an integral part of the public school system.” Clearly, there was enthusiasm and support for pre-grade one education in the years preceding 1970, which is why analyzing the provinces’ policies can reveal whether they responded to the calls to implement or expand their kindergarten programs. In the remainder of this section, the kindergarten policies of each province for both periods will be discussed. Before advancing, it should be noted that the focus of this section will be on official provincial government policies and funding commitments as opposed to what individual school boards did. This is an important distinction because boards have sometimes funded a program (e.g. full-day kindergarten) even though the program was not the policy at the provincial level and provincial grants were not allocated for the program.

Beginning with Ontario, kindergarten has had a long history in that province. The first formal policy relating to kindergarten was established in “the Public School Act, 1885, [which] allowed school boards to make provisions for children who were five years old [i.e.

308 Provincial Archives of Alberta, Private Files of Education Minister Hon. Louis Hyndman, PR1979.0067, Box 21, File: 226.
309 It is also better to examine policies related to kindergarten, as opposed to other areas of the sector that began to get attention in the post-World War II years, such as special education, because unlike kindergarten, a program like special education often did/does involve more than one ministry (e.g. the ministry of health or ministry of social services [or its equivalent] of a given provinces). This means that it would be hard to truly get a sense of how much provinces were committed to such a program by just looking at the amount of funding provided by (and the policies of) their ministries of education. As such, this would not allow us to accurately get a sense of whether such funding levels/policies reveal anything about the party system of a province or the extent to which variables like ideational forces affected governments’ decisions regarding such programs.
senior kindergarten]. In 1887, the Act was amended to recognize the organization of kindergarten programs, the training of teachers and a system of grants. The decision whether to establish kindergartens was left to the discretion of school boards.”310 Over time, more and more school boards established kindergarten programs so that “by the late 1960s, half-day kindergarten for five-year-olds was well established throughout urban Ontario, and school consolidation made it accessible to rural children as well: by the mid-seventies, kindergarten enrolments virtually mirrored those in grade 1.”311 What made the expansion of kindergarten possible was that the province provided generous funding: “essentially, the funding arrangement for kindergarten and for junior kindergarten [was] the same as that applicable to other elementary school grades in Ontario. Where these programs…operated for pupils to attend on a half-day basis, as is usually the case, the per pupil data in the formula for operating costs and grants are reduced accordingly.”312 Compared to other provinces, Ontario stood out in the first period—at that time governed by the Progressive Conservative Party—because it was “the only province which mentions junior kindergartens in its school legislation.”313 This is significant because it meant that the government funded an extra grade level more than any other province.

Furthermore, the province had internal discussions regarding whether it should make pre-grade one more comprehensive by establishing full-day kindergarten. As early as 1974, the government studied the matter.314 The government’s policy was that if a board did establish full-day kindergarten, the province would fund it. However, by 1978 the officials in

310 Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario, 5.
311 Gidney, 155.
312 The Saskatchewan Archives, Department of Education: Program Services Branch, R-1624, File: 2.4 (1972—Kindergarten).
313 Ibid.
314 Archives of Ontario, Files of the Assistant Deputy Minister of the Education Administration Division RG 2-154, B162094, File: H.K. Fisher 1978 Miscellaneous Correspondence.
the ministry, such as the deputy minister, G. H. Waldrum, “expressed…concern about what may have developed into a mass movement into expanded kindergarten programs by some boards.” In a May 30th, 1978 ministry management committee meeting, “he reiterated the fact that there was no money in [that] year’s planning to fund new or expanded programs, so a policy position was taken that half-time funding [i.e. half-day funding] would stand regardless of program developments that might take place. Those presently in place, however, would be grandfathered and some exceptions may be possible for a limited number of pupils.”

In the post-1990 years, the main issue surrounding kindergarten in Ontario continued to be whether the province would fund full-day programs. In 1989, the Liberal government in its Throne Speech stated that it looked forward, as a ‘long-term vision,’ to the day when the government could make ‘full-day senior and junior kindergarten’ available to all four- and five-year-olds. But as a ‘first step’ it announced that it would require all school boards to expand their existing senior and junior kindergarten programs. Attendance would remain voluntary but the government would ensure that boards ‘offer half-day junior kindergarten for four-year-olds as well as half-day senior kindergarten for five-year-olds.’ Both initiatives were to be implemented over the following five years. As well, the province would ‘provide funding for school boards to offer full day senior kindergarten programs, where classroom space permits.’

The genesis of this policy was a 1985 report, *Report of the Early Primary Education Project*, commissioned by the previous Progressive Conservative government. When the NDP came into office in 1990, it decided to follow through on the policy and even increased funding for it. The government decided that it would provide “100 per cent funding for junior

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315 Archives of Ontario, Files of the Assistant Deputy Minister of the Program Division of the Ministry of Education, RG 2-264, B216209, File: Management Committee 1977-78 Minutes.
316 Gidney, 205-206.
317 Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario, 7.
kindergarten students, regardless of school boards’ level of provincial grants. In 1994, the government also established a $35 million capital fund to assist boards to build or renovate junior kindergarten classrooms. School boards were given until September 1997 to fully implement the kindergarten policy. In February 1995, the policy regarding kindergartens was updated by the New Democratic government. They announced that they would remove the fifth year of high school so as “to expand junior and senior kindergarten to full days with day care before and after school” and that the program would be phased in over five years. The government, however, “rejected an earlier plan to begin schooling for three-year-olds [which was recommended by the Royal Commission on Learning]…. The idea was facing growing public opposition and concerns about costs.”

However, there was a provincial election in June of 1995 and the neoliberal Progressive Conservatives won. In November of that year, as part of a broader policy of reducing funding for education as means of addressing a budget deficit, the government announced that it would cut grants for junior kindergarten by $100 million, which represented a reduction of about 50 per cent. In early 1996, the government announced cancellation of funding for capital projects for junior kindergarten—funding which totalled $42.1 million. Also, in March of 1996, the government introduced Bill 34, the Education Amendment Act, 1996, which among other policies, indicated that school boards would no longer be required to offer junior kindergarten. The reason for the funding cuts for kindergarten had a lot to do with the province’s fiscal situation (i.e. the new Tory government coming into office and having to deal with a large budget deficit). As explained

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318 Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario, 7.
320 Ibid.
321 Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario, 7-8.
by the minister of education in response to a petition by the member for Elgin (Peter North) in April of 1996, “the government examined Junior Kindergarten in relation to its commitment to fiscal responsibility and the need to preserve core educational programs.”

However, junior kindergarten did not cease to exist in the province. Although “25 of the 78 public school boards cancelled the program for the 1996-97 school year” when the government announced the funding cuts, many boards reinstated the program when school boards were amalgamated in 1998-1999, which often resulted in those that had cancelled it to be merged with boards that had retained it. This meant that “in 1998-99, all but four of the 31 new public district school boards offered junior kindergarten. In 2000-01, the number…dropped to three. By September 2001, there [was]…only one board in the province that [did] not offer the program.” As for senior kindergarten, in March 1998 the government announced that although it would continue to fund half-day programs, it would only fund full-day programs, attended by 10% of students, up to the 1998-1999 school year.

This was the status of junior and senior kindergarten in the province until 2007, when the Liberal government, running for re-election, promised that if re-elected it would implement full-day junior and senior kindergarten. It was re-elected and began to fund the programs in September of 2010 and was fully rolled out by September of 2014.

Turning to Saskatchewan, the province did not fund kindergartens at the start of the first period. The policy was that school boards could establish such programs and charge fees

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322 Archives of Ontario, Deputy Minister of Education Files, RG 2-28, B190070, File: 12.
323 Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario, 8
324 Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario, 8.
325 Gidney, 251.
to cover their costs.326 In October of 1971, the New Democratic government, having been elected in June of that year, “appointed a committee to examine the feasibility of establishing publicly [sic] supported kindergartens in Saskatchewan….The Minister’s Committee on Kindergarten Education, in its Report of June 1972, recommended: ‘That the Department of Education initiate a number of pilot projects during the school year 1972-73 in order to provide information on the operation of kindergartens.’ The Minister of Education authorized the establishment of six pilot projects in August, 1972.”327

Around the same time, in June 1972, the regulations of the *Foundation Grants Act* were amended and from then the policy became as follows: “‘the Minister may recognize such other expenditures as may from time to time be deemed appropriate’: and the sum of $253 will be the recognized expenditure for each kindergarten pupil enrolled in those school systems where kindergarten programs have been recognized. (The province is not at this time prepared to meet the cost of kindergarten classes in those systems which in preceding years have not had them.)”328 As such, the province decided that it would begin giving grants to each school board that had established kindergartens prior to June 1972.

The kindergarten pilot projects were essential according to ministry officials before they could decide whether to recommend to the cabinet that kindergarten programs should be funded.329 In their wake, the government passed legislation in late 1973 “providing for the

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326 The Saskatchewan Archives, Department of Education: Program Services Branch, R-1624, File: 2.4 (1972—Kindergarten).
327 The Saskatchewan Archives, Department of Education: Program Services Branch, R-1624, File: 2.4 (1972—Kindergarten). Other archival documents indicate that three pilot projects were established (“two in rural units and one small urban system”). Source: The Saskatchewan Archives, G. S. MacMurchy, R-901, File: 1.7.2 (Kindergarten, 1971-1972).
328 The Saskatchewan Archives, Department of Education: Program Services Branch, R-1624, File: 2.4 (1972—Kindergarten).
329 The minutes of an August 1972 ministry meeting stated “considerable emphasis has been placed on the success of the pilot projects, since at this time there is no commitment to implement universal kindergarten
establishment of kindergarten universally but at the option of the school board. Government grants will be available to support the programs when boards decide to introduce kindergartens."330 Thus, beginning in September 1974, the province began to fund kindergarten programs established by school boards.

When cabinet was debating whether or not it would fund kindergartens, a major issue was the cost of such a program. In a budget request submitted to the Treasury Board, the Ministry of Education’s budget bureau argued that “the expected benefits of such a program should be weighed against the projected costs in terms of additional taxation required or, alternatively, programs which might otherwise have been implemented.” 331 Ultimately the cabinet decided it was a worthy program and should be funded instead of other programs that the government was considering funding at that time, such as a “Community College Program, Denticare Program, Grid Road Surfacing Program, [and] Mill Rate Reduction Program.”332

With respect to the second period, Saskatchewan, like many other Canadian provinces—including the other two that are the focus of this study—was not in a good fiscal position at its start. Even though the Romanow led NDP government was committed to balancing the budget, it was not willing to make across the board cuts like the Harris government in Ontario or the Klein government in Alberta. In fact, “unlike those provinces, Saskatchewan did not balance its budget on the backs of the weakest and most vulnerable.

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330 The Saskatchewan Archives, Department of Education: Program Development Branch, R-1234, File: 3.9 (Curriculum Information).
331 The Saskatchewan Archives, Department of Education: Program Services Branch, R-1234, File: 4.21 (Kindergarten Information—1973).
332 The Saskatchewan Archives, G. S. MacMurchy, R-901, File: 1.7.2 (Kindergarten, 1971-1973). What is noteworthy is that a ministry official who read over the document wrote, in the section about why kindergarten is a worthy program that deserves funding, “Important thing is that this is such a critical age—more important to educate here than high school.”
332 Ibid.
Welfare rates were not cut, single employables were not given one-way bus tickets out of the province and government funding for kindergarten was not eliminated.” But the province did not seek to expand kindergarten programs during the period, even when the province began to have budget surpluses beginning in 1995. According to a former official, this was because the government, having just put its fiscal house in order, wanted to be prudent and keep spending under control.

Like Saskatchewan, Alberta did not fund kindergartens at the start of the first period. The province allowed for school boards or private entities to establish kindergartens, but it did not commit itself at that time to help fund such programs. A report submitted to the Calgary School Board by the Elementary Division on October 24th, 1972 stated that “Edmonton and Calgary have received some financial assistance from the government to set up pre-school education classes in inner-city schools” The funding, at least to the Calgary School Board, was given from 1944 to 1953 and “was on the same basis as for the Elementary classes.”

However, changes to the province’s policies related to kindergarten began when the Progressive Conservatives came into office in August of 1971. During the election campaign, the party had made it clear that if elected, it would “introduce a universal kindergarten

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334 Having said that, the province did expand pre-kindergarten programs, which the ministry of education helped fund (Pamela Cowan, “Province Boosts Pre-K Spaces 80%,” The Leader-Post, 21 June 2001, A3). However, this program should not be thought of as a form of junior kindergarten, but rather as a form of child care. In fact, when the province was seeking to expand the program last decade, a portion of the funding for the program was to come from the provincial-federal child-care agreement that the federal Liberals spearheaded in 2005, but which was abandoned by the Conservative government when they were elected in 2006 (No Author, “Province Will Keep Working To Improve Child-Care Programs: Higgins,” The Star-Phoenix, 23 February 2006, A12).
335 Personal interview, January 9th, 2015.
337 Ibid.
scheme, which the Social Credit government had refused to do.” In addition to a new government, the impetus for change was also the recommendations of the aforementioned Commission on Educational Planning (known as the Worth Commission). (The Commission was established by the previous Social Credit government in 1969. The final report was released in June 1972.) This is because the Commission had this to say about kindergarten:

“‘while several Canadian provinces have high participation rates in preschool programs, Alberta remains the only one without established plans for a publicly-supported endeavour at this level. Yet overwhelming support for such an undertaking was found by the Commission during its hearings…. In fact, no other single topic was as often discussed with such a high degree of accord. It is time for us to act upon so clear a mandate.’”

In responses to citizens regarding how the province would proceed regarding kindergarten policy, the education minister would often mention that it was studying the Worth Commission’s recommendation. For example in one November 7th, 1972 letter, the minister wrote: “may I assure you that we are closely examining the Worth Report recommendations concerning early childhood education and we are undertaking study of all the options and alternatives in the early childhood area. I expect that the government will be in a position, early in the new year, to state its position on the early childhood issue.”

One reason why the government may not have initially come out and supported the Worth Commission’s recommendation is that the ministry headed by Lou Hyndman had to convince some members of the governing party that it was a worthwhile program, because

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some in the party felt that kindergarten is ‘‘substitute baby sitting services,’ but Hyndman was still able to persuade his colleagues to initiate an early childhood program.”  

Along with studying the feasibility of establishing kindergarten, the government was at the same time perplexed as to why such a program had not already been established. In a October 23rd, 1972 letter to the deputy minister, the minister wrote: “The Premier wishes a short answer to the following questions[.] If most other provinces in Canada have an early childhood program for five year olds and Alberta does not, how are they able to include this extra program within a total educational budget that is not as costly as our present 1-12 budget?”

When the government finally decided to begin funding kindergarten programs in September of 1973, the program was not universal. Instead grants would only be given to operators for students who were between 4.5 to 5.5 years old and were either “mentally, physically or emotionally handicapped[;] who live in those designated areas of the province, where it is considered because of poverty, extreme social-cultural differences etc. that they do not have a fair start[; and] to children in those kindergartens which were approved by the Minister of Education prior to January 1st, 1973.” The last stipulation meant kindergarten programs established after December 1972 (whether by school boards or private operator) for non-handicapped or non-disadvantaged students would not receive government grants to operate.

In terms of the grants, the province decided that those for handicapped students would be higher. Specifically, the original funding provisions were $558 for “mentally

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341 Wagner, 238.
retarded” children; $335 for blind and visually impaired children; $695 for hearing impaired children; $615 for physically handicapped children; and $695 for “emotionally disturbed” children. As for “disadvantaged children,” the grants would be $365 per pupil; for “normal children” it would be $280.344

Even though the kindergarten program was implemented in a less than universal manner in 1973, the government planned to expand funding to all kindergarten students over the coming years. They kept their promise so that by September 1977, all kindergartens received a per pupil grant regardless of when they were established and what sorts of students they catered to.345 The implementation of pro-kindergarten policies in the first period in Alberta would have also been pursued if other political parties were in office. This is evident because the three main opposition parties, the Liberals, the New Democrats, and the Social Credit made it clear that they were in favour of ensuring that kindergarten would become an integral feature of the provincial education system via government funding. For example, the Liberals, in their 1971 election platform pledged that if elected, they would “provide government support of kindergartens”;346 the NDP, in their 1971 election platform, stated that they “would support public kindergartens”;347 and the Social Credit, in their 1975 platform, used the term “early childhood services” (which they differentiated from “Day care centres”) to pledge that they would financially support such services, and like the governing Tories, believed that the first step should be to provide funding to kindergartens for special needs students.348

344 Ibid.
345 Provincial Archives of Alberta, Records Created by J. Jeffries, the Research Assistant to the Deputy Minister, GR1990.0489, Box 2.
348 Social Credit Party of Alberta, Election Platform, 1975, no page numbers provided.
In the second period, kindergarten was undermined when the Klein government came into office in 1993. Determined to deal with a budget deficit, the government decided to implement across the boards cuts. With respect to kindergarten programs, prior to cuts being implemented, they were funded at a 456-hour level, of which 400 hours were paid for by the provincial government. In order to achieve savings, the government decided that it would only fund 200 hours, effective September 1994. A few years later, in January 1996—having dealt with the budget deficit—the government announced that it would restore funding to 400 hours beginning with the 1996/1997 school year. In 2000, the government announced that it would increase funding up to 475 hours.

In 2003, the Commission on Learning, which was established the previous year to review all aspects of the K-12 education system in the province, submitted its report. Among its recommendations was that the government should fund junior kindergarten and that it should provide funding so that full-day programs could be operated. Two years after the release of the report, the government had still not followed through on the recommendations. However, the education minister in February 2005 said that the government was studying the matter. But by the end of the second period the government had not followed through on the recommendation.

Having reviewed the kindergarten policies of all three provinces during the two periods, it is clear that there were broad similarities, which can be explained by the dominant ideas in place during both periods. In the first period, the policies of the provinces regarding

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351 Ibid.
kindergarten reflected the dictates of the consensus in place at the time. By maintaining (in the case of Ontario) or introducing (in the case of Saskatchewan and Alberta) kindergarten programs, even when budgets were in the red, governments were following the dictates of the consensus (that governments should increase spending, especially during economic downturns which was the case during the 1970s). Furthermore, the person-regarding paradigm, which reflected the Keynesian consensus, as discussed in the previous two chapters, also justified a commitment to pre-grade one schooling since it contributed to the development and well-being of children. Once again, partisanship is not a very helpful variable because although Saskatchewan was governed by a social democratic party, Alberta and Ontario were governed by conservative parties. As such, if partisanship was consequential, we should not have seen the latter two provinces make such a significant programmatic commitment.

In the second period, it is clear that neoliberalism and human capital theory explain the changes in kindergarten policies, specifically of Alberta and Ontario, given that these two provinces were the ones that implemented and then reversed new policies. By examining the dictates of neoliberalism we are able to understand the cuts in these two provinces. In order to reduce spending in the education sector, which was required so as to address budget deficits, reducing funding for kindergarten—as for other grades, which is reflected in the per student figures discussed above—was an easy and obvious choice. If neoliberalism was not consequential, or a different consensus was in place that did not emphasize the need to reduce spending and address budget deficits, a case could be made that governments would not have reduced funding for kindergarten or possibly might have even increased funding. For example, Alberta in the first period had budget deficits in the first few years of the
decade, yet it still decided to begin funding kindergarten programs. This policy option was simply not feasible in the second period due to the restrictions imposed by the neoliberal consensus.

In Ontario, it could be argued that partisanship was consequential because when the neoliberal Tories came into office in 1995, and facing high budget deficits, they abandoned pledges concerning kindergarten made by the previous Liberal and New Democratic governments, and reduced funding for kindergarten. This is true. Indeed, this substantiates the argument of this chapter that neoliberal parties reduced spending more than other types of parties when dealing with budget deficits.

After the spending cuts, the re-commitment to kindergarten by the neoliberal Tories in Alberta, and its expansion in Ontario by the centrist Liberals— as well as the fact that the governing social democratic New Democrats in Saskatchewan did not cut kindergarten funding, even when they faced high budget deficits—can be explained by examining the dominance of human capital theory in the second period.

Specifically, because of it, “countries are increasingly examining the factors that encourage or inhibit employment [and by extension economic success and prosperity], including…the impact that early years education and development can have on future success…. [In other words,] education is increasingly recognized as an important part of that investment…. But ‘(r)emedial policies once people have reached adulthood are unlikely to be effective unless these adults started out with sufficient cognitive and social skills.’”354 As argued above, in the second period, governments were under increasing pressure to ensure that individuals had necessary knowledge and skills so as to make their economies attractive

to investors by having workers be able to fill necessary 21st century jobs. Accordingly, governments had to ensure that their education systems were structured in such a way that students were leaving high school ready to enter the workforce or post-secondary education for more schooling.

However, this could only be done if students received a proper education at the start of their schooling, because otherwise, they would never catch up. Hence, this required that an emphasis be placed on kindergarten, as opposed to abandoning it to save money as was done with grade thirteen in Ontario—a grade which was seen to have produced little benefit, but had a large cost (i.e. those students that were going to do well in the workforce or post-secondary education were already prepared by grade twelve, but those that were not, would not benefit by an additional year of schooling). For example, a former official who was instrumental in spearheading full-day kindergarten in Ontario argued that such a program expansion was seen to be linked to the well-being of the economy. The official framed the decision to introduce such a program in this way: “if 28% of kids are showing up in first grade seriously behind their peers…and most of them never catch up,” which was the case in the province prior to the introduction of full-day kindergarten, “tell me what kind of human capital supply chain are you actually developing.” Thus, in order to ensure that students were getting a strong head-start in the early years of their schooling so as to be able to succeed in subsequent grades and graduate with the necessary skills and knowledge needed

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355 This should not be interpreted to mean that the emphasis on the need for pre-grade one schooling in the post-1990 years was devoid of any progressive, child-centered objectives as in the past. This was still certainly part of the reason why such schooling was advanced by its proponents. Source: Ibid., 292-296. However, the point being advanced is that unlike the first period, in the post-1990 years in which globalization had an impact on policymaking, the need for such schooling was no longer just about ensuring the development of each student for its own sake. Rather in the post-1990 years, such schooling was also seen to be essential in terms of its connections to preparing future workers in order to ensure economic prosperity and success.

356 Personal interview, November 10th, 2014.
of workers in a globalized, competitive economy, kindergarten was seen to be essential by policymakers.

Overall, as in the foregoing section, we can see that the contradictory dictates of neoliberalism and human-capital theory were both consequential in the second period, and that the impact of the former was offset by the impact of the latter when examining kindergarten policies for the period as a whole, as opposed to specific phases of this period.

Before advancing, it should be noted that in Ontario and Alberta, the main opposition parties agreed with the governing neoliberal parties regarding the need to restore funding to kindergarten after budget deficits were addressed. In the case of Ontario, this support among opposition parties\(^\text{357}\) is not surprising since, as discussed above, they were committed to pro-kindergarten policies even before the Tories came into office in 1995. In Alberta, it is clear that the main opposition parties were not opposed to the governing Tories’ decision to restore funding for kindergarten because they had advanced pro-kindergarten policies. In the case of the Liberals, in their 1997 election platform, they pledged to fund 475 hours of kindergarten.\(^\text{358}\) The NDP made the same pledge in their 1997 election platform.\(^\text{359}\) During the 2004 election, the Liberals pledged to “introduce optional junior kindergarten and full-day kindergarten programs province-wide, with vulnerable children the priority.”\(^\text{360}\) The NDP made a similar promise during that election: “Initiate full day kindergarten and junior kindergarten in schools where children are most at risk, with future expansion to schools

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\(^{358}\) Liberal Party of Alberta, Speak Up, Alberta, 1997, no page numbers provided.

\(^{359}\) New Democratic Party of Alberta, We’re Fighting Back, 1997, no page numbers provided.

where parents desire it.”

Similar pledges were made during the 2008 election. The Liberals promised to “phase in new junior kindergarten programs (starting with at-risk children) and establish full-day kindergarten as recommended by the Alberta Commission on Learning”;

likewise, the New Democrats pledged to “fund full-day kindergarten and half-day junior kindergarten for vulnerable children and all children whose parents choose this option.”

Teacher to Student Ratios

An examination of teacher hiring is also useful for determining the quality and extensiveness of the provinces’ public education sectors. Needless to say, expenditures on education are directed towards more than teachers’ salaries. School boards spend money on building schools, transportation, supplies, and support staff and administrators to name just a few key expenditures. However, teachers’ salaries, along with the number of students an education system has to educate and how low governments want the teacher to student ratios to be, “are [the] major education ‘cost drivers.’”

In fact, teachers’ salaries account for about “two thirds of school board operating expenditures.” As such, by examining teacher to student ratios, we can gauge the extent to which provincial governments supported the most important input for education. By doing so we will be able to further understand which province provided a more comprehensive education system since school boards with more funds can hire more teachers, resulting in lower teacher to student ratios.

Before advancing, it should be noted that there is a vast literature on the effect of low teacher to student ratios on student outcomes. Some of this literature indicates that a low

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365 Gendron, 16.
ratio does not necessarily mean that student outcomes are improved.\textsuperscript{366} Other studies show that a lower ratio ensures that student achievement improves,\textsuperscript{367} while yet others indicate that even though lower ratios improve student outcomes, other factors, such as teacher quality are more important\textsuperscript{368} or that lower ratios matter only in the early grades\textsuperscript{369} or for particular types of students (e.g. primary graders with low achievement).\textsuperscript{370}

Regardless of these positions, and even if lower teacher to student ratios do not improve student outcomes, examining this ratio is important in a study such as this because it can reveal whether a particular province ensured that there was an abundance of one of the costliest inputs of the education sector even if such an input would not definitely improve student outcomes. It reveals whether a province spent money even if it would not certainly benefit students. This, in turn, could be a sign that a more progressive party system is in existence, since jurisdictions with non-progressive party systems might be far less prone to spend money on questionable areas of a policy sector.

Table 3.5 provides a yearly breakdown of the number of students per teacher. A point of clarification regarding the ratios needs to be advanced. In certain years in all three provinces, the ratios are extraordinarily low. However, these figures come with a major caveat: the calculation of these ratios often takes into account other individuals besides

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teachers that work in a school (e.g. therapists, psychologists, librarians). As a result, a teacher may be responsible for far more students in a class than a ratio suggests. Although this is not ideal, the available sources of data regarding staffing at schools that are provided by respected agencies (e.g. Statistics Canada) do not break down staffing by different categories. Moreover, this issue of inaccuracy in the actual number of students per teacher is not unique to this study. This is the standard practice in both scholarly and media analyses pertaining to teacher to student ratios.

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The yearly ratios provide a unique perspective on the sector. By analyzing the ratios year by year across the two periods, an initial conclusion can be reached: the partisanship variable cannot help explain why the ratios are so similar among the provinces throughout the years of the two periods. If this variable had an effect on the ratios, Saskatchewan’s ratios would have been consistently lower than the other two provinces, while Alberta’s would be consistently the highest, due to the dominance of a left-wing party in the former province, whereas, in fact, we find that the ratios are generally similar from year to year in both periods in all three provinces.

However, what we can also conclude is that the ratios are very distinct when the two periods are compared with one another. In the first period, the ratios were almost always above twenty in all three provinces. Only in 1975 was it below twenty when Alberta and Saskatchewan had ratios of nineteen. In contrast, in the second period, the ratios were far lower in each province. In fact, towards the end of the period, the ratios were far lower compared to the first period. The highest ratio in the latter half of the second period was seventeen in 2002 in Ontario. Otherwise the ratios were fifteen or lower in the other years, in all three provinces.

This evidence seems rather perplexing. After all, the first period is considered one of public education expansion—which theoretically should have meant lower teacher to student
rations, while the second period is considered one of partial contraction in the sector, meaning the ratios in this period should have been higher. Could enrolment figures have caused the ratios to be so much lower in the second period? That is, could the number of students in the public education systems of the provinces have declined dramatically in the second period? Examining the enrolment figures for each province for both periods leads us to conclude that they are not the reason for the unexpected ratios in two of the provinces.

In the case of Ontario, the number of students in the public education system was relatively constant (around two million students); in Alberta, the number of students in the public education system actually increased from an average of 427,322 students per year in the first period to an average of 534,781 students per year in the second period. Only in Saskatchewan was there a decrease in enrolment in the second period, particularly beginning in the latter half of that period. In the first period the average number of students enrolled in the Saskatchewan public education system was 221,789; in the second period the average was 185,799. This means that one could partly explain the lower ratios in the second period

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in that province as resulting from fewer students in the education system being taught by the same number of teachers.

Logic then dictates that the number of teachers employed by the public education systems of the provinces better explains the low ratios in the second period (i.e. more teachers were employed during the second period compared to the first period). Examining the yearly teacher figures for each province reveals that the number of teachers employed in each province was significantly higher in the second period. In Ontario, the average number of teachers in the first period was 92,564; in the second period the average was 126,058. In Saskatchewan the averages were 10,601 and 11,072, respectively, while in Alberta the averages were 21,074 and 31,881, respectively. Therefore, the low ratios are a result of the increase in the number of teachers that were hired even though enrolment figures only increased in one of the provinces being studied (Alberta).

This phenomenon of ever increasing number of teachers being employed began in 1985, and not just in the provinces being studied, but across the country. What accounts for this? Part of the explanation is that

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375 Gendron, 17.
contractual job security clauses and school enrolment often distributed over large geographic areas prevented school administrators and governments from quickly adjusting the size of their teaching forces to the number of students. Furthermore, new educational programs were added to school curricula, including the early 1970s launch of the federal government’s Official Languages in Education program. French immersion classes and second language education programs were created in all provinces, causing increased demand for new teachers. Special education programs and mainstreaming were also introduced, reducing average class size.376

It is clear that decisions made prior to the second period, whether those decisions related to collective bargaining agreements or programmatic commitments, led to a direct increase in the number of teachers hired. However, we should not assume the “contractual job security” argument (i.e. powerful teachers’ unions forcing governments to hire more teachers) is the main reason for an increase in the number of teachers in the post-1990s years. After all, such an argument only indicates why teacher levels were maintained, not why more were hired. Moreover, in the 1980s and 1990s, many teachers that were hired in the expansion years of the 1950s and 1960s began to retire, meaning that governments could have reduced the overall numbers of teachers by refusing to increase funding so that new teachers could not be hired.

What can better help explain the rise in the number of teachers in the post-1990 years is a key idea that is the focus of this: human capital theory. Politicians came to regard low teacher to student ratios (i.e. smaller class sizes)—contrary to the conflicting findings in the literature on this topic, as discussed above—as being a key aspect of ensuring that students were receiving a high quality education so that they could be properly prepared to succeed in employment or post-secondary education and thus be qualified workers for their knowledge-based economy labour force. For example, when Ontario’s Progressive Conservative

376 Gendron, 18.
education minister was asked in the provincial legislature in 1996 about class-room funding by a member of the opposition, the minister argued that the government was focused on ensuring that an increasing amount of education spending went to the class-room (e.g. ensuring that enough teachers are employed) and connected this with the need to ensure student success: “When you talk about student-teacher ratios, we're interested as a party in making sure we have our people in the education system utilized so they make the biggest effect on student achievement, and we think that's what needs to be done in education.”

When the Liberals came into office in 2003, they too viewed lower student to teacher ratios as an important means of improving student achievement, particularly in the early stages of a students’ schooling. This is why they introduced a cap on class sizes—they could not be higher than twenty—in the early primary grades (kindergarten to grade three).

Similarly, the neoliberal Alberta government also viewed low teacher to student ratios as a priority. Beginning in the late 1990s, after budget deficits were eliminated, the government funded a few programs designed to allow school boards to hire more teachers. For example, in the fiscal year 1998-1999, they funded a “teacher aide program.” Money was also set aside in the 2000-2001 budget for the hiring of more teachers. The government put even more emphasis on reducing teacher to student ratios after the aforementioned Commission on Learning, in its 2003 report, argued, by citing research, that reducing class sizes is essential in ensuring that students receive a high quality education.

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The government accepted the recommendation and announced in 2004 that they would dedicate new funding, a total of $149 million, for a “class size reduction initiative.”

This agreement regarding the need to put in place policies to reduce class sizes did not only apply to ideologically different governing parties in the provinces. Even ideologically different opposition parties in the three provinces pledged that they too would have reduced class sizes if they were in office. For example, the Alberta Liberals, in a 1993 policy paper on education and in their 1997, 2001, 2004, and 2008 election platforms pledged that they would reduce class sizes (sometimes for particular grades only). The Alberta New Democrats also emphasized the need to reduce class sizes in their 1997, 2001, 2004, and 2008 election platforms. The Ontario New Democrats, once in opposition, also emphasized the need to reduce class sizes. For example, in a policy paper on

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382 Liberal Party of Alberta, Education For All: The Alberta Liberal Plan for Life-Long Learning, 1993, 2. Specifically, the party stated that “class size is a crucial factor in this phase of schooling. An Alberta Liberal government will work closely with local school boards to find ways, based on research, to reduce the number of students in existing kindergarten to Grade 4 classrooms.”
383 Liberal Party of Alberta, Speak Up, Alberta, 1997, no page numbers provided. Specifically, the party pledged that it would “provide funds to hire 1000 new teachers, thus reducing class size so students can learn and teachers can teach.”
384 Liberal Party of Alberta, Power to People, 2001, no page numbers provided. Specifically, the party stated that “smaller class sizes let teachers spend more time with students and on curriculum development, and it is less likely that students will fall through the cracks. We will work with school boards to achieve class size targets of: Kindergarten to Grade 3: 17 students, Grade 4 to Grade 9: 25 students, Grade 10 to Grade 12 30 students.”
385 Liberal Party of Alberta, Focus. Forward., 2004, 8. Specifically, the party pledged that it would “fund and implement the Learning Commission recommendations and timelines for class sizes for kindergarten to grade 12.”
386 Liberal Party of Alberta, It’s Time, 2008, 12. Specifically, the party pledged that it would “support the Learning Commission’s recommendations for class size.”
387 New Democratic Party of Alberta, We’re Fighting Back, 1997, no page numbers provided. The party did not provide specifics. It only stated that it would “reduce class sizes.”
388 New Democratic Party of Alberta, Clear Solutions: An Effective Alternative, 2001, 6. Specifically, the party stated that “class size is a growing issue of concern. When a class is too large, every student loses. The teacher is unable to provide the quality of education they want to provide. The New Democrats will fight to cut class sizes at all grade levels, and especially in the lower grades when kids most need one-on-one attention.”
389 New Democratic Party of Alberta, Agenda for Change, 2004, 21. Specifically, the party pledged that it would “bring down class sizes at all grades to where students can learn and set meaningful limits on class sizes.”
390 New Democratic Party of Alberta, Where We Stand, 2008, no page numbers provided. Specifically, the party pledged that it would “implement Learning Commission recommendations by imposing caps on class sizes.”
education released by the party in 1998, the party argued that if elected, it would “reduce maximum class sizes to 16 in junior kindergarten, 18 in senior kindergarten and 20 in grades 1 to 3.”391 In Saskatchewan, the Liberals, in their 1995392 and 2003393 election platforms also emphasized the need to reduce class sizes. Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that if other types of parties were in office in the three provinces in the second period, there still would have been emphasis on providing adequate funding so as to ensure that class sizes would be reduced.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the financial commitment to the education sector by various governments in the three provinces during the two periods that are the focus of this study. Analysis of various types of spending allowed for a nuanced presentation of the actual financial commitment to the sector by the provinces. Taking all the analysis above into account, the following conclusion can be made: the political parties variable was somewhat useful for understanding why spending was lower when neoliberal parties were in office in the second period, but it failed to explain why there were broad similarities in the first period, i.e. why in all three provinces it was an era of expansion even though in two of the provinces there were fiscally conservative parties in office, and why in the second period the provinces made cuts at the same time (i.e. in the 1990s) and why there was a certain degree of restoration of funding after budget deficits were dealt with. Nor can it explain why there

392 Liberal Party of Saskatchewan, Restoring Health to Saskatchewan: The Saskatchewan Liberal Action Plan, 1995, 68. Specifically, the party pledged that it would reduce “administrative costs in provincial and school board management to provide additional resources for smaller classes and more teachers.”
393 Saskatchewan Party, Let’s Get Saskatchewan Growing, 2003, 25. Specifically, the party stated that “there must be a commitment to reasonable class-sizes at all grade levels, including benchmarking class size at 24 for grades K-3; development at early stages is critical to future success in life.”
were such low teacher to student ratios in all three provinces, regardless of the ideological stripe of governing parties.

Instead, in order to understand the policy outputs, specifically the fact that there were broad similarities in terms of financial commitment to the sector, we need to take into account the causal effect of dominant ideas. The first period, due to the dictates of Keynesianism, was a time of strong commitment to the sector, i.e. the lack of major cutbacks, even when governments had legitimate reasons to make cutbacks. These reasons included dealing with deficits or inflation, as discussed above. In addition, there was an expansion in the years of schooling (i.e. the introduction of kindergarten funding) in Saskatchewan and Alberta. In the second period, it was shown that the existence and influence of two ideational forces associated with globalization—neoliberalism and human-capital theory—caused the adoption of similar policies by policymakers in the three provinces. That is, we saw that their contradictory dictates offset one another so that neither was the dominant guiding force as policymakers considered various policy options concerning spending in the second period.

Overall then, in this aspect of the education policy sector, the provinces have followed the same general trend in terms of financial commitments to the sector in the two periods that are being studied: years of increasing and decreasing commitment were generally the same in all three provinces, which cannot be explained by pointing to the ideological stripe of governing parties, but rather by taking into account the dominance of Keynesianism, neoliberalism, and human capital theory, and how these influenced the thinking of policymakers. If partisanship was a consequential variable, we would not have seen similarities in general spending patterns by ideologically different governing parties in
the provinces, or agreement with the policies of governing parties among opposition parties within each of the three provinces.
As public education in Canada has evolved over the decades, one source of tension in the sector has been the manner in which provincial governments have treated and regulated school boards. This is mainly because there is a power imbalance in the relationship between provincial governments and school boards; the former have the legal power to control, consolidate, abolish, and oversee the latter. Due to such power in the hands of provincial governments, there have at times been revolutionary changes in terms of the status and number of school boards. Furthermore, the public’s perception of school boards’ relevance has ebbed and flowed, which has further allowed provincial governments to subordinate school boards when their popularity declines.

In what is to follow, I will first discuss the extent to which school boards in each of the provinces had the power to determine education property taxes during the two periods that are the focus of this study. The second section will examine school boards’ influence on their province’s curricula. The third section will focus on governments’ policies regarding school board amalgamations. The final section will seek to make sense of the policy outputs. Similar to the conclusions reached in the previous chapters, we will see that it is ideas, specifically Keynesianism in the first period and neoliberalism in the second, which will allow us to understand a great deal about the policies of the provinces concerning school boards, and why there was agreement across the political spectrum in the three provinces.

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394 Various terms are and have been used by provincial governments to refer to the bodies that serve as intermediaries between them and individual schools. Generally though, the common term is school boards. I will follow this practice and use this term even if one of the provinces being studied used a different term at one point in its history or presently.
concerning necessary policies related school boards (i.e. opposition parties having policy positions that were the same as the policies of governing parties) in both periods.

**School Boards’ Control Over Property Taxes**

As briefly mentioned in the previous chapter, for most of the two periods, in addition to the provincial governments funding education, school boards determined the rate of (and levied) property taxes to cover a portion of education costs. This ceased to be the case in Alberta in 1994 and in Ontario in 1997, when the provincial governments took control of the extent to which properties could be taxed for education funding. In Saskatchewan, school boards maintained the power to determine the level of property tax rates during all the years this study covers. In order to understand why two of the provinces chose to dramatically alter the financing of their education systems, but the third did not, we need to examine the policies of the past.

Beginning with Ontario, there were concerns about high property taxes dating back to the first period. In 1969, high education property tax rates led to protests throughout the province “and in some cases rural municipalities threatened to withhold their portion of the education taxes until something was done.”\(^{395}\) This forced the government to act and it implemented two policies: it increased grants so as “to subsidize local rates in many small communities” and it promised that provincial grants would be increased to 60% of total costs of education within three years,\(^{396}\) so that less education funding would be derived from property taxes. Table 4.1 provides a yearly breakdown of how much school board revenues

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\(^{396}\) Ibid., 58-59.
derived from local sources (i.e. property taxes) for Ontario and the other two provinces for all the years that are the focus of this study.

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At the same time, Queen’s Park also told boards that they had to control their costs. To ensure that boards received this message, the government amended the Education Act in November 1969 so as to allow the minister of education to set an expenditure ceiling if necessary. Such a change “challenged cherished notions about autonomy of local boards and the rhetoric of decentralized decision-making, [and] was vigorously attacked by board representatives and other stakeholders.” Not surprisingly, boards did not control costs. As

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397 The sources of school board revenues were obtained from: Statistics Canada, School Board Revenues, By Direct Source of Funds (table 478-0010), CANSIM.
398 Gidney, 59.
399 Ibid.
a result, the minister announced in late 1970 that ceilings would be set beginning in 1971. The government, however, stated that “the ceilings would be set at levels consistent with average spending so that most boards would have little difficulty in conforming to them and at worst would have to make only modest reductions in their estimates. But a few big-spending urban boards, [the minister] warned, would be hard hit.”

The opposition parties, somewhat surprisingly, only proposed modest board-friendly policies in the election that was held in the fall of 1971. Although both the Liberals and the New Democrats promised that they would raise the provincial proportion of funding to “80% or more” as opposed to 60%, they did not promise that they would abolish the ceilings if elected.

But the promises of the other parties were inconsequential because the Tories returned to office. In its new term, the government did deliver on its promise to fund 60% of total education spending. However, beginning in 1976, as shown in Table 4.1, the provincial share of education funding declined and never approached 60%. This was the case even throughout the 1980s, both when the Tories were in office in the first half of the decade and the Liberals in the second half.

During the 1990 election campaign, the NDP promised that unlike the other two parties, it would increase the provincial share of education funding. But, “within six months of the election…Marion Boyd, the NDP’s first minister of education told the House that there ‘won’t be much of an improvement’ in the near future [in terms of the province’s share of education funding].” During their time in office, the NDP never did live up to their promise of increasing the amount of education funding derived from provincial revenues. In

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400 Ibid., 60.
401 Ibid., 61.
402 Ibid., 185-186.
fact, between 1990 to 1995, the provincial share, as shown in table 4.1, declined from 43% to 37%.

The New Democrats could have used the recommendations of a commission they appointed (the Fair Tax Commission, which submitted its recommendations in 1993) to justify the provincial government taking over the funding of education. This is because the report recommended that the province should establish a ceiling for expenditures and fund education up to that ceiling; assume responsibility for setting commercial and industrial property taxes which should be divided equally among all boards; and only allow school boards to set the rates on residential property, but “restricted to a fixed percentage—not greater than 10 per cent—of the total amount of provincial funding provided to that board.” However, the New Democrats did not do this, mainly for political reasons. Specifically, there was great “opposition by wealthy boards or municipalities to the ‘Robin Hood scheme’ of pooling. [Also] the polls revealed that Ontarians were split right down the middle about transferring the costs of education to the provincial income tax.”

Also, according to a former official, the government did not implement the Commission’s recommendation because the province’s fiscal situation prevented it from taking on such a responsibility, meaning the provincial government funding 90% of education. This shows the influence of the neoliberal consensus on policymakers because if deficit reduction or the need to cut, or at least not raise, taxes were not such important objectives during the NDP’s time in office, as dictated by the consensus and discussed in the previous chapter, the government could have increased the amount it spent on education.

403 Ibid., 190-191.
404 Ibid., 191.
405 Personal interview, November 13th, 2014.
However, with the election of the neoliberal PC Party in 1995, change was on its way. The new government passed legislation in 1997, allowing it to take control of setting education property taxes. They argued that such a policy was necessary for two reasons. The first reason was due to the inherent education inequalities created by differences in the values of properties in different boards, meaning boards “in which residential property values are comparatively high [could]…afford higher expenditures per pupil than poorer districts [could]—even though they impose below average tax rates on their citizens. Alternatively, some municipalities may have a very high commercial and industrial tax base. If such property [was] included in their base for school taxation, they [could] enjoy much higher outlays per student than…other districts while having low taxes on residential property.”

The second reason that the government took control over the establishment of education property taxes was because it wanted to reduce expenditures and provide relief to taxpayers. As long as the power to levy education property taxes was in the hands of school boards, the provincial government could not provide relief to taxpayers; they knew they had to take the power away from the boards to achieve their objective. The finance minister at the time stated that such a policy would finally mean that “the taxpayer [would] have some satisfaction out of the fact that finally somebody will be regulating the amount of taxes and they won't be going up.” This shows the extent to which providing tax relief was a reason for implementing such a policy. Needless to say, this again shows the influence of

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407 Gidney, 245.
408 In terms which model (centralized or decentralized) is better in terms of keeping costs—and thus taxes—low, there has been conflicting findings. For one such study, which provides a brief overview of the literature, refer to: Stuart Landon, “Institutional Structure and Education Spending,” Public Finance Review 26, no. 5 (1998): 411-446.
the neoliberal consensus, which dictated that governments prioritize tax restraint in policymaking.

The party that succeeded the Tories in 2003, the Liberals, did not promise to return the power to levy education property taxes to school boards. In their 2003 election platform, the only mention about such taxes was somewhat odd. They promised that they would “end the largest taxation without representation in North America. Taxpayers contribute over $7 billion to education property taxes, yet the Harris-Eves government determines in secret how that rate is set. We will establish a Standing Committee on Education to hold public hearings every year on the effectiveness of provincial funding,”\textsuperscript{410} clearly implying that they would maintain the Tories’ policy of not allowing school boards to levy education property taxes. It should be noted that the party’s election platform from the previous election, held in 1999, also did not mention restoring taxation powers to school boards.\textsuperscript{411}

The NDP also did not promise to restore the power to schools in any of their election platforms in the second period after the policy change (i.e. no mention was made in their 1999, 2003, or 2007 election platforms). In fact, after the policy change, the party proposed, in a 1998 discussion paper prior to their convention, that “commercial assessment should be pooled at the provincial level in the name of funding equity. But local boards could also be authorized to raise up to 10 percent above and beyond the provincial formula from residential assessment for special local education initiatives,”\textsuperscript{412} meaning that although they were not willing to go as far as the governing Tories in terms of limiting the power of school boards to levy education property taxes, they were only willing to allow school boards to have a very

limited ability to use this type of power. Clearly, there was broad agreement among the three major parties, even though they were ideologically very different, regarding the need for the provincial government to set education property tax rates.

Turning to Alberta, like Ontario, the issue of over-reliance on property owners to fund education dated back to the 1960s. In 1961, in order to address education inequities, “the Social Credit government made a significant change in the way it funded education by establishing the School Foundation Program Fund (SFPF). The money for this fund was obtained from general revenues and from a ‘uniform province-wide levy on residential and non-residential property.’” However, the government also allowed “school boards … [to] levy ‘supplementary requisitions’ to make up the difference between the SFPF and their total expenditures.” Although this policy helped address the problem of education inequities (i.e. boards in higher assessment areas being able to have more funds and offer more and better programs and services), it did nothing in terms of providing tax relief to property owners.

This changed when the PC Party came into office. During the 1971 election, they promised that they would not include taxes on residential properties for the SFPF. Upon coming into office, they “set up the Task Force on Provincial Municipal Fiscal Arrangements to investigate the division of responsibilities between the province and local authorities. As recommended by the Task Force, the government did remove residential property from the SFPF in 1974, and then removed farm land from it in 1975.” Due to this policy change, there was partial relief for property owners, but not complete tax relief because school boards

414 Ibid.
415 Ibid.
still had the power to impose education property taxes. This issue, regarding the need to provide tax relief to property owners, was one in which there was cross-party agreement and would have been implemented if one of the opposition parties was in office in the 1970s. This is evident because all three opposition parties discussed the importance of addressing the issue. For example, during a debate in the provincial legislature about the governing Tories’ first Throne Speech in 1972, the Social Credit Party indicated that reducing education property taxes for property owners was a necessity and urged the government to act.\textsuperscript{416} The Liberal Party was also adamant about the need to reduce education property taxes. In fact, as early as 1967 (i.e. prior to the start of the first period), the party was arguing that if they were elected, they would increase the share of provincial funding for education so that school boards would not be forced to increase the rate of education property taxes.\textsuperscript{417} The NDP, in a policy paper released in the year prior to the election in 1975, argued that “in order to achieve a reasonable degree of equality in educational opportunity throughout Alberta, the financial burden of education must be removed from the sphere of property taxation and borne by the general revenue of the provincial government.”\textsuperscript{418} Thus, they too would have put in place a policy to reduce the tax burden on property owners.

Interestingly, the burden on property owners steadily increased after a slight decrease in the mid-1970s when residential and farm properties were excluded from the SFPF, because of the actions of the provincial government. As shown in table 4.1, the share of education funding derived from property taxes increased from 29% in 1974 to 36% in 1979. This happened because, over time, the government reduced the funding it provided to school

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{416} Alberta, Legislative Assembly, \textit{Legislative Debates (Hansard)}, 17\textsuperscript{th} Legislature, 1\textsuperscript{st} Session, March 9, 1972 (John Anderson), http://www.assembly.ab.ca/Documents/isysquery/76acb694-6e1c-4622-b4ab-597243a598c7/4/doc/.
\bibitem{417} Liberal Party of Alberta, \textit{A Platform for Responsible Representation}, 1967, 8.
\bibitem{418} New Democratic Party of Alberta, \textit{The Party and Its Program}, 1974, 52.
\end{thebibliography}
boards, causing school boards to increase the taxes on property owners to make up the difference that resulted from what they received from the provincial government and their actual costs.\(^{419}\) As a result, the over-reliance on property owners to fund education persisted.

In the late 1980s, the government again attempted to address the problem. “In 1987 Minister of Education Nancy Betkowski released a discussion paper entitled *Equity in Education Financing* ‘to generate public discussion’ on the issue by offering five possible ways of financing education in Alberta.”\(^{420}\) One of those ways was to introduce “full non-residential tax revenue sharing,”\(^{421}\) meaning that the province, not the school boards, would determine the education tax rates for non-residential properties. The government ultimately decided to implement this option. However, because of public opposition due to the loss of local autonomy that would result from the new policy, the government backed down and chose to abandon the idea. In 1991, the government again attempted to take control of non-residential tax rates, but again it was unable to gain public support for the idea.\(^{422}\)

When Ralph Klein took over the party, they were “able to create a crisis atmosphere focused on the deficit and thus the concomitant need to cut spending.”\(^{423}\) The Klein government took both the residential and non-residential taxing powers from school boards in 1994. The only exception was the ability of school boards to “impose a special school tax levy, not exceeding 3 per cent of the budget of the board if such a levy is approved by a plebiscite in a general election.”\(^{424}\) Although part of the reason the government pursued this policy was to ensure all boards would have the same amount of money to provide education,

\(^{420}\) Wagner, 100.
\(^{421}\) Ibid., 101.
\(^{422}\) Ibid., 102-103.
\(^{423}\) Ibid., 103
\(^{424}\) Ibid., 104.
it also implemented the policy so as to ensure “that the boards would not thwart the
government’s tax restraint goals by raising local taxes.” As in Ontario, this shows the
consistency of policy outputs related to education property taxes with the dictates of the
neoliberal consensus, which emphasizes the need for governments to restrain taxes.

In the years after the policy change, there were discussions in the province about
possibly returning some taxation powers back to local boards so as to help address
insufficient funding provided by the provincial government. For example, in its 2003 report,
the Commission on Learning, which was discussed in the previous chapter, included such a
policy option in its recommendations, but the government did not act on the
recommendation. Also, in 2008, the government hinted that school boards may “have some
of their taxing authority back,” but it never did change the policy.

The two main opposition parties in Alberta did not specify clearly if they disagreed
with the government’s new policy. For example, in 1997 (i.e. the first election after the
policy was implemented), the Liberal election platform only said that if elected, they would
“put decision-making back where it belongs: in the hands of local elected school boards”
without explaining if this meant that they would return taxation powers to them. Even when
the policy was announced, the Liberal education critic, although noting the inherent
centralizing nature of the new policy, did not specify if his party would undo the policy if
elected. Moreover, in a 1993 policy paper released before the election that was held in that
year, the party indicated that it was thinking about centralizing taxation if it was elected: “An

425 Ibid.
427 Heather Welwood, “Hancock Seems Headed in the Right Direction to Help Schools; Returning Some
429 Diana Coulter, “New Act Aims to Spread Funds Evenly; Bill 19 a Power Grab—Liberals,” Edmonton
Journal, 2 April 1994, B3.
Alberta Liberal government would adopt, as a long-term goal, a return to the province’s historical leadership role in education funding. This long-term solution will require a commitment to a full scale review of taxation and responsibility for providing services, involving the business community, municipal governments, school boards, ratepayers associations, parents and students.”

Likewise, the NDP also implied that they were supportive of the government’s policy. In their 1997 election platform, they indicated that they would “provide full and adequate funding from general revenue for all core education services,” as opposed to restoring the ability of school boards to levy property taxes and fund a portion of education according to their own criteria and objectives. Therefore, like Ontario, there was seemingly agreement across the political spectrum about the need for the provincial government to control the setting of education property tax rates.

Turning to Saskatchewan, although there was not a significant policy change in terms of school boards’ taxation powers in the years under study, the issue was on the policy agenda and under consideration by various governments. Like the other two provinces, there were concerns about high education property taxes in the first period (and the years leading up to the first period.) For this reason, when the NDP came into office in 1971, they increased the share of provincial grants for education so that the share of funding derived from education property taxes—as shown in table 4.1—decreased from 54% at the start of the decade to 41% by the end of the decade. This policy regarding the need to increase the share of provincial funding was one that even the two opposition parties in the first period would have also implemented. This is evident because the Liberals, in their 1971 election platform, pledged that if they were elected, they would have increased the provincial share of

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education funding “thus enabling school units to lower the local property tax.”\(^{432}\) Taking it one step further, the Tories, in their 1971 election platform pledged that they would provide full funding for education, and thus, provide complete tax relief for property owners.\(^{433}\) However, the governing New Democrats were not willing to go that far (i.e. eliminate the power of school boards to levy education property taxes and rely on provincial general revenues to completely fund the education system). Consequently, there was not a reduction in the power of school boards to levy education property taxes in the first period. In the years that followed, specifically from 1982 to 2002,

reforms to funding the education system were contemplated both by Premier Grant Devine’s Conservative government, and by Premier Roy Romanow’s NDP government in response to pressures from municipalities to reduce the reliance on school boards on revenues generated from the property tax base. Whereas the Conservative government contemplated adopting Manitoba’s ‘dual levy’ approach whereby local school boards would impose one education levy on the property tax base and the provincial government would impose an education levy through the income tax system, the NDP government contemplated adopting some version of Alberta’s or Ontario’s approach.…. Precarious fiscal and political situations at various points in their time in office, along with challenging policy and program agendas faced by both governments at various times during their respective mandates, ultimately constrained them not to pursue those reforms. The two provincial governments that followed them continued exploring those options, as well as others…. The NDP government led by Premier Lorne Calvert did so by appointing the Commission on Financing Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education. The Commission’s main recommendation [made public in 2004] was reducing the proportion of funding for education derived from the property tax base and increasing the proportion of funding derived from provincial transfers.\(^{434}\)

The Calvert government said that they could not pursue such a plan without an increase in the funding it received from Ottawa via the equalization program.\(^{435}\) Without

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\(^{432}\) Liberal Party of Saskatchewan, *The Liberal Program*, 1971, no page numbers provided.


such funding, if education property taxes were reduced, it ultimately would have meant that funding for the education system would decline, with the provincial government getting the blame. Wanting to avoid this, the NDP government never did fundamentally change the manner in which properties were taxed for education purposes.

However, the provincial government had to do something because of anger about high property taxes, particularly in rural areas. It also had to do something because the opposition parties in the 1990s were promising that if elected they would, in the case of the Liberals, increase the share of provincial grants to the education system, and, in the case of the Saskatchewan Party, cease “provincial offloading,” thus providing relief for property owners. The Tories were also pressing the government to address high education property taxes.


437 Liberal Party of Saskatchewan, Putting Saskatchewan People First...The Clear Choice, 1999, no page numbers provided. The Liberals promised that if elected in 1999, by the end of their fourth year they would cover 50% of the costs of education as opposed to the roughly 40% that the NDP was providing in the late 1990s. In their 2003 platform, the Liberals stated that “the present funding formula for education does not reflect the principle that education is primarily a provincial responsibility. Saskatchewan Liberals are committed to properly funding our K-12 education system. The Calvert NDP contributes about 40% of the ‘operating grants’ for school boards with about 60% of the ‘operating grant’ being generated by the local taxpayer. Saskatchewan Liberals believe in a long-term plan to reform the way we fund our publicly supported education system. Liberals will take a reasoned and sustainable approach. Over a ten year time frame, our government commits to contributing 70% of the local residential and agricultural taxpayers portion of the operating costs of our schools, with local residential and agricultural taxpayers contributing the remaining 30%. The commercial industrial contribution ratio will remain the same. The provincial contribution will grow to provide relief to individual property owners and to our agricultural community. This shift would underscore the provincial role and responsibility to be the major contributor to education.” Source: Liberal Party of Saskatchewan, ReEnergizing Saskatchewan, 2003, 26. In 2007, the party argued that “The current economic boom has led to an unsustainable increase in the cost of living for the province’s homeowners and renters. With property taxes on the rise and rents skyrocketing, the Saskatchewan Liberal Party proposes that the education portion of property tax be eliminated.” Source: Saskatchewan Liberal Party, Building a Province for Tomorrow, 2007, 9.

438 Saskatchewan Party, The Way Up: Election Platform of the Saskatchewan Party, 1999, 16. The party did not provide any specifics as to how it would end the offloading. In 2003, the party promised that if elected, they would “increase the provincial government’s share of funding to K-12 education from its current level of about 40% up to 50% within our first term; Cut the education portion of property tax by allowing it to be deducted from taxable income for provincial income tax…; cut the education portion of the property tax on agricultural land by 15%...” Source: Saskatchewan Party, Let’s Get Saskatchewan Growing, 2003, 13. In 2007, they promised that if elected, they would “reduce the education portion of property taxes for Saskatchewan families by doubling property tax rebates over four years…[and to increase] K-12 education operating funding to school boards by 20% over four years – a $118-million investment in education.” Source: Saskatchewan Party, Securing the Future: New Ideas for Saskatchewan, 2007, 14.
taxes via an increase in provincial finding, because they criticized the governing New Democrats for not providing enough provincial grants, in turn forcing school boards to increase education property taxes.  

Due to these pressures, the government decided to implement a series of tax credits. In 2004 it announced that it would provide a tax credit for farm properties for three years. The following year it announced that it would implement a tax credit in 2005 and 2006 for all property owners. In 2006, it announced an “ongoing” credit for rural property owners. As such, in the second period, there was agreement across the political spectrum in Saskatchewan regarding the need to ensure that a reduced portion of funding for the province’s education system was derived from property taxes. Although the governing NDP did not increase the share of provincial grants, which is what the aforementioned opposition parties were advocating, by providing a tax credit for property owners, it was indirectly increasing the amount that was directed towards education from provincial coffers.

After the second period, in 2009, Saskatchewan introduced the same policy that Alberta and Ontario had implemented. The governing Saskatchewan Party believed such a policy was necessary in order to address the problem of over reliance on property taxes to fund education, and allow for equity in funding across all school districts, and consistent with the dictates of the neoliberal consensus, allow for tax relief to property owners. We know

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439 Saskatchewan, Legislative Assembly, Legislative Debates (Hansard), 23rd Legislature, 1st Session, March 29, 1996 (Ben Heppner), http://docs.legassembly.sk.ca/legdocs/Legislative%20Assembly/Hansard/23L1S/96-03-29.pdf#page=6.
440 Garcea, 18.
this to be the case because the minister of finance, when announcing the new policy in his 2009 budget speech, explicitly mentioned that a main objective of the policy was to “significantly reduce the education portion of property tax.”

Given the popularity and necessity of this policy, the New Democratic Party did not advance a policy position that was critical of the government vis-à-vis to this issue at the time it was announced or promise during the election campaign of 2011 that they would undo it if they returned to office. The Liberals also did not criticize the policy because as far back as 2007, they had adopted a more extreme position regarding property taxes and the power of school boards. Specifically, in their 2007 election platform, they stated that “with property taxes on the rise and rents skyrocketing,” it was necessary “that the education portion of property tax be eliminated,” meaning that education funding would be derived solely from provincial general revenues, without any input or influence from school boards in terms of how much was spent on education. As such, the Liberals were in favour of centralizing funding for education, reducing the power of school boards, and reducing property taxes, though in a slightly different manner than the governing Saskatchewan Party. Overall, like the other two provinces, there was cross-party agreement concerning the need to reduce high property taxes, which reflects the neoliberal consensus in place during the second period.

School Boards’ Control Over Curricula

444 Government of Saskatchewan, Budget Speech, 26th Legislature, 2nd Session, 2009. (Budget speeches can be obtained from www.poltext.org.)
In addition to examining the degree of centralization of taxation powers, another manner in which we can determine if there are differences in the relationship between provincial governments and school boards is by analyzing who had control over curricula. In Canadian provinces, the ministries of education essentially determine the extent to which they want to be in control of the curricula for their education systems. Each education ministry usually establishes a curriculum “committee comprised of teachers, teacher federation representatives, university faculty and, sometimes, members of the public or business representatives. This committee develops a general guideline which, once approved by the Ministry of Education, becomes the legal curriculum for the provincial schools.”^447

However, what the committees produce is sometimes very general in nature, especially for elementary grades,^448 which means that local school boards have the power to enhance and structure curricula for the various subjects in a manner that reflects the wishes and interests of their communities. Having said that, the ministries at times have produced fairly specific guidelines, thus preventing school boards from having any sort of influence over the curricula. This is done so that policymakers at the centre can ensure that all students that graduate from their education systems have learned a particular set of subjects and skills so as to be prepared for employment and post-secondary education. Therefore, by examining centralization (or decentralization) of curriculum development, we would be able to determine if one or the other was done in a given period by all governments irrespective of differences in their ideologies, which would reveal a great deal about the influence of ideas, specifically Keynesianism and neoliberalism and the policy paradigms that were based on them, as discussed in chapter two.


^448 Ibid., 13.
Beginning with the first period in Ontario, the province’s elementary curriculum was re-written for the first time since 1937 with the 1967 publication of *Interim Revision Introduction and Guide*. Unlike the 1937 document, *Interim Revision* emphasized decentralization, meaning that it was very general in nature and left it to school boards and classroom teachers to essentially structure the curriculum as they saw fit.\(^{449}\) In 1975, a new elementary curriculum was published. Titled *The Formative Years*, “in a brief twenty-three pages, [it] set out in the tersest of terms the objectives to be achieved in the various subjects. It was, in this respect, clearly intended to reinforce the decentralizing impulses of the 1960s: the ministry provided the broadest aims and objectives; the details of what, how, and when were to be left to local people to determine.”\(^{450}\)

In terms of secondary grades, a new curriculum was introduced in 1962 and was known as the Robarts Plan because it was spearheaded by former minister of education, John Robarts. The curriculum was fairly rigid because it “specified the compulsory and optional subjects in each branch, and provided that different subjects would be allotted different amounts of teaching time…. Large numbers of compulsory subjects, differential time allocations, and five or six distinctive branches made it almost impossible to open up the program of studies.”\(^{451}\) In 1969, a new high school curriculum was introduced, which introduced the credit system and allowed a means of transitioning away from the rigid Robarts Plan.\(^{452}\)

However, by the mid-1970s, because of dissatisfaction with the high school curricula, the ministry took a new approach: it decided that it would take far more control in terms of

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\(^{449}\) Gidney, 68-70.  
\(^{450}\) Ibid., 80-81.  
\(^{451}\) Ibid., 65-66.  
\(^{452}\) Ibid., 79.
how high school students progressed yearly and what they were taught in each subject. Change was needed, because as the then education minister argued, a decentralized curriculum writing process “‘was great in theory, but just wasn’t working.’ The costs had been ‘too much in time and money for [local board] curriculum committees all over trying to do the same thing.’... Equally, he argued, ministry guidelines had become ‘too broad and general. The current guideline for Grade 9 Canadian history, for example, is only 800 words long. That isn’t enough.’ As a consequence, the government would move towards more detailed guidelines, beginning with the subjects that constituted the new compulsory core. And he promised they would be available for use in September 1977.”

The education minister felt that this was required because “in the heady years of the late 1960s and early 1970s, ‘we may have gone too far in decentralizing the responsibility for the preparation of courses of study.’ The idea ‘was great in theory but it just isn’t working.’”

This move towards a more centralized curriculum development process took place at the same time as the abandonment of the progressivism of the Hall-Dennis Report that started in the mid-1970s, which was discussed in chapter two. As such, the government sought to centralize power so as to be able to re-direct the education system in a new direction that it thought would produce better outcomes.

In the second period, under the NDP government, curriculum guidelines were criticized as still being too vague by the commissioners of the Royal Commission on Learning. After the release of the commission’s report, the government expressed support regarding “the commission’s case for greater centralization of control of the curriculum: organized around ‘outcomes’ from junior kindergarten to grade 12, a province-wide

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453 Ibid., 95.
455 Gidney, 227.
curriculum would be introduced, accompanied by sets of standards for all the core subjects, and school-ready curricular materials."456 The then education minister said that “the ministry will…take a central role in the development of curriculum.”457

But less than six months after the release of the Commission’s report, the New Democrats were replaced in office by the PC Party. The Tories did not abandon the centralization of curriculum development that the New Democrats had said they would pursue.458 The government wanted the power over such a process so as to ensure “province-wide consistency about what was to be taught when.”459 When the Liberals came into power in 2003, they maintained the overall centralized process of curriculum development.

It should not be assumed, however, that the centralization of curriculum development mostly seen under the PCs and Liberals in the second period excluded other actors when developing curricula. Actors such as parents or experts from post-secondary institutions could influence policy documents460 and school boards could even give feedback—at least under the Liberals—before the final curriculum for a subject was published.461 But this does not contradict the larger point which is the focus of this section: the ministry of education had come to control the process at the expense of school boards, which essentially meant that the latter had to implement what the former produced as opposed to having the ability to

456 Ibid., 232.
459 Gidney, 240. This argument is also advanced in: Laura Elizabeth Pinto, Curriculum Reform in Ontario: ‘Common Sense Policy Processes and Democratic Possibilities (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 55.
461 Ibid., 304.
independently develop curricula. This emphasis on centralizing curricula development is connected to the accountability paradigm—a paradigm influenced by the dictates of the neoliberal consensus—which emphasizes standards, as discussed in chapter two. More precisely, “Standards were a means to centralise control as to what students should learn. The increasing demand for standards influenced the specificity of the curriculum documents since 1985.”

In Alberta, prior to the election of the PC Party in the first period, the overall policymaking process, including curriculum development, was fairly decentralized, with “teachers and other education professionals” having the ability to influence the policy outputs. Even in the PC’s first term, decentralization of curriculum development was emphasized, right up to the end of their first term. In fact, not long before the election in March 1975, the plan in the ministry was to decentralize curriculum decision-making. In a December 19, 1974 letter to the deputy minister, the ministry’s director of curriculum wrote the following: “During a recent telephone conversation, you indicated that Mr. Hyndman [the minister of education] would like to make an announcement in the New Year concerning the decentralization of curriculum decision-making, restructuring of the curriculum boards, increased lay involvement, and the like.”

Even after the election, plans were being made for “operationalizing the decentralization of curriculum decision-making.”

However, at the start of the government’s second term in the mid-1970s, just as there were plans being made to decentralize the curriculum development process, there were

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462 Ibid., 325.
463 Wagner, 79.
464 Provincial Archives of Alberta, Records Created by Deputy Minister and Assistant Deputy Minister of Instruction and Support, GR1983.0091, Box 24, File: 263.
465 This was stated in a May 7, 1975 memorandum from a senior official written to the associate deputy minister. Source: Ibid.
moves being made which would, ironically, centralize the curriculum development process. Part of the reason for this was that a new minister of education—Julian Koziak—was appointed in the second term. Upon becoming minister, he “decided to review the process for curriculum policy making in the province. ‘The Government had concluded that the educational community was too influential in the direction in which education was moving. Educators were perceived to lack understanding of what the needs of society were generally, and what the public demanded of public education specifically.’ In 1976 Koziak established the Curriculum Policies Board to oversee the development of curriculum and to help develop the Goals of Basic Education.”

The Board was created so as “to recommend policies to the Minister of Education related to curriculum procedures and programming for Grades 1-12 in Alberta.” The government received support for its centralization of curriculum development because the Harder Report, which was released in 1977, essentially recommended that this process be firmly in the hands of the ministry. This was a contributing factor that led to a lot of anger and protest from school boards after the Harder Report was released. As in Ontario, the move towards centralization of the curriculum development process was connected to the questions and concerns that citizens and government officials had about the dominant education paradigm (i.e. the person-regarding paradigm), as discussed in chapter two.

In the second period, centralization continued to be the norm, especially under the Klein government. What guided the centralized curriculum development process in the

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466 Wagner, 80.
467 Ibid., 127.
468 Ibid., 129.
469 Provincial Archives of Alberta, Minister of Education Hon. J. Koziak's Files, GR1979.0200, Box 4, File: 41.
471 Wagner, 93.
second period was not just path dependence and familiarity. Rather a ministry document released in 1991, *Vision for the Nineties: A Plan of Action*, listed various priorities for the ministry, among which was “a results-based provincial curriculum.” In other words, there was a concerted effort to continue to centralize curriculum development so as to ensure that the education system was focused on education goals that were deemed important and necessary in a time in which the paradigm in place—as discussed in chapter two—dictated that governments track what was being taught in school and the extent to which students were learning what they were being taught. Provincial officials were even proud of their centralized curriculum and the results it produced. In 2004, the then education minister argued that it is the province’s “centralized” curriculum, which is the cause of the province’s students performing well in international tests. The Learning Commission also argued that the students’ strong performance is due to the “centralized” curriculum.

Unlike Ontario and Alberta, the relationship between the various governments of Saskatchewan and school boards vis-à-vis the power to develop curricula material has been more balanced. An internal ministry of education document prior to the start of the first period (written in January of 1968) explicitly outlines the emphasis on local autonomy. In a list of functions that the ministry is responsible for, one of the listed functions is “to provide necessary services to local districts for the development of the instructional program.” The ministry would not be taking the lead and forcing school boards to simply implement curricula that were developed in Regina. Rather, the ministry saw its role as facilitating local

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474 The Saskatchewan Archives, Department of Education: Program Development Branch, R-1234, File: 3.9 (Curriculum Information).
initiatives in the curriculum development process. Later on in the document, this particular point is emphasized: “One long-range goal of the Department of Education should be to encourage local developments which will prepare local school authorities and professional personnel to accept an increasing degree of responsibility in areas such as curricula, supervision and instructional planning and evaluation. Increasing involvement of trustees and teachers in planning committees and in local experimentation will result in further decentralization.”

Emphasis on decentralization continued throughout the first period in Saskatchewan; there was not an abandonment of this principle as occurred in the other two provinces. For example, in a June 1977 letter to a citizen, the then minister of education wrote that “the Government of Saskatchewan, in particular, the Department of Education, are [sic] committed to the need for local input in educational decision-making.” The main opposition parties also emphasised the need to allow local autonomy in terms of key aspects of the education system. This is evident because the Liberals, in their 1975 election platform, pledged that if elected, they would “encourage maximum degree of local control regarding educational programmes and school maintenance within our educational system.”

Similarly, the Tories, without mentioning curricula development or “education programmes” directly, pledged in their 1978 election platform that they would “increase local control by elected boards of the school system...” thus implying that they would respect the principle of local autonomy and (mostly likely) not have centralized curricula development.

475 Ibid.
477 Liberal Party of Saskatchewan, A New Direction: The Choice is Yours, 1975, 6.
Even in the second period, Saskatchewan continued to show “strong commitment to local modification of centrally defined curriculum expectations.” What explains this commitment to local input in Saskatchewan? A key reason that Saskatchewan has always placed emphasis on local power in terms of curriculum development is that it is a very rural province with distinct communities, thus requiring such an approach to the writing of curricula material. In fact, the curricula guidelines in the province are so decentralized that they allow plenty of input from classroom teachers. For example, in the 1990s, when the ministry “revised all curricula…these revisions [just] present[ed] the objectives teachers are expected to achieve for the various courses; however, they specify neither content nor methods. These remain the domain of the classroom teacher. Curricula do provide model units, and teachers have the opportunity to develop their own units.”

Thus, in two of the provinces (Ontario and Alberta) we saw a movement towards a centralization of curricula development. As mentioned above, this was reflective of the accountability paradigm which itself was based on the dictates of neoliberalism as discussed in chapter two. Only if the provincial government took control of course content could it ensure that students were learning the subjects deemed to be important—so as to justify the high cost of public education—and necessary—so that standardized tests could be administered. In Saskatchewan, the dictates of neoliberalism were not persuasive enough in this aspect of education policy making to counteract the pressure to ensure that local communities had a say in the curricula of their schools. Having said that, it does not mean

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481 Ibid.
that partisanship was influential in terms of explaining the uniqueness of Saskatchewan. For example, the main opposition party in the second period, the Saskatchewan Party, argued in its 2003 election platform that if elected, it would “promote strong community...in the planning, decision-making and delivery of K-12 education.” Comparably, the Liberal Party, in its 2003 election platform listed the following as part of its education commitments: “The autonomy of boards of education to make decisions must be maintained.” Such positions indicate that if they were in office, the two opposition parties—like the governing New Democrats—would not have limited the ability of school boards to have control over important matters of schooling, one of the most important being the ability to determine the content of curricula.

The Extent of School Board Amalgamations

The amalgamation of school boards, which provincial governments can impose, is a useful means of determining whether a more conservative political party and neoliberal consensus results in more amalgamations given that both emphasize the need to reduce inefficiencies and costs, which are some of the reasons given by governments when they do amalgamate. Therefore, by determining exactly when amalgamations took place and the extent of the amalgamations, we can determine if the variables that are the focus of this study had a causal effect.

Before advancing, it should be noted that prior to the first period, “From the late 1930s to the early 1970s the basic unit of local administration in Canada was transformed from small districts based on school attendance areas to large regional or county school

districts. In these large school districts elected boards of five to fifteen members had local jurisdiction over several thousand pupils, a hundred or more elementary or secondary schools, and an array of specialized educational services."\textsuperscript{484} Thus, provinces, including the three that are the focus of this study, had slowly, over a period of four decades, significantly reshaped the local administration structure of their school systems.

Therefore, from a policy analysis standpoint, the 1970s were uneventful because key policies regarding the number of school boards in a given province had been made prior to that decade. In Ontario, for example, just before the arrival of the 1970s, two significant decisions were made by the provincial government that fundamentally changed the structure and number of school boards in the province. In 1964, “a new method of distributing provincial grants” was implemented. However, in order for the new method to be successful, it “required both large units [i.e. school boards] and, in terms of their tax base, comparable ones…. [Because of this], coincident with the introduction of the plan, in early 1964, [the education minister] brought legislation before the House that made the township the administrative unit for the public schools in rural areas.” This resulted in school board numbers declining virtually overnight.\textsuperscript{485}

However, the government seemingly was anticipating that there needed to be more consolidation. This is because in addition to the aforementioned legislation in 1964, the government put forth legislation “to pave the way for the voluntary creation of even larger units, this time at the county level. But in [the] following years little progress was made.” The government decided to act by passing a new law in 1968, which took effect the following year, that resulted in “moving from boards representing townships, villages, towns,
and cities, to boards for entire counties…. The combined result of the legislation of 1964 and 1968…was to reduce the total number of administrative units in Ontario from something like 3500 to 230.”

As uneventful as the 1970s were in Ontario in terms of policies related to school board amalgamations, the second period could not have been more different. Beginning with the NDP’s time in office, there were proposals regarding the need to reduce the number of school boards in the province. In fact, the call for reducing school boards began early in the NDP’s term. “In the run-up to the school-board elections in autumn 1991, and multiplying during 1992, questions began to be asked about the possible saving that would accrue to public education if local administration were reorganized. Sometimes the talk amounted to no more than reducing the number of trustees. Sometimes it was about board amalgamation. Occasionally someone would suggest outright abolition. Tony Silipo, the NDP government’s second minister of education, was ordering boards ‘to explore ways to end duplicated services.’ The Star was running front-page stories on the extent of ‘duplication’ and ‘waste’ within Metro.”

When Dave Cooke replaced Silipo as minister of education in 1993, he continued to be focused on seeking savings from school board operations, specifically by amalgamating them. In fact, “not only did he issue dire warnings that if boards didn’t [amalgamate], the government would, but he immediately appointed consultants to make recommendations about amalgamation in Windsor-Essex and Ottawa-Carleton, and pressed ahead with a similar plan for London-Middlesex.” According to a former senior official, another reason why the province had to amalgamate school boards was that since French separate and public

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486 Ibid., 49.
487 Ibid., 195.
488 Ibid., 197.
school boards had to be created, as a result of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which meant that French students had a right to have their own school boards, it would have been too costly to create these new boards without amalgamating existing ones.\textsuperscript{489} Therefore, even though the Royal Commission on Learning examined the issue and did not recommend amalgamation, “Cooke remained adamant…. [He] announced in February 1995 that the number of school boards would be cut in half…. [Furthermore] he established a four-person task force, headed by John Sweeney… to work out the details… [and] report by 31 December 1995.”\textsuperscript{490}

Clearly, the stage was set for school board amalgamations. However, a few months after the February announcement, the NDP were voted out of office. Upon coming into office, the PCs allowed the Sweeney task force to continue with its work, showing that they were interested in the idea of amalgamating school boards.\textsuperscript{491} The Sweeney task force released its report in February 1996, and recommended a “massive reduction in the number of school boards.”\textsuperscript{492} Although the government studied the possibility of abolishing all school boards, they ultimately decided to follow the advice of the Sweeney task force, not to mention the report from the Who Does What Education Sub-panel which also recommended in 1996 that school boards should be reduced, not completely abolished.\textsuperscript{493} Thus the government introduced legislation, Bill 104, which became law the following year, which reduced the number of school boards from 129 to 72 (among other changes).\textsuperscript{494}

\textsuperscript{489} Personal interview, November 13\textsuperscript{th}, 2014. French school boards were created in all three provinces during the 1990s due to court rulings.
\textsuperscript{490} Gidney, 198.
\textsuperscript{491} Ibid., 237.
\textsuperscript{492} Ibid., 243.
\textsuperscript{493} Archives of Ontario, Deputy Minister of Education Files, RG 2-28, B190070, File: 12.
\textsuperscript{494} Gidney, 247.
government justified the policy by arguing that it would result in $150 million in savings.\textsuperscript{495} Thus, in the post-1990 years, consistent with the neoliberal consensus which dictates that governments reduce spending, we saw two ideologically distinct parties pursue amalgamation for this very reason. The other major political party in Ontario, the Liberal Party, was also in support of amalgamations. This is clear because during committee hearings prior to the implementation of the governing Tories’ amalgamation plan, Liberal MPPs made it clear that they were not against what the government was doing, but simply wishing that they had followed the exact recommendations of the Sweeney task force (e.g. reducing the number of boards consistent with what the task force recommended, not more than what was recommended)\textsuperscript{496} and changing the pace of amalgamations.\textsuperscript{497}

Turning to Alberta, at the start of the first period, the aforementioned Worth Commission, in its final report in 1972, argued that there should be school board amalgamations so as to address the inequities that existed between rural and urban parts of the provinces.\textsuperscript{498} However, there were no amalgamations in the province during the subsequent eight years. What occurred was the exact opposite: there was an increase in the


\textsuperscript{497} Ontario, Legislative Assembly, Standing Committee on Social Development, \textit{Minutes of Proceedings}, 36\textsuperscript{th} Legislature, 1\textsuperscript{st} Session, March 26, 1997 (Lyn McLeod), http://www.ontla.on.ca/web/committee-proceedings/committee_transcripts_details.do?locale=en&Date=1997-03-26&ParlCommID=54&BillID=&Business=Bill+104%2C+Fewer+School+Boards+Act%2C+1997&DocumentID=18884

\textsuperscript{498} Alberta’s Commission on Educational Planning, \textit{A Future of Choices, A Choice of Futures} (Edmonton: Government of Alberta, 1972), 74.
number of school boards. This was because when the PCs came into office in 1971, they “simplified the process of resident application, making school jurisdictions easier to form.”499

By the 1990s, as the number of boards had increased greatly over the years and a new government having been elected (the Klein government) that was very interested in reducing costs, there were bound to be changes to the number of boards in existence in the province. This is because well before the Klein government was elected, the high number of school boards was being questioned. In 1984, a “discussion paper to guide the School Act review was released by Minister of Education Dave King…listing the different issues that needed to be considered in the form of questions. Under the ‘Governance of Education’ section, [one] of the issues listed was: ‘Are Albertans well served by 150 distinct school jurisdictions?’… Although this did not lead to a noticeable public concern about the number of jurisdictions, it was at least an issue that had come to the attention of the departmental officials involved in rewriting the School Act.”500

Two months after being elected, the Klein government began the process of amalgamation. In August of 1993, it amalgamated 35 non-operating boards with those in operation, bringing down the number of school boards to 147. This was done because “by reducing the number of school boards, it was claimed that money could be saved through the elimination of redundant administration. This was thus an attractive option for the government.”501 In fact, when justifying the policy, the minister of finance, in his 1994 budget speech framed the decision in the following manner: “Targeting waste and duplication continues to be a priority in Budget ’94….This year we’re expanding our focus to

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499 Wagner, 106.
500 Ibid., 107.
501 Ibid.
the entire public sector, asking the tough, basic questions. Do we need 140 school boards in Alberta?...By getting rid of waste and duplication, we can focus our efforts where we need them the most: in the classroom."

Moreover, the government also had to amalgamate school boards because by taking education property taxing power away from trustees, as discussed above, it meant that “small school districts with a poor assessment base would no longer be viable as funds were cut.”

Therefore the government wanted to, and believed it had to, further reduce the number of boards. The ministry’s 1994 business plan explicitly mentioned that it wanted to essentially cut the number in half. Because of this objective, “in February 1994, [the] government announced that” boards would have to start discussions with each other to amalgamate “and set a six-month period for voluntary agreements to be reached, with a target date for reorganization set at January 1, 1995. This process brought about the establishment of 70 school districts, which the minister subsequently reduced to 63” which is the current number of boards in the province. This process also reduced the number of trustees from 1100 to 460.

In the new millennium, there continued to be discussions about further amalgamation in the province. For example, although the Commission on Learning stated that it did not recommend school board amalgamations, it did recommend that “the provincial government provide incentives and support pilot projects for school jurisdictions that are interested in

503 Alison Taylor, The Politics of Education Reform in Alberta (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 76. Although these are the cited author’s words, they are based on information provided by a civil servant that the author interviewed.
504 Wagner, 108
considering joint services or exploring potential amalgamations.”

Seemingly, the Commission was arguing for purely voluntary amalgamations without any directives from the provincial government. However, no further amalgamations took place in the second period. With respect to the opposition parties, they did not advance any policy regarding undoing the PC’s decision. In fact, in 1993, the Liberal Party released a policy paper in which they argued that if they were elected they would study the issue of board boundaries and implied that they would support amalgamations. Similarly, in their 1993 election platform, New Democratic Party also indicated that it probably have pursued amalgamations if it was elected because they pledged to undertake a total review of the sector, and one of the areas listed as part of the review was “board amalgamations.”

As in Ontario and Alberta, the governments of Saskatchewan in the first period did not pursue amalgamation. This changed in the second period. But the manner in which the province pursued amalgamations is somewhat different in comparison to the other two provinces. From the very start of the period, there were discussions about the need to reduce the number of boards. In 1991, a government commissioned report, *School Finance and Governance Review*, argued that there should be amalgamations in the province so as reduce costs. However, because of negative reaction by school trustees, the government chose to ignore the recommendation regarding amalgamations. In 1994, though, four school boards amalgamated voluntary.

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Yet, the government knew that it had to address the high cost of education as it was tackling a budget deficit. As such, two years later, “after extensive public consultations, [the minister of education] asked local school boards to examine, with their communities and neighbours, the best ways to structure education to sustain and improve the quality of education for their students.” 511 The minister stressed that such a process is different than other provinces because of its emphasis on local input. 512 In fact, a former ministry of education official stated that the voluntary approach was adopted precisely so that local autonomy and decision making could be respected. 513 The approach led twenty boards to amalgamate and create eight new boards in 1997, which at that time was “the single most significant school board restructuring in Saskatchewan since 1944.” 514 Between 1997 and 2002, some other school boards voluntarily amalgamated.

However, by 2002, the province “was concerned that the move to larger school divisions was progressing too slowly and decided to offer an incentive [specifically financial incentives] for boards that were willing to amalgamate.” 515 When the government introduced the incentives, “It set ‘a goal of reducing the number of school divisions by 25 per cent (25 school divisions) prior to the board elections in October 2003.’ Although many school divisions co-operated, by the end of the period the number of school divisions had been reduced by only 18 percent. By January of 2004, the number of school divisions in the province had been reduced to 81 … [meaning] the incentives had failed to inspire sufficient

512 Ibid.
513 Personal interview, January 9th, 2015.
515 Jackie Kirk, An Examination of School Division Restructuring in Saskatchewan (Regina: Saskatchewan School Board Association, 2008), 15. In terms of the financial incentives, the province was offering “Consideration Support - $7500; Amalgamation/ Restructuring Transition Assistance – maximum $450,000; Early Commitment Support - $15,000” as long as amalgamations were completed by October 2003.
Wanting to be provided with possible policy solutions, the government, “On May 2nd, 2003…struck the Commission on Financing Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education....”\textsuperscript{517} The report by the Commission recommended that the manner in which education in the province is funded should be reformed so that the system was not reliant on property owners to provide the majority of the funds, but recognized that this alone “would not fully achieve equity for students and ratepayers. As a result, they recommended forming a task force that would be assigned the task of redrawing the school division boundaries to allow for regional tax pooling.”\textsuperscript{518}

After the release of the report, the government responded in May of 2004 by announcing a three phase Education Equity Initiative which included the establishment of a three-member taskforce (the Education Equity Task Force) to recommend new school boundaries. The government instructed the task force that there should not be more than forty school boards. That August, the Task Force released a preliminary map so as to get feedback from the public. In November, the final version of the map was released by the Task Force and they recommended that there be only twenty-eight school boards. The proposal was adopted by the government. All the new boards had elections for new trustees by June of 2005 and they became operational on January 1, 2006.\textsuperscript{519}

The reason why the government was so focused on reducing the number of school boards was because they saw it as an opportunity to increase efficiencies by reducing spending and being able to provide property tax relief\textsuperscript{520} since certain areas with lower

\textsuperscript{516} Ibid., 16.
\textsuperscript{517} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{518} Ibid., 17.
\textsuperscript{519} Ibid., 17-20, 24.
property values would be merged with those with higher property values, resulting in taxpayers in the former areas seeing a reduction in their education property taxes. These objectives show the influence of the neoliberal consensus which dictates the need for governments to reduce spending and provide tax relief as much as possible. It should be noted that if one of the opposition parties was in office during the second period, as opposed to the New Democratic Party, which was in office in all the years of the period except the first year and last year, they too would have pursued amalgamations. In the 1990s, the main opposition parties, the Liberals\textsuperscript{521} and Tories,\textsuperscript{522} both made it clear that they were not opposed to amalgamations, only criticizing the government for not adequately consulting local communities (in the case of the Liberals), or not allowing local communities to lead the amalgamation process without interference from the Ministry (in the case of the Tories). In the new millennium, the province’s main opposition party, the Saskatchewan Party, would have also implemented an amalgamation policy if it was in office. This is evident because in committee hearings, it was made clear by members of the party that they supported amalgamations, even though they questioned the manner and the pace in which the policy was implemented.\textsuperscript{523}

Conclusion

\textsuperscript{521} Saskatchewan, Legislative Assembly, \textit{Legislative Debates (Hansard)}, 23\textsuperscript{rd} Legislature, 1\textsuperscript{st} Session, March 8, 1996 (Ken Krawetz), http://docs.legassembly.sk.ca/legdocs/Legislative%20Assembly/Hansard/23L1S/96-03-08.pdf#page=6.

\textsuperscript{522} Saskatchewan, Legislative Assembly, \textit{Legislative Debates (Hansard)}, 23\textsuperscript{rd} Legislature, 1\textsuperscript{st} Session, May 7, 1996 (Ben Heppner), http://docs.legassembly.sk.ca/legdocs/Legislative%20Assembly/Hansard/23L1S/96-05-07.pdf#page=7.

\textsuperscript{523} Saskatchewan, Legislative Assembly, Standing Committee on Human Services, \textit{Minutes of Proceedings}, 25\textsuperscript{th} Legislature, 1\textsuperscript{st} Session, November 29, 2004 (Glen Hart), http://docs.legassembly.sk.ca/legdocs/Legislative%20Committees/HUS/Debates/041129Debates-HUS.pdf.
This chapter has allowed us to see once again why focusing on the ideological stripe of governing parties as a means of understanding the causes of education policy outputs is not helpful. Instead, only by taking into account the policy consensuses of the two periods can we understand the causes and timing of policy decisions concerning school boards. As discussed in previous chapters, the consensus of the first period—Keynesianism—did not emphasize tax cuts or implementing policies simply to reduce government spending as the consensus of the second period did. Consequently, we did not see governments pursue policies just because they reduced costs or were a means of reducing taxes for citizens. For example, we saw that high education property taxes were an issue that all parties in the provinces—both governing parties and opposition parties—discussed and wanted to address. However, none of the governments—regardless of province or political stripe—implemented the one policy that could reduce taxes on property owners: taking the power to set rates away from trustees. Instead, the governments of the three provinces dealt with the problem by introducing other measures or ignoring it because policy goals such as reducing taxes were simply not a major policy requirement in the first period as it was when the ideational environment had changed by the second period.

As discussed above, however, two opposition parties, the Saskatchewan Tories and the Alberta NDP, argued that funding for education should be provided by general revenues (i.e. not allowing for the taxation of property by school boards to fund their provincial education systems). Having said that, only in the case of the former party was the primary objective to reduce taxes. In the case of the Alberta NDP, they were in favour of centralizing funding of education due to their belief that such a policy would ensure that a more equitable education system could be provided all across the province if funding was based completely
on the progressive tax base of the provincial government, as opposed to wanting to centralize funding as a means of reducing taxes for property owners. Thus, all governing and opposition parties, except the opposition Tories in Saskatchewan, believed that it was not imperative to prevent school boards from being able to levy education property taxes in order to provide a greater degree of tax relief for property owners because, to reiterate, the ideational climate of the 1970s did not emphasize such a policy objective, unlike the ideational climate of the post-1990 years.

Similarly, although amalgamation of school boards is often pursued in order to enhance education equity, it is also done so as to reduce the overall costs in the sector. In the first period we did not see amalgamations because in the decades leading up to it, there had been amalgamations in order to ensure education equity. Since the consensus of that decade did not require cost cutting as a policy goal that should be pursued, amalgamations were not pursued by the governments of the provinces. Further amalgamating school boards at that point would not have served the purpose of enhancing education equity. That issue had been dealt with by the amalgamations that led up to the first period. Instead, if governments pursued amalgamation, it would have been for purely cost cutting reasons. As we saw, they did not do this because the dictates of the consensus of that period did not require it. In contrast, amalgamations were pursued in the second period primarily for cost cutting reasons, which reflected the neoliberal consensus.

We even saw that decisions concerning curricula development were reflective of the broader consensuses, particularly in Ontario and Alberta in the second period (i.e. decisions to centralize curricula development were consistent with the need to introduce accountability in schooling—accountability, which as discussed in chapter two, was reflective of the
neoliberal consensus). Saskatchewan, because of its dispersed population and thus school boards catering to small, distinct communities, was an exception in this aspect of provincial school board policies.

The dominance of the two consensuses is also evident when we take into account the fact that opposition parties did not disagree with governing parties in terms of their decisions regarding school boards. Although other factors could have led to this, it cannot be denied that the dictates of the consensuses had led the parties to adopt similar policy positions, meaning that they were constrained in terms of the policy options they could advance related to this aspect of the sector. For example, we saw above that in Ontario and Alberta in the second period all three major parties in their party systems (the New Democrats, Liberals, and Tories) were supportive of the policy of not allowing trustees to set education property taxes, and how both the Ontario New Democrats and Tories were supportive of the policy to centralize curricula development, a policy which was subsequently kept by the Liberals when they came into office. Similarly, the New Democrats in Saskatchewan did not criticize the Saskatchewan Party for stripping the ability of local school boards to set local education property tax rates. Simply put, all major parties in all three provinces adopted policy positions in the second period that were reflective of the dictates of the neoliberal consensus, specifically dictates related to efficiency, low spending, and low taxes. In the next chapter, the story will change somewhat as we will see the political party variable become consequential as we seek to understand policies concerning non-traditional schools.
Chapter 5

Provincial Policies Regarding Private and Charter Schools

The focus of this study up to this point has been on the policies of the three provinces regarding how they fund and structure their traditional education systems (i.e. public and separate schools). In contrast, this chapter will focus on how the three provinces have allowed private and charter schools to be components of their education systems. This will allow us to determine whether traditional public schools have had their utility and legitimacy challenged more—with proposed or implemented policies that allow for other types of schools to offer an alternative—by neoliberal political parties and as the ideational climate changed in the latter half of the twentieth century.

After all, in modern education systems—at least in Canada—public school advocates often argue that public schools and private or non-traditional public schools (i.e. charter schools) are mutually exclusive, meaning promotion or financial support of the latter will come at the expense of the former. Therefore, according to such arguments, governments that promote and offer financial support to non-public schools are portrayed as being neoliberal or following the dictates of a neoliberal consensus. This is because promotion of private and

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524 Contrary to popular belief, charter schools are not private schools. According one charter school advocate, they can be defined as: “An independent public school of choice, given a charter or contract for a specified period of time (typically five years) to educate children according to the school’s own design, with a minimum of bureaucratic oversight. It may be a new school, started from scratch, or an existing one that secedes from its school district. It is held accountable to the terms of its charter and continues to exist only if it fulfills those terms. As a public school of choice, it is attended by students whose families select it and staffed by educators who choose to teach in it.” Quoted in: Thomas L. Good and Jennifer S. Braden, The Great School Debate: Choice, Vouchers, and Charters (Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2000), 119.
charter schools is a means of introducing market mechanisms, which is a key tenet of neoliberalism, into the education sector.\textsuperscript{525}

The debate and tension regarding the status of public and non-public schools, and whether the two can and should coexist is not new. This is because traditional public schooling (i.e. universal, free\textsuperscript{526} education for all, with state oversight)—in English Canada, particularly modern-day Ontario and the Atlantic provinces—emerged in the mid-nineteenth century only after private, church-operated education had already been established in the colonies that came to comprise the provinces of this country. When this occurred, this “new” form of education faced “passionate religious” opposition, especially by Roman Catholic and Anglican conservatives, which, until then, had a firm hold on the education of children.\textsuperscript{527}

\textsuperscript{525} This was not always the view of school choice. This is because the proponents of it have changed: “Today’s opponents of choice correctly trace its modern origins to the market principles of Milton Friedman, but often forget that in the 1960s and 1970s, most choice advocates were unambiguously on the political left. At that time, leftists portrayed schools as inhumane, jail-like institutions that crushed youthful spirits. The stodgy, old-guard educational establishment, they claimed, could be countered only by localizing power. Left educationalists—Marxists, anarchists, even radical theologians—rallied behind choice, believing it would unleash the creative energies of students and teachers alike, and lead to a freer, more imaginative schooling. ‘Free school,’ an unstructured type of schooling driven by student self-motivation, briefly flourished in the late 1960s and early 1970s, but widespread enthusiasm soon dissipated. Hundreds of these schools were set up in the U.S., but many were soon closed because they were deemed to be unmanageable. Many of those left-wing critics, however, found a home in the educational establishment, and schools changed from their influence. Gone today from most classrooms are the old-style rows of individual desks, the military-like emphasis on order, and the insistence on drill and memorization. Today, the most vociferous critics of public education hail from the political centre or right. They argue, rightly or wrongly, that an overdose of ’60s-style thinking has made our schools sub-par. Schools, they argue, need to restore a balance between new and traditional methods, and parents should play a role in schools beyond the bake sale. To these critics, today’s education establishment is distant and uninviting to parents. Only a major shake-up in the form of school choice can improve the system.” Source: Scott Davies, “We Should Try a Few Charter Schools: The Next Big Issue in Ontario May Be School Choice, Either Within the System or With Competing Charter Schools,” \textit{The Hamilton Spectator}, 7 January 1998, A9.

\textsuperscript{526} Education is not free of course. Either taxes or fees are required to ensure the survival of any education system. However, when using the term free, it is meant to refer to schooling in which the government regulates it and pays for the personnel and buildings (and supplies to a certain extent) instead of individual schools charging fees.

\textsuperscript{527} Ronald Manzer, \textit{Public Schools and Political Ideas: Canadian Educational Policy in Historical Perspective} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 65. This should not be interpreted as suggesting that religious influence on “public education” ceased. The subjects and focus of schools were still to be religiously oriented. For a brief overview of the early history of education in the territory we now call Canada, refer to: Brenda MacKay and Michael W. Firmin, “The Historical Development of Private Education in Canada,” \textit{Education Research and Perspectives} 35, no. 2 (2008): 57-72.
Accordingly, we need to recognize that there has always been a desire for what we now consider non-traditional schools by various segments of the population, specifically by those who favour religious-oriented curricula and schooling, dating back to the period before Canada was created.

Having said that, the overall trajectory of education in the provinces, especially in the post-Confederation years, has been towards the consolidation and popularity of what we now consider traditional public education (i.e. universal and free, with direct state oversight). As such, when evaluating whether certain governments and provinces implemented policies to favour private or charter schools in recent years, we need to recognize that such policies contradict the overall general trend towards state-based schooling, which has been privileged since the mid-nineteenth century.

It should be noted that compared to other countries, in particular the United States, Canada has not seen as strong a push from religious organizations, certain parent groups, and other groups who are interested in introducing greater choice in the education systems of the provinces. But the push for greater choice has not been non-existent. In the sections to follow, I will discuss how the various governments of the three provinces have responded to requests for greater choice during the two periods that are the focus of this study.\footnote{\begin{footnotes}
528 The provinces policies regarding separate school boards will not be evaluated because all three provinces have—since their creations—publicly funded Catholic (and several Protestant) school boards, meaning there is a lack of variation and thus no insight to be gained about the variables that are the focus of this study.
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The first section will focus on Ontario, the second on Saskatchewan, and the third on Alberta. The fourth section will compare and analyze the policy outputs of the three provinces. As we will see, this area of education policy is one in which partisanship matters a great deal in the \textit{second period} that is the focus of this study. Specifically, it will be shown that although in the first period there was not a great deal of developments concerning non-
traditional schools, because major initiatives concerning such schools were implemented in the 1960s in two of the three provinces (Saskatchewan and Alberta), there was plenty of discussions, policy proposals, and decisions regarding non-traditional schools in the second period. It will be shown that neoliberal parties in all three provinces pursued policies that benefited non-traditional schools—policies which were criticized by other types of parties in each of the provincial party systems.

**Ontario**

The popularity of, and enrolments in, private schools in Ontario in the latter half of the twentieth century has not followed a consistent trajectory. Around World War II, such schools were facing an existential crisis. This is because “some found their socio-economic exclusivity now appealed to an ever declining constituency in a more egalitarian twentieth-century Canada. Others discovered that their religious emphases were less desired in an increasingly secular society. Many of the sexually segregated all-girls and all-boys schools lost potential pupils to the co-educational public school sector.”

However, beginning in the 1960s, private schools once again began to become popular among segments of the population, leading to more being established. In addition to seeing changes in the number of private schools in those years, there was also a change in the types of private schools being established, meaning that the private school sector saw

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529 Robert M. Stamp, *A History of Private Schools in Ontario* (Toronto: Government of Ontario, 1984), 19-20. This was a study that was completed for the Commission on Private Schools.

greater “religious and philosophic diversity.” These changes took place for a few key reasons.

First, there was the separate school factor. Because the province at that time only provided funding for separate schools up to grade ten, private schools were the only option for those who wanted a Catholic education in the final years of high school. But these types of Catholic private schools only made economic and practical sense in urban areas with a high Catholic population. This is because only in such areas did public separate schools exist that taught up to grade ten, which in turn would allow for private schools to be established because they had a student population base to draw from. When the province implemented county-sized school boards in the mid-1960s (as discussed in the previous chapter), it meant that “separate schools systems [sic] throughout Ontario had larger attendance areas and population bases upon which to construct Grades 9 and 10 classes that eventually fed into private Grades 11-13.” Therefore, more private Catholic schools began to be established throughout the province. There was an increase in the establishment of private Catholic high schools also because the government announced in 1971 that it would not provide funding to separate schools so that they could offer grades eleven to thirteen. This caused Catholics across the province to realize that if they wanted education until the end of high school that was based on their religion’s tenets, they had to establish their own private schools.

A second reason why there was an increase in the number and popularity of private schools in the post-1960 years in Ontario was a change in opinions and feelings about the public, secular education system on the part of the province’s Jewish community. Specifically, Jewish private schools began to be established so that the community could

531 Stamp, 22.  
532 Ibid., 23.  
533 Ibid., 24.
fight “against the perceived submergence of Jewish identity into a process of homogenization that Ontario’s post-war schools seemed to represent. The public school system offered few opportunities for transmitting a linguistic and cultural heritage so important to this minority”\textsuperscript{534} —transmission which could easily take place in private Jewish schools.

The third reason for the resurgence of private schools in the province was that some in the non-Catholic Christian community believed that the education system in the province “had become too secular.”\textsuperscript{535} Specifically, members of the province’s evangelical and fundamentalist Christian community began to abandon the public education system and establish their own private schools so as to ensure that their children could attend a school based on their belief “that a Christian atmosphere should permeate all aspects of schooling.”\textsuperscript{536}

An addition reason for the increase in the number of private schools in Ontario was the “rapid rise of schools founded for non-religious, purely educational or philosophic reasons.”\textsuperscript{537} Originally, these types of schools were formed beginning in the mid-1960s by those who could be described as being on the political left. They created private schools because of “the perceived inflexible, all-too-structured nature of the public school.” (Such sentiments were of course very prevalent at that time, as evidence by the recommendations of the Hall-Dennis report which was written around the same time, as discussed in chapter two.)

As the number and popularity of private schools was increasing in the 1960s and 1970s, pressure was applied on the government from advocates of these schools for funding.

\textsuperscript{534} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{535} Ibid., 25.
\textsuperscript{536} Ibid., 26.
\textsuperscript{537} Ibid., 26-27.
However, lobbying the government separately was not very successful. As a result, “it became clear that a more concerted effort was necessary. In 1974, the Ontario Association of Alternative and Independent Schools (OAAIS) was founded by participants from the Roman Catholic, evangelical Christian, and Jewish educational communities, along with representatives of some non-sectarian schools.” Even then, the government did not give in to demands of private school advocates by extending public funding or introducing tax credits for parents that sent their children to such schools.

As the 1970s progressed, the government did not change its policy regarding financial support for private schools. It should be noted that the two main opposition parties, the Liberals and the New Democrats, did not advance policies indicating that they would be supportive of financial aide for private schools or parents that sent their children to such schools. But the government’s policy regarding these schools changed on June 12th, 1984. On that date, the PC premier, Bill Davis announced in the legislature that starting in September 1985, the government would increase funding to separate school boards so that they could offer education grades until the end of high school. At the same time, the government announced that it would create three commissions, one of which—The Commission on Private Schools in Ontario—was to study the issue of extending public financial support to other types of private schools.

In October 1985, the commission released its report. However, the new Liberal government had already announced the month before the release of the report that it would not extend any sort of financial support to private schools. Therefore, the Commission’s

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538 Gidney, 134.
539 Newspaper databases and election platforms were searched for evidence of alternative policy proposals put forth by opposition parties. No such evidence was found.
540 Gidney, 124.
541 Ibid., 128.
recommendation that financial support should be extended to all parents that sent their children to non-public schools for religious or philosophic reasons was ignored.\textsuperscript{542}

The issue of financial support for private and charter schools was not a part of policy discussions in the first half of the 1990s when the New Democrats were in office. However, when the Tories came back into office, the issue began to get attention. However, this was somewhat surprising because the party had not made any promises or made any mention of the issue in their 1995 or 1999 election platforms.

During their first term, the Tories did not introduce any new initiatives regarding private schools. However, during the first half of their second term, rumours began to emerge in April of 2001 that the government would introduce a voucher system. This is a method of funding education in which a set amount of government funding is provided to parents, who are then able to send their children to the school of their choice. However, the then premier of the province, Mike Harris, rejected the idea, stating that vouchers have “‘never been espoused by me or the minister of education, nor have I seen a suggestion anywhere around the cabinet table, nor do I think it will come as long as I’m premier.’”\textsuperscript{543} The Premier said that his party had “contemplated vouchers as a policy plank while in opposition in the early 1990s and rejected the idea.”\textsuperscript{544}

However, the premier did admit that the government was “contemplating allowing parents to send their children to any school within the public system even if it is outside their neighbourhood.” In addition to this proposal, the premier also said that his government was

\textsuperscript{542} Ibid., 135.  
\textsuperscript{543} Richard Brennan and Caroline Mallan, “No Way We Will Use Vouchers in Schools: Harris; But Premier Says He Wants to Give Parents ‘Choice’ in Education,” \textit{The Toronto Star}, 11 April 2001, A3.  
\textsuperscript{544} Ibid.
considering other changes to the education system.\footnote{Ibid.} The very next month, in the annual budget, the finance minister announced that the government would introduce tax credits to partially cover the costs of tuitions at private schools.\footnote{Government of Ontario, \textit{Budget Speech}, 37\textsuperscript{th} Legislature, 2\textsuperscript{nd} Session, 2001.} Specifically, the government intended to phase in a tax credit over a five-year period that would eventually be worth $3,500 a year.

The reason that the government introduced the measure was its desire to increase choice—and by extension provide competition to school boards—in the province’s education system. The finance minister, when speaking out in favour of the policy explicitly admitted to this because he justified the policy by saying: “‘I think it's the right public policy…I believe in choice for parents in education.’”\footnote{Louise Elliott, “Flaherty Backs Private School Tax Credit,” \textit{The Kingston Whig-Standard}, 22 November 2001.} The premier also admitted to this goal when he argued that “directing public resources to independent and private religious schools could bolster competition among schools and ‘that competition will indeed help the public system be even stronger.’”\footnote{April Lindgren, “Private School Tax Credit ‘Fair,’ Harris Says: Sending Children to Private Schools Saves Ontario Money, Premier Claims,” \textit{Ottawa Citizen}, 15 May 2001, A3.} Also, the government introduced the policy as a cost saving measure. As explained by the then premier, the policy “‘is fair, particularly for lower and middle income families who by not sending their children to the public school system save the taxpayers $7,000,’… referring to the $7,000 per capita cost of educating children in the public system.”\footnote{Ibid.} According to a former official, in addition to introducing this policy so as to introduce choice and competition into the sector and save money, it was also done so as to
send a message to the public school system (specifically to teachers) that they cannot hold the system hostage by going on strike because parents would have an attractive alternative.\textsuperscript{550}

When the government announced the new policy, many public school supporters in the province, such as the Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation, the Ontario English Catholic Teachers’ Association, the Canadian Federation of Students, and the Toronto Parent Network announced their opposition to it,\textsuperscript{551} as did the two opposition parties. During the 2003 election campaign, the Liberals\textsuperscript{552} and NDP\textsuperscript{553} promised to cancel the credits. Upon being elected, the Liberals kept their promise and abolished the tax credit right away. At that time, the issue of public financial support for private schools seemed to have been settled and it seemed as if it would not be part of policy discussions for the foreseeable future. However, this changed in 2007.

In that year, the province held an election in the fall. The PCs, headed by John Tory, announced well before the election, in early 2006, that if elected, they would provide financial support to private faith-based schools.\textsuperscript{554} In the lead up to the election in June 2007, Tory argued that the proposal was advanced due to the inherent unfairness of the province’s education system where adherents of one particular faith (i.e. Catholics) could educate their children based on the tenets of their religion due to financial support from the government, but not members of other faiths.\textsuperscript{555}

However, the proposal was not very popular among some segments of the population and was opposed by public school advocates and the Liberals and NDP. Due to the

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\textsuperscript{550} Personal interview, November 17\textsuperscript{th}, 2014.
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controversial nature of the proposal, during the campaign the PCs announced that instead of implementing the policy if they were elected, they would instead “hold extensive consultation and a free vote in the legislature.” The policy proposal, however, ended up not being consequential because the PCs were defeated in the election.

In addition to seeking to provide financial support to those attending private schools, the PC government during the second period was also considering allowing charter schools to be established in the province. Upon coming into office in 1995, the PCs considered introducing these types of schools, but they were occupied with other matters in the education sector that precluded them from putting in place a policy that would allow for charter schools to operate. This is evident because in response to a written question from a member of the provincial parliament about these schools in November of 1996, the then minister of education, John Snobelen, stated: “We have looked at how charter schools were developed and how they operate in Alberta and other jurisdictions so that we can determine if this type of school could benefit Ontario students. We are interested in discussing the merits of charter schools in the future but at this point we are focused on addressing the financial and governance inequities in our public school system” (emphasis added).

There is no doubt that the government was interested in charter schools, going so far as to study how other jurisdictions had implemented such schools, which is evidence of policy transfer, as will be discussed in chapter six, but other issues were given priority. We can also see the government’s interest in such schools, but also that they were prevented from enacting legislation to allow for their existence due to other matters that they wanted to prioritize, when, in the following year (1997), the new education minister, Dave Johnson, did

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557 Archives of Ontario, Deputy Minister of Education Files, RG 2-38, B190070, File: 12.
not reject the idea of charter schools, but simply said that “‘there are a number of major
issues on my list….It’s not going to be easy for me to allocate much time to the charter-
school issue in the near future.’”

However, in the PCs’ second term, during the summer of 2001, the new minister of
education, Janet Ecker, said that “she would consider charter schools if enough parent
councils are interested.” Polls at that time showed that 59% of parents in Ontario supported
charter schools. The education minister said this after saying the exact opposite at the start
of the year. Clearly, the government, in the lead up to their 2001 budget, in which the
private school tax credit was announced, had made a fundamental change regarding their
policy concerning the degree of choice that would be allowed in the province’s education
system. The PCs, however, did not put in place a policy during their second term that would
allow for charter schools to come into existence.

But prior to the 2003 provincial election, the party released policy papers related to
various policy areas. In the policy paper concerning education, the party promised that if
elected it would allow charter schools to be established. Although they used the term
“innovation schools” instead of charter schools, it is clear that the two were the same.
According to the party’s description, innovation schools “would operate within the current
[public and separate school] system, directly funded by government based on the number of
students enrolled, but would offer unique programs or teaching.” Without a doubt, this is a
description of charter schools, but with a different name. These schools never were

558 Jennifer Lewington, “No Spot For Charter Schools on Johnson’s Priority List; Specifically Financed Schools
established because the PCs were defeated in the 2003 election by the Liberals who were opposed to the establishment of these types of schools in the province’s education system.

All in all, unlike in the first period in which there was cross-party agreement regarding non-traditional schools (i.e. not extending any sort of funding or providing tax credits to parents that sent their children to such schools), the second period was marked by partisan differences; the neoliberal Progressive Conservative Party adopted a favourable position regarding such schools in stark contrast to the Liberal and New Democratic parties. Therefore, we cannot conclude that ideational forces of the kind we are considering in this thesis, that is those which affect all political actors within the same province, determined policies regarding this aspect of the education sector in Ontario given that the three main parties took positions consistent with their principles.

Saskatchewan

The status of private schools in Saskatchewan is very different than in Ontario. In 1964, the NDP government extended public funding to Catholic high schools. Until that point only Catholic (separate) elementary schools had received funding. This policy change happened “as a result of an extensive lobbying campaign by the Catholic bishops of the province and Catholic organizations such as the Knights of Columbus.”562 But an obvious question emerged: If private Catholic high schools would be given funding, why not other private high schools? Eight such high schools (known as historical high schools) had been

established in rural parts of the province in the early twentieth century where there were no public high schools.\textsuperscript{563}

Given the perceived unfairness that was created by the 1964 policy decision, in 1968 the Liberal government began to provide funding to the eight historical high schools.\textsuperscript{564} However, it was decided that they would only receive a portion of the per pupil grant and this particular aspect of the policy has remained the same.\textsuperscript{565} When the New Democrats replaced the Liberals in 1971, they did not reverse this policy. As the 1970s progressed, private schools became more popular in the province due to the creation of evangelical Christian schools and schools created to serve the disabled student population.\textsuperscript{566} Prior to this, private schools—besides the eight historical high schools—were not a major player in the education system of the province. In fact, since such schools were not numerous, the province did not even have a specific policy concerning them. But given the rapid development of such schools in the 1970s, the government realized it had to react. This is made clear in a March 1978 internal ministry of education memo written by two senior ministry officials that was addressed to several other senior officials: “The issue of private schools, elementary and secondary, is gaining visibility in Saskatchewan with the establishment of several this past year. There is no clear Department of Education policy statement addressing the issue of private schools…. It is proposed to establish a committee to study this issue, identify what is

\textsuperscript{565} The grants provided to these high schools have always fluctuated based on the yearly figures that the province provides to public and separate schools. Currently, they receive roughly 70\% of the per pupil grant that public and separate schools receive.
\textsuperscript{566} Eugene Hodgson, “Independent Schools,” in \textit{The Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan} (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 2006). This encyclopedia can be viewed online by going to the following website: http://esask.uregina.ca/home.html.
happening elsewhere, and prepare a report together with recommendations for the department’s consideration with a view toward the establishment of a policy.”

The Education Act that was passed in that year (1978) by the New Democratic Party did specify what the government considered to be legitimate private schools and their responsibilities vis-à-vis the ministry as well as which ones would be eligible for grants. (Those that continued to be funded were the historical high schools.) However, the ministry’s policy regarding private schools proved to be not comprehensive as evidenced by the reaction of the ministry to the famous R. v. Jones case.

Jones, a resident of Alberta, was a fundamentalist Christian and believed that the state had no authority over the education of his children and so he chose to teach them himself. This violated the Alberta School Act which required that the province license all schools. Since Jones did not satisfy this requirement, he was charged with truancy because his children were not attending a licensed school. However, he argued that the requirement violated his Charter rights, specifically section two, which guarantees freedom of religion. The case eventually reached the Supreme Court of Canada, which ruled in 1986 that the school license requirements, such as those in Alberta’s School Act, were a reasonable limit on an individual’s Charter rights. The ruling meant that “the right of parents to educate their children in accordance with their conscientious beliefs must be balanced against both the

568 Robert Albota, The Public Funding of Private Schools in Canada (Toronto: Canadian Education Association, 1992), 14.
569 Lucien Perras, Summary of Legislation, Regulations, Policies for the Funding of Private Schools in Each of the Provinces of Canada Other Than Ontario (Toronto: Government of Ontario, 1985), A7. This was a study that was completed for the Commission on Private Schools.
571 Ibid.
572 David Vienneau, “Parents Must Get Okay To Teach Kids At Home, Top Court Decides,” The Toronto Star, 10 October 1986, C18.
right of every child to an education and the compelling interest of the state in the education of all children.”

Accordingly, provincial laws had to strike the right balance and the Saskatchewan government (now headed by the Progressive Conservative Party) felt that it needed to do this. Therefore, after the Supreme Court’s ruling, in 1987, “The provincial government appointed Gordon Dirks to examine both private schools…and home-based education in Saskatchewan. The Minister of Education released the *Review of Private Schooling in Saskatchewan* in 1987; it announced that home-based education would continue to be permitted, but with stronger supervisory procedures to ensure that home-schooled children receive a good education.”

This led the government in 1988 to “establish a comprehensive system for the regulation and registration of independent schools through the Department of Education. [Furthermore] in 1989 the Minister of Education established an Advisory Board on Independent Schools.”

The following year, the Advisory Board, “composed of all the major education groups in Saskatchewan, recommended that there be four categories of independent schools…. The Minister of Education accepted the advisory board’s recommendations and adopted the four categories of independent schools.” These four categories would include the special category reserved for the historical high schools. Thus, the three new categories were registered independent schools; associate schools; and alternative/special needs independent schools.

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574 Ibid.
575 Hodgson, “Independent Schools.”
576 Albota, 14-15.
577 “Registered independent schools meet basic eligibility criteria as outlined in The Independent Schools Regulations. The independent school does not receive any funding from the Ministry of Education. Registered
In terms of funding, associate schools were eligible for funding beginning in 1993. As for alternative schools, their funding is “calculated [based] on the severity of students’ special needs.” The reason why the government decided to extend funding to other types of private schools besides historical high schools has to do with the aforementioned Jones case and the manner in which the province began to view the role of private schools in the province’s education system and the right of religious minorities. This is evident because in the preface to the province’s policy manual concerning private schools, the government acknowledges that the new legal framework represented by the policies in this manual attempts to balance the educational interests of the children enrolled in independent schools themselves, their parents, and the public at large. It acknowledges the following rights, freedoms, and legal principles that form part of our democratic society: Every child has the right to an education. Parents do not have the right to deny their children an education[;] Parents have the responsibility to provide for the education of their children and the right to do so in accordance with their conscientious beliefs by enrolling their children in independent schools, subject only to such reasonable limits prescribed by law that can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society[;] Independent schools have the right to exist in Canada. Churches, denominations, and religious societies have an authority separate from the state to operate schools, not always in complete accordance with public education practices[;] The state has a “compelling interest” in the education of all children, and therefore the interest to put in place a legal framework for the operation of independent schools[;] A legal framework for independent schools should recognize both freedom of conscience and religion in education and the principles of fundamental justice[;] The state independent schools provide its students of compulsory school age with an exemption from attendance at a public or separate school.”


578 “Associate school refers to an independent school which has a voluntary operating agreement with a school division. To qualify for associate school status, the school must be religiously-based; have been in operation for at least two years; and have an acceptable operating agreement with a school division. The arrangement involves the school division employing the teachers and the independent school board providing the building, maintenance and course materials beyond those associated with the provincial curriculum. Funding is provided through the school division.” Source: Ibid.

579 “Alternative schools typically provide education programs and services to students who are wards of the province. While the Ministry of Education is responsible for ensuring the appropriate educational programming is in place, the wide range of supports and services required by a ward of the province and his/her family requires an integrated approach amongst human service agencies and ministries.” Source: Ibid.

580 Larry Johnston and Susan Swift, Public Funding Of Private and Denominational Schools in Canada (Toronto: Ontario Legislative Library Research and Information Services, 2000), 6.
has the authority to enforce compulsory education for all children, but not education in compulsory way.\textsuperscript{581}

Clearly, the province chose to recognize and fund religious schools in order to respect the rights of religious minorities as opposed to simply doing so to provide financial relief for parents who send their children to private schools. Even when a new party, the New Democrats, came into office in the autumn of 1991, they did not put a halt to this policy.

It should be noted that in addition to wanting to respect the rights of religious minorities, this policy was also adopted because, according to a former official who served in the post-1991 years, the government also wanted to ensure that students who were attending private religious schools were getting a proper education (i.e. students in such schools were still learning useful skills and subjects so that they could enter the workforce or post-secondary education after high school). Consequently, in order to have some oversight, the government decided that it should extend funding so that it could then ask such schools to implement the province’s common curriculum as part of the education that students received.\textsuperscript{582}

This remained the policy of the province throughout the second period. As such, up to 2008, partisanship was not a consequential variable vis-à-vis the province’s policies concerning non-traditional schools. This is because only one party was in office for a majority of the second period and none of the opposition parties, most notably the Saskatchewan Party after its creation in 1997, advanced policies that differed form the governing New Democrats in an official way (e.g. in election platforms).

\textsuperscript{582} Personal interview, January 9\textsuperscript{th}, 2015.
However, in 2011, there was a fundamental change in the province’s policy regarding private schools. The neoliberal Saskatchewan Party decided that it would begin funding all private schools starting in September of 2012 up to 50% of the rate of the per pupil grant average given to public and separate school boards. This new category of funded private schools—referred to as qualified independent schools—have to meet specific criteria in order to receive funding, such as “being in operation as an independent school for a minimum of two years, the utilization of Professional ‘A’ teachers, the implementation of Saskatchewan curriculum, participation in the provincial accountability framework, adhering to ministry directives and policies, financial reporting, among other criteria.”

This policy announcement was surprising because “nary a word [was] said [by the Saskatchewan Party] during the recent provincial election campaign [held the previous month] or in its throne speech.” Instead the government chose to make the announcement suddenly “four days before Christmas.” This may have been done because the government wanted “to avoid the kind of backlash created in Ontario in 2007, when former Conservative leader John Tory promised to extend public funding to faith-based schools.”

When the policy was announced, the government stated that it made the decision because it wanted to follow “through on its commitment to improve student achievement and provide equitable opportunities for all Saskatchewan students.” However, another primary goal of the new policy was to introduce choice and competition into the province’s education

system. For example, when the policy was announced, the minister of education justified it by arguing that it “will provide parents with more choice (emphasis added) for their children's education and fit with the government's goals of growth and security.” In another instance, when the minister was asked about the policy in the legislature by the NDP’s education critic, he argued that the policy was necessary because the government is “concerned about educating all of our students in this province and allowing parents the choice to send their children to the schools of their choice.”

It is obvious that the government made the policy change to create more school choice. This goal allows for the introduction of competition and market mechanisms in the educational system, which is a policy that neoliberal parties, like the governing Saskatchewan Party, strongly support. The main opposition party in the province, the social democratic NDP, was very critical of the policy and argued that it would “erode education” meaning it would undermine public education because they felt that the funding for the per pupil grant for private school students would come from the overall education budget, even though the government stated that “no money will be diverted from public schools.”

Overall then, as in Ontario, where non-neoliberal parties were ideologically against pro-private school policies, there was a similar difference between the main parties in Saskatchewan regarding the extent of financial support that should be provided to private schools. Accordingly, it is clear once again how and why partisanship is a consequential

587 Ibid.
588 Saskatchewan, Legislative Assembly, Legislative Debates (Hansard), 27th Legislature, 2nd Session, November 15, 2012 (Russ Marchuk), http://docs.legassembly.sk.ca/legdocs/Legislative%20Assembly/Hansard/27L2S/121115Debates.pdf#page=8.
variable when evaluating this aspect of provincial education systems, as opposed to ideational forces.

**Alberta**

Like Saskatchewan, Alberta began funding private schools prior to the start of the first period when the Social Credit Party was in office. The funding began as a result of nearly a decade of sustained lobbying from private school advocates. Originally, the financial support was a grant of $100 that was given to private schools for each of their students. The reason the province implemented the policy was to address the issue of double taxation. This is confirmed in the response provided by the education minister—a member of the governing PC Party, which came into office in 1971—in May of 1973 to a letter from a group of students asking about the province’s policy regarding private schools: “A reasonable attitude of government might be that while education of all the children in the province is provided by a publicly supported system of education, it recognizes the right of dissident groups to refuse to take advantage of that education and instead establish their own system of education. Nevertheless, the parents of children within the dissent groups are taxed doubly in paying taxes in support of the publicly supported educational system and also paying fees to have their children attend private schools. The provincial government grant to private schools, therefore, is to ease to a certain degree this double taxation.”

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590 Wagner, 201.
591 Provincial Archives of Alberta, Private Files of Education Minister Hon. Louis Hyndman, PR1979.0067, Box 23, File: 247. What is interesting is that in response to a internal memo from the director of special educational services (E. J. M. Church) to other senior officials in the ministry, in which Church wrote that “at first financial support was granted to private schools as a measure of relief for parents who suffered double taxation” one of the other officials (K. McKie, who was the supervisor of special education) responded by saying that “the concept of double taxation is a myth….Not only do the taxpayers of Alberta provide one general education system, but they provide two through the public and separate systems. Because all citizens are taxed to support an education system, it can not be correctly claimed that the payments of taxes by any
Private schools receiving the grant “had to have been in operation for at least three years, have at least 30 students, and two full-time teachers, where none of the teachers taught more than three grades.” As the years progressed, funding for private schools increased. The increases were a result of “the continued lobbying of the government by private school supporters. The main umbrella group for private schools in the province…lobbied hard to get the government to increase grants. It drafted a proposed bill on private schools that it wanted passed and drew up an Education Manifesto.”

The government also made another major change in the 1970s regarding the status of the private schools in the province. Ever since the province’s origins, various Christian sects, such as Lutherans and Mennonites, had established their own private schools. However, these schools were usually not certified, mainly because of their curricula. Some of the schools would not shut down, causing the courts to get involved. Although the years leading up to the start of the first period were relatively quiet, things changed in 1970s.

In 1970 the Old Colony Mennonites of Stirling applied for permission to operate a private school. Early in the following year they were granted approval and instructed to use Department of Education Correspondence Courses. The Holdeman Mennonites of Duchess applied for a private school in September 1971 and received approval within a month. They too were to use Alberta Correspondence Courses. However, in March 1974 the Holdemans indicated that they would no longer use the Correspondence Courses because they disagreed on religious grounds with much of the content of the courses. Furthermore, they would no longer employ teachers who had

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particular family entitles them to specifically to attend a school in the public or separate system. All children—in theory—are eligible to attend a school in the public or separate system regardless of whether their parents pay any taxes or not. They are paying for the past benefits and future benefits of a literate society rather than purchasing schooling for their individual children. If specific parents elect not to make use of the available educational services but prefer to purchase certain particular forms of education elsewhere, it is their right to do so but it is difficult to rationalize that it is also the responsibility of other taxpayers to support this particular want. The majority of private schools in Alberta are religiously oriented and it is, therefore, an imposition to expect that the general taxpayer should be required to support a child at a sectarian school when there is a publicly supported school available which is free to all comers. The general taxpayer is thus forced to support sectarian institutions which he may have no desire to support.” Source: Provincial Archives of Alberta, Records Created by J. Jeffries, the Research Assistant to the Deputy Minister, GR1990.0489, Box 3.

592 Wagner, 201-202.
593 Ibid., 181-182.
been trained in ‘worldly’ institutions. In August both the Holdeman and Old Colony Mennonites were informed that their schools were no longer approved as correspondence centres. However, the schools remained open, and operated ‘illegally’ although the Department of Education knew about them. In November 1975 the Holdeman Mennonites of Linden applied to have a private school for grades one to nine called the Kneehill Christian School. The following month they were refused approval because three of their proposed teachers were not certificated and the curriculum they planned to use was American. Nevertheless, the Holdemans told the Department in May 1976 that they would open their school in September 1977. At least six other Holdeman communities in Alberta were planning on taking similar action by this time. This situation created problems for the government, the affected school boards, and the ATA [Alberta Teacher’s Association]. The ATAs concern was with the potential use of uncertified teachers in these schools…. Apparently, the provincial government was not anxious to pursue legal action against the Holdemans. In June 1977 the lawyers for the ATA wrote to Attorney General Foster demanding that he take action against the proposed schools. He replied that he didn’t intend to do so. As a result, it was the Three Hills School District that decided to initiate legal action in September 1977. By the time the case actually came to court in November, however, the Attorney General had taken over prosecution of the case. As well, although all the parents who sent their children to the now operating illegal school were charged, it was decided that only one parent, Elmer Weibe, would be tried as a test case.594

In the ensuing trial, which took place in 1978, the government lost. This was because Weibe argued that the government’s requirements were a violation of his freedom of religion, which was guaranteed in the province’s Bill of Rights.595 Although the government could have appealed the ruling, it chose not to. Instead, “The government changed the regulations for private schools to include a category of private schools which would use uncertified teachers. These ‘category four’ private schools would also be ineligible for government funding.”596

594 Ibid., 183-184.
595 Ibid., 185.
596 Ibid., 188. The other categories of private schools were: “(a) a category 1 private school where it (i) follows courses of study (A) prescribed by the Minister under section 12 (2) (a) of The School Act, or (B) approved by the Minister under section 12 (2) (b) of The School Act and for the purposes of this paragraph the governing body of a private school shall be deemed to be a board mentioned in section 12 (2) (b) of the Act, (ii) employs as a teacher only a person possessing a valid certificate of qualification issued under The Department of Education Act, (iii) complies with any standards prescribed by the Minister under section 12 of The School Act for junior high schools or senior high schools where instruction in subjects at the junior high school or senior high school level is offered, and (iv) is not a category 2 private school, (b) a category 2 private school where it (i) is established for the education and training of children who are mentally, emotionally, or socially
As a result of the decisions of two different governing parties (Social Credit and the PC Party) the province’s policies regarding private schools changed dramatically in the span of eleven years (between 1967, when grants were first given to private schools, and 1978, when regulations were changed to allow for category four private schools to legally exist). What is interesting is that in the three elections that were held in the 1970s in the province (1971, 1975, and 1979), the other two opposition parties, the Liberals and New Democrats, did not criticize the government for being so hospitable to private schools.

Prior to the start of the second period, there were further changes to the province’s policy regarding private schools. One of the changes was as result of the aforementioned Jones case. After the case,

The government moved on two fronts against Jones. He was once again charged with truancy, and the Attorney General launched a civil suit seeking an injunction to prevent Jones and his church from operating a school. Jones refused to yield, and both cases came to a head early in October 1987, the deadline Jones had been given to comply…. Sticking to his principles and still refusing to register his school, and pay the fines for the cases he lost, Jones was put in jail. Although he had been sentenced to 30 days, he only had to serve 10…. The imprisonment of Jones led to concern among many fundamentalist and evangelical Christians, a segment of the population commonly assumed to be supportive of the PC government…. Having been released from jail Jones went straight back to operating his school, which had remained open under the oversight of other church members. Thus another showdown with the government was imminent. Then in November 1988, just before legal action was again to be taken, the government was able to reach an agreement with Jones to keep his school open without compromising his religious principles. This was made possible by the completion of the School Act which changed the requirements for registering a private school.

597 The NDP did, however, argue that the government should have appealed the Weibe ruling. Source: Wagner, 189.
598 There is evidence that the two parties were more critical of the government’s policy vis-à-vis private schools in the 1980s. For such evidence, refer to Ibid., 225-227.
599 Ibid., 215-216.
The new School Act, which came into force in 1988, was very favourable to private schools. Among other things, it emphasized the right of parents to decide how their children should be educated, with critics arguing that it would essentially encourage and promote the appeal of private schools; allowed private schools to hire uncertified teachers; and provided such schools more independence in terms of decisions regarding their curricula. The NDP was very critical of the government, with its leader arguing that the government was essentially changing the education system in the province and putting in place “‘a modified voucher system.’” Similarly, the Liberals believed that the government was pursuing a policy for the sector that could be described as “‘the privatization of schooling.’”

In the 1990s, there was another fundamental change in the province’s policy regarding school choice in the province. Upon being elected in 1993, the Klein government introduced legislation in 1994 to allow for charter schools to be established in the province. Specifically, the government announced that “a maximum of 15 charter schools will be approved for the 1995-96 school year, with charters granted for three to five years.” At first, “five schools opened in 1995 and another three in 1996…. By January 1998 eleven charter schools had been approved in the province, but two of the eleven were closed in the spring of that year by the minister of education because they failed to meet legislated conditions.”

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600 Ibid., 227.  
601 Ibid.  
602 Ibid.  
604 Alison Taylor, The Politics Of Educational Reform in Alberta (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 80-81. There are currently thirteen charter schools in the province.
The reason why the government allowed these types of schools to exist relates to its overall aims for the sector. As part of its overall focus on “longer-term fiscal planning and performance assessment” the Klein government asked each department to come up with a three-year business plan. The education ministry released its plan in March 1994. The twenty-page document presented the restructuring plan for the province’s education system. Restructuring would be carried out so that three key objectives were achieved: efficiency, accountability, and choice. With respect to the last objective, the government saw charter schools as a good way to increase choice. This was probably done because “choice was seen by provincial politicians as a way to change education without requiring significant financing commitment.” This was obviously a convenient approach because it addresses another of the objectives that the government had for the sector (i.e. making the education system more efficient, which meant reducing the amount of money dedicated to it).

The opposition parties were critical of the government’s decision to allow the creation of charter schools. The Liberals argued that the policy is one that would take the “the province deliberately down the path toward two-tier education and private schools.” The NDP, in their 1997 election platform, stated that “significant public money is being diverted to finance so-called Charter Schools—which are really private schools in all but name.” They promised that if elected, they would “re-examine the use of tax dollars to fund Charter Schools.”

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605 Ibid., 89
606 Ibid., 90
607 Ibid., 91
608 Ibid., 303
610 New Democratic Party of Alberta, We’re Fighting Back, 1997, no page numbers provided.
The Klein government also made some changes to the grants that private schools received. Throughout the years between the two periods that are the focus of this study, grants to private school had steadily increased. By the start of the second period, private schools were receiving 50% of the per pupil grant that public and separate schools were receiving. In 1998, however, the Klein government announced that it would increase the percentage of the grant to 60%. The reason why this policy was implemented was because the year before, “A government backbencher had moved a private member's bill…proposing to increase the private-public ratio to 75 per cent. Yet, a party conference some months later voted resoundingly to abolish all funding for private schools. At length, a government task force recommended the 60-per-cent figure, which the government, anxious to defuse the controversy, duly adopted.”611

The grants remained at 60% until July of 2008 when the government announced that the grants to private schools would be increased to 70%.612 The reason the government increased funding was related to the aforementioned emphasis on choice. As the then premier said, when the policy was announced, “I am a tremendous supporter of choice in the education system. Our achievement levels compared to other provinces is simply outstanding—in fact to other countries.”613 The Liberals and New Democrats criticized the government for this decision, with both essentially arguing that there should not be an increase in public funds for private schools.614

As in the other two provinces, there was a divergence of opinion among the main political parties in Alberta regarding the status of non-traditional schools in the second

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613 Ibid.
614 Ibid.
period. Both the Liberal and New Democratic Parties believed that the province, with the passage of a new School Act in 1988, went too far in terms of policies concerning the status and appeal of private schools. Thus, unlike the first period in which there was cross-party support for allowing private schools to exist, by the second period the two main opposition parties believed that the government was no longer simply trying to ensure the rights and freedoms of religious groups were protected by having in place laws to ensure that parents could send their children to independent schools so that they could be educated in accordance with their religious beliefs. Essentially, the two opposition parties believed the government’s objective regarding non-traditional schools had changed. It now appeared to be that that government was attempting to somewhat undermine the public education system by encouraging all parents to place their children in non-traditional schools by making such an option possible and financially attractive.

Conclusion

The foregoing discussion has allowed us to further understand the causal effect of the variables that are the focus of this study. Beginning with the political party variable, it helps us understand why there were differences in the policies of the provinces in the second period when neoliberal parties were in office—parties much more likely to pursue policies that were at their core pro-private and charter schools, so as to introduce more choice and competition into the sector. Further evidence of the effect of partisanship was also shown when discussing the criticism of opposition parties in the various provinces. Those parties that were left-wing or centrist were critical of policies that delegitimized the public/separate school systems of the provinces. For example, we saw the Ontario New Democrats and
Liberals criticize the Tories’ private school tax credit policy and their faith-based school grant proposal, the Alberta NDP and Liberals criticize changes to the province’s School Act in the late 1980s, as well the policies of the Klein government concerning private and charter schools in the 1990s, and the Saskatchewan NDP criticize the Saskatchewan Party for extending public funding for all private schools.

Furthermore, the partisanship variable allows us to understand why certain policies were pursued in the provinces at certain times. It is only by taking into account the ideological outlook of a governing party that we are able to understand why a province like Saskatchewan pursued a policy more favourable to private schools in the post-2008 years as opposed to before when a social democratic party was in office, or why private school tax credits and the possibility of allowing charter schools to be established in Ontario were proposed when the neoliberal Tories were in office.

Turning to the policy consensus variable, it was not helpful in allowing us to understand the policies of the provinces in this area of the sector in the first period, specifically why Saskatchewan and Alberta implemented pro-private school policies, leaving Ontario as the only province to not provide public funding for private schools. This is because the Keynesian consensus did not have specific dictates that related to this aspect of the education sector (i.e. the extent, if any, that private schools should be supported by governments). For this reason, it could be said that the consensus of the first period was inconsequential in terms of understanding the policy outputs of the provinces vis-à-vis this aspect of education sector. After all, the two provinces that introduced funding for private schools in the years leading up to the first period did so to ensure that unfair implications of some of their education policies would be addressed. In the case of Saskatchewan, the
unfairness pertained to the fact that parents that sent their children to non-Catholic private high schools were disadvantaged after the introduction of funding for Catholic high schools in the mid-1960s. In Alberta, the unfairness pertained to the double-taxation of parents that sent their children to private schools. It would be incorrect to attribute such attempts at addressing unfairness as being related to the dictates of the Keynesian consensus. This is because although the consensus dictated that policies be implemented so as to create an economically more just and fair society, it dictated that such an objective be achieved via government services and programs. As such, the Keynesianism conception of fairness did not include support for the implementation of policies favourable to those in society that relied on private social services or programs.

As for the consensus of the second period, although neoliberal parties in all three provinces implemented policies consistent with its dictates (i.e. allowing more choice and market principles in the education sector), the fact that other types of parties in all three provincial party systems were critical of introducing policies that would undermine (in their opinion) public education indicates that the neoliberal consensus, which was a key variable in terms of explaining education policy outputs in other areas of provincial policymaking as discussed in the previous chapters, was not relevant in terms of policies concerning non-traditional schools. In this instance, it was partisanship (i.e. the specific ideologies of governing parties and their determination to implement policies consistent with their principles) that explains policy outputs concerning private and charter schools.

Overall, the three provinces diverged in terms of their policies concerning private and charter schools because Ontario, by the end of the second period, did not have any policies in place that benefited private schools or parents that sent their children to such schools, and did
not have a policy that would allow for the establishment of charter schools. Part of the reason for this divergence is due to path dependency: Saskatchewan and Alberta instituted policies favourable to private schools in the 1960s and the policies of both provinces became entrenched and remained in existence in the second period and beyond. Another reason for the divergence is that just when Ontario had a neoliberal government in place in the second period that had introduced a policy favourable to parents that sent their children to private schools (i.e. a tax credit), and had plans to introduce a policy to permit the establishment of charter schools, they were removed from office and remained out of office for the rest of the period. This allowed for a new, non-neoliberal governing party (i.e. the Liberal Party) to abolish the tax credit and cease further planning regarding the policy of allowing charter schools to operate in the province, given that such policies were inconsistent with its core ideological principles. In contrast, in Alberta and Saskatchewan, we saw that in the post-1990s years, neoliberal parties were able to introduce even more favourable policies concerning private schools (not to mention a new policy to allow for the establishment of charter schools in Alberta), without the election of new, non-neoliberal governing parties in the immediate aftermath of those policies being implemented—parties that would undo such policies, and thus prevent them from being entrenched.
Chapter 6

The Role of Policy Transfer in Contributing to Similarities in Provincial Education Policy Outputs

As has been shown in the previous chapters, dominant ideas have shaped various aspects of the education sector, resulting in the provinces implementing similar policies in certain instances. As discussed in chapter one, there is a vast literature in political science that has shown that ideational factors are important when trying to explain policy similarities in a given sector or area of a sector. In fact, it—the ideas literature—is one of the most important developments in the discipline over the past few decades because it has allowed us to fully understand many causal relationships or policy outputs in areas as diverse as international relations (i.e. the constructivist approach), immigration policies, social engineering policies, and economic policies. Because of this, we are no longer limited to traditional institutional, structural, behavioural, or interest-based explanations for explaining political puzzles.

However, in order to prove that ideas do matter and have a causal effect, it has to be shown that transmission of policy options and solutions take place between policymakers in different jurisdictions. Needless to say, it can be very difficult to provide concrete evidence of such transmission given the fact that policymaking is often done behind closed doors by policymakers.

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anonymous bureaucrats doing much of the work. Even when insight is easily obtainable regarding how and why a particular course of action was taken during the process of policymaking, usually such information does not provide insight into where the source of inspiration was for a particular policy. But in certain instances we can gain insight into the ideational exchange that takes place between policy actors in different jurisdictions within a given sector. This is because evidence such as documents from archives, statements made by policymakers in newspaper articles, and interviews with those officials can show the source(s) of policies that they considered or implemented.

It is these types of evidence that will be presented in this chapter to show that the provinces constantly looked outside of their borders for inspiration and information when developing policies. By presenting such evidence, it will be shown that analyzing the policies of other jurisdictions was a constant and crucial part of provincial education policymaking processes. This will help show that it was possible for different jurisdictions to implement similar policies that reflected the dictates of the dominant ideas that are the focus of this study. It should be noted that the evidence that will be presented below is not just of the three provinces looking to each other for policy options and solutions regarding the four aspects of the education sector analyzed in chapters two to five, but to other jurisdictions and to other aspects of the sector as well. This is done so as to show that the process of transfer was wide ranging—in terms of the various areas of the sector in which ideas for policies were sought—and not restricted to just proximate jurisdictions within the country.

However, before outlining how policymakers in the three provinces were influenced by policies in jurisdictions other than their own, the concept of policy transfer, which was briefly discussed in chapter one, will be further discussed so as to show exactly how this
process functions. This will be the focus of the following section. The second section will focus on policy transfer in the first period, while the subsequent section will show evidence of policy transfer in the second period.

**Literature Review of Policy Transfer**

As discussed in chapter one, the ideational literature has identified two concepts to describe the exchange of policy tools, options, and solutions: policy transfer and policy diffusion.619 Broadly, both concepts describe phenomena where “knowledge about policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in one political system (past or present) is used in the development of policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas in another political system.”620 It is partly for this reason (i.e. the fact that both concepts describe the same phenomena) that the uniqueness of each concept has been questioned, leading “some scholars [to] argue that policy transfer is a type of diffusion…, while others…[argue that] diffusion…[is] as a type of policy transfer… and Stone sees both as types of lesson-drawing.”621

However, the sub-literatures on policy diffusion and policy transfer differ in terms of approaches and points of emphasis. For example, the former emphasizes structural factors when explaining ideational exchange and generally uses quantitative approaches, while the latter emphasizes agency and generally relies on qualitative approaches.622 In addition,

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619 An additional concept that often gets mentioned (or grouped) with these two is policy convergence. However, unlike policy diffusion and transfer, policy convergence is focused on policy effects as opposed to policy processes. Source: Christoph Knill, “Cross-National Policy Convergence: Concepts, Approaches and Explanatory Factors,” *Journal of European Public Policy* 12, no. 5 (2005): 767.


622 Ibid., 274-275.
diffusion studies treat such a phenomenon “as a dichotomous (adopt/don’t adopt) variable” whereas transfer studies present the adoption of policy tools, options, and solutions “as a matter of degree.”623

In terms of the consideration of domestic factors and how they impact ideational exchange, the transfer literature pays far greater attention to such factors and how they “affect whether, when and how governments accept transfers from abroad.”624 Due to this perspective, the transfer literature stresses the fact that “the logic of transfer does not necessarily entail convergence. Because transfer is seen as continuous variable [sic], perhaps extending along several dimensions and often a matter of combining foreign and local models, national distinctiveness remains alive and well.”625 Hence, transfer studies, due to their use of in-depth qualitative examinations of a small number of cases, allow us to see that even if the same policy is adopted by different jurisdictions, the specific manner in which it is implemented may differ so as to reflect each jurisdictions’ unique qualities, or even policy legacies.626

With respect to the actors that engage in ideational exchange, the policy transfer literature has identified nine different types: “elected officials, political parties, bureaucrats/civil servants, pressure groups, policy entrepreneurs and experts, transnational corporations, think tanks, supra-national governmental and nongovernmental institutions and consultants.”627 As the evidence will show in the sections to follow, many of these types of actors, specifically, elected officials, bureaucrats, think tanks, and supra-national

623 Ibid., 278.
624 Ibid., 279.
625 Ibid., 280.
governmental organizations, were instrumental in the spread of education related policies between various jurisdictions.

One of the most important contributions of transfer studies concerning the policymaking process has been why policy transfer takes place. Three different causes of transfer have been identified: voluntary transfer, negotiated transfer, and coercive transfer.\textsuperscript{628} Voluntary transfer “is a rational, action-oriented approach to dealing with public policy problems that emerge from one or more of the following: the identification of public or professional dissatisfaction with existing policy as a consequence of poor performance; a new policy agenda that is introduced due to a change in government, minister or the management of a public organization; a political strategy aimed at legitimizing conclusions that have already been reached; or an attempt by a political manager to upgrade items of the policy agenda to promote political allies and neutralize political enemies.”\textsuperscript{629} In addition to these reasons, voluntary transfer may also be a result of competition, meaning “that the growing importance and mobility of capital explains why more and more countries have come to adopt broadly similar investor friendly policies, including privatization, deregulation, balanced budgets, low inflation and strong property rights. In this view, differences between states disappear as footloose capital flows towards those states offering greatest returns and away from less favourable environments.”\textsuperscript{630} As will be shown below, this is the form of transfer (i.e. voluntary) that characterizes the ideational exchange in the education sector between the provinces during the two periods.

\textsuperscript{628} These causes are similar to the causes of policy convergence as identified in that literature. Specifically, the causes of such a phenomenon are imposition, international harmonization, regulatory competition, transnational communication (which includes processes such as lesion-drawing, transnational problem-solving, emulation of policies, and international policy promotion) and independent problem-solving. Source: Katharina Holzinger and Christoph Knill, “Causes and Conditions of Cross-National Policy Convergence,” \textit{Journal of European Public Policy} 12, no. 5 (2005): 779-786.


\textsuperscript{630} Marsh and Sharman, 272.
The other two reasons for why transfer takes place “involve varying degrees of coercion and are common in developing countries. Negotiated policy transfer refers to a process in which governments are compelled by, for example, influential donor countries, global financial institutions, supra-national institutions, international organizations or transnational corporations, to introduce policy change in order to secure grants, loans or other forms of inward investment…. Direct coercive policy transfer occurs when a government is compelled by another government to introduce constitutional, social and political changes against its will and the will of its people.”

As for the specific process of policy transfer, scholars have identified four key ones. The first type is copying, which is when “a governmental organization adopts a policy, programme or institution without modification.” The second type is “emulation where a governmental organization accepts that a policy, programme or institution overseas provides the best standard for designing a policy, programme or institution at home,” but modifications are made, unlike when copying takes place. The third type is hybridization, “where a governmental organization combines elements of programmes found in several settings to develop a policy that is culturally sensitive to the needs of the recipient.” The fourth type of transfer is inspiration, which is when “an idea inspires fresh thinking about a policy problem and helps to facilitate policy change.”

It needs be noted that although ideational exchange between political systems is not new, it has certainly increased in recent decades. One reason for this is due to the re-emergence of globalization, which results in virtually all states and sub-state actors seeking solutions to the same pressures and challenges that such a phenomenon presents.

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631 Evans, 245.
632 Ibid., 245-246.
“However, global economic forces are not the only pressure toward policy transfer; the rapid growth in communications of all types makes exchange of ideas and knowledge much easier. Similarly…international organizations, such as the European Union (EU), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, advocate, and at times enforce similar policies across diverse countries.”

It should not be assumed, however, that policy ideas always originate from other countries or international organizations. This is because “actors engaging in policy transfer can, and do, draw lessons from…units within their own country. Not only can sub-national units of government draw lessons from each other, but the national government can also draw lessons from lower levels of government, while lower levels of government can draw upon the national government.” This is an important point because as will be shown below, the provinces exchanged ideas amongst each other to a great extent.

Evidence of Policy Transfer in the First Period

In the 1970s, the policymakers of the three provinces examined the policies of, and travelled to, various jurisdictions. For example, in 1972 and 1973 policymakers from various provinces travelled to Britain to study various aspects of schooling there. A letter written by an official in Ontario’s ministry addressed to an official in Scotland’s education ministry outlined what that province hoped to learn: “An overview of key issues in Scottish education to-day by one of your staff would be of great value to the entire group and from that point….

634 Ibid., 7.
635 Ibid., 12.
636 Provincial Archives of Alberta, Records of the Deputy Minister and Assistant Deputy Minister of Instruction and Support Including Records on ACCESS Project, Accreditation, Association, Societies, Boards, and Committees, GR1996.0016, Box 12; The Saskatchewan Archives, E.L. Tchorzewski Papers, R-485, File: 1b (Educational Council).
Some interest has been expressed in your work in special education, comprehensive senior schooling, teacher education, the work in a Merchant Company school, the planning and development of programs at the administrative level and primary school program in the inner City of Edinburgh."

Similarly, in 1979, officials from the province travelled to China. In an internal memorandum, some of the key topics that the officials wanted to learn about China’s education system were outlined and they included: basic education and national priorities; early childhood education; education for the world of work; education of exceptional children; second and third language education; teacher education programs; citizenship education; and funding of education. Also, officials from the provinces travelled to the USSR in 1973 and 1978.

In 1975, Alberta officials travelled to Australia and in 1978 Alberta’s deputy minister travelled to Thailand. In 1972, when Alberta was in the process of establishing its kindergarten policy, an official was sent to Britain to study its policies. Alberta also studied the policies of closer jurisdictions, in particular Saskatchewan’s. Another example

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637 Archives of Ontario, Files of the Assistant Deputy Minister of the Education Administration Division, RG 2-154, B173851, File: Scottish Education Department.
638 Archives of Ontario, Files of the Assistant Deputy Minister of the Program Division of the Ministry of Education, RG 2-264, B137362, File: Deputy Minister.
640 Provincial Archives of Alberta, Records of the Deputy Minister and Assistant Deputy Minister of Instruction and Support Including Records on ACCESS Project, Accreditation, Association, Societies, Boards, and Committees, GR1996.0016, Box 15.
642 Ibid.
643 Ibid.
644 Provincial Archives of Alberta, Records Created by Deputy Minister and Assistant Deputy Minister of Instruction and Support, GR1983.0091, Box 23, File: 258.
645 Provincial Archives of Alberta, Private Files of Education Minister Hon. Louis Hyndman, PR1979.0067, Box 21, File: 224.
is when Alberta sent an official to study a school for special education students in Seattle in 1978.\textsuperscript{645}

The provinces also sought very specific information from distant jurisdictions. For example, when Saskatchewan was reviewing, in 1977, its special education curriculum—an area of education that received a lot of attention in the 1970s due to the person-regarding paradigm and its concern with whether education systems were satisfying the needs of \textit{all} students—California’s and Wisconsin’s policies were examined so as to see how its own curriculum could be improved.\textsuperscript{646}

Officials in the provinces were also influenced by important reports in other jurisdictions. As was briefly mentioned in chapter two, Ontario’s Hall-Dennis Report was a source of inspiration for policymakers in other provinces as they put in place policies that reflected the person-regarding paradigm. For example, we saw how Alberta’s government was so impressed by it that the province established its own commission to review its education system and essentially build off of the Hall-Dennis Report, which the commission did as reflected in its final report (the Worth Report). Saskatchewan also studied and was influenced by the Hall-Dennis Report. In fact, even in the early 1970s, well after the report was released, officials within the ministry were studying it. For example, in 1970, the minister of education instructed his deputy minister to provide a summary of the report’s chapter on the aims of education.\textsuperscript{647} Saskatchewan also studied the Worth Report.\textsuperscript{648}

Ideational exchange also took place due to necessity. For example, in 1976, due to the attention that standards and evaluation were receiving “in the media and at professional

\textsuperscript{645} Provincial Archives of Alberta, Ministerial Files and Correspondence, GR1980.0110, Box 2.
\textsuperscript{646} The Saskatchewan Archives, D.C. Faris Papers, R-486, File: 31aa (Curriculum Committees: Minutes).
\textsuperscript{647} The Saskatchewan Archives, J.C. McIsaac Papers, R-66, File: 1g (General).
\textsuperscript{648} The Saskatchewan Archives, G.S. MacMurchy Papers, R-901, File: II.11a—18.1 (Miscellaneous: Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, etc.).
conferences,” Ontario decided to organize a meeting for every provincial deputy minister of education so that they could gather and have “an informal and private sharing of information.”

Sometimes, the minister of the day would travel to other jurisdictions and seek to gain insight about particular matters. For example, in a 1973 visit to British Columbia, Ontario’s minister wanted to know how that province dealt with “school board budgeting, teacher salary negotiations, procedures and other problems related to the financing of public education.” Another example is when the minister travelled to Georgia and Florida in March of 1977 to learn more about the assessment programs of those two states. Alberta officials, specifically the deputy minister, also became interested in the Georgia assessment program in 1976 and decided to study it.

Needless to say, there was also direct ideational exchange between the three provinces that are the focus of this study. For example, in 1976 Saskatchewan officials sought information regarding the “philosophy” of Alberta’s special education curriculum committee when they were in the process of reviewing their special education curriculum. Similarly, in 1978, Alberta officials carefully studied Ontario’s history curriculum for intermediate grades so as to gain insight into how it differed from their social studies.

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649 Provincial Archives of Alberta, Records of the Deputy Minister and Assistant Deputy Minister of Instruction and Support Including Records on ACCESS Project, Accreditation, Association, Societies, Boards, and Committees, GR1996.0016, Box 24.
651 Archives of Ontario, Files of Tom Wells, Minister of Education, RG 2-151, B296605, Box 9, File: Georgia and Florida March 1977.
652 Provincial Archives of Alberta, Records of the Deputy Minister and Assistant Deputy Minister of Instruction and Support Including Records on ACCESS Project, Accreditation, Association, Societies, Boards, and Committees, GR1996.0016, Box 24.
653 The Saskatchewan Archives, E.L. Tchorzewski Papers, R-485, File: 31aa (Curriculum Committees: Minutes).
In addition, Alberta studied Ontario’s (and British Columbia’s) policies concerning private schools in 1971. In 1975, Ontario established a Committee on the Cost of Education. This report was studied closely by Alberta officials in order to gain insight into existing policies and potential changes in that province. In 1978, an official from Saskatchewan inquired into Alberta’s policy regarding learning resources, which elicited a response. In 1976, when Ontario released new curriculum guidelines for the secondary schools, Alberta officials studied them so as to see how they differed from their requirements. Similarly, in 1978, Ontario officials studied Alberta’s curricula standards.

When Ontario passed a new Education Act in 1974, Alberta officials asked their counterparts to send them the document because they were “extremely interested in the new policy and directions.” Also, after the release by the Ontario government of the Commission on Declining School Enrolment report in 1978, officials in Alberta studied it in order to determine its significance for their education system.

Sometimes, officials from the provinces would spontaneously meet to engage in ideational exchange. For example, in 1972 Saskatchewan’s minister of education sent a letter to his counterpart in Alberta. He wrote: “I would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you and Mr. Hanuschak toward the latter part of May or early June, following the closing of the

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655 Provincial Archives of Alberta, Records Created by J. Jeffries, the Research Assistant to the Deputy Minister, GR1990.0489, Box 43, File: 478.
656 Provincial Archives of Alberta, Private Files of Minister Hon. Louis Hyndman, PR1979.0067, Box 42, File: 462.
657 Provincial Archives of Alberta, Source Files from the Associate Director of the Curriculum Branch, GR1989.0310.
659 Archives of Ontario, Files of the Assistant Deputy Minister of the Program Division of the Ministry of Education, RG 2-264, B137356, File: Fisher Correspondence.
660 Provincial Archives of Alberta, Records Created by J. Jeffries, the Research Assistant to the Deputy Minister, GR1990.0489, Box 2.
661 Provincial Archives of Alberta, Records Created by J. Jeffries, the Research Assistant to the Deputy Minister, GR1990.0489, V13-47-1-1.
Legislatures. The purpose of the meeting would be to discuss mutual problems, such as school finance, and teacher salary negotiations, etc."

In terms of the genesis of ideational exchange, there was no general way in which such exchange would begin. At times, the genesis would simply be an official reading about a particular policy of another jurisdiction in newspapers. For example, in 1978, after an Ontario assistant deputy minister had read an article in *The Toronto Sun* which had mentioned special education programs in New Brunswick and Calgary, he had asked his director of special education for more information, which he was provided with. Another example is when Alberta’s minister of education read an article in *The Globe and Mail* in 1971 about British Columbia’s education system and asked his officials to provide more details about certain features. Even newsletters produced by ministries of education were closely monitored. For example, in 1972, Alberta’s associate deputy minister sent a memorandum to the deputy minister, writing: “Attached is a page taken from an Ontario Department of Education publication entitled ‘New Dimensions’ which deals with parents’ views on the quality of education. I would think that the Minister might be interested in this particular article. In addition, I have written to the Ontario Department of Education asking for the complete survey.”

Another somewhat peculiar manner in which ideational exchange would originate was that a jurisdiction outside of Canada would hear about the policies of one of the

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662 Provincial Archives of Alberta, Private Files of Minister Hon. Louis Hyndman, PR1979.0067, Box 42, File: 462. Alberta’s minister responded, stating: “I think your suggestion of a meeting with you and Mr. Hanuschak is an excellent idea and that much could be gained by all of us in discussing mutual problems and possible solutions.”
663 Archives of Ontario, Files of Tom Wells, Minister of Education, RG 2-151, Box 14, B296613.
664 Provincial Archives of Alberta, Private Files of Minister Hon. Louis Hyndman, PR1979.0067, Box 42, File: 462
665 Provincial Archives of Alberta, Records Created by Deputy Minister and Assistant Deputy Minister of Instruction and Support, GR1983.0091, Box 23, File: 258.
provinces and then ask that they work together or exchange information. For example, in 1979, an official from the Utah State Board of Education sent a letter to Alberta’s deputy minister to tell him that he “recently…had an opportunity to listen to a presentation relating to Industrial Education in Alberta. I was impressed and also surprised to learn that the Jr. High/Middle School philosophy, objectives and direction parallel our efforts in Utah.” He then asked that an official from Alberta visit Utah and attend a conference related to vocational education.666

In terms of specific aspects of the sector, one of the most studied by officials was how much they spent on education relative to others. For example, in 1975, an Alberta official wrote a memorandum to a colleague to indicate that they had “received three different delegations dealing with educational finance from three different provinces in the last four months. The visitors included the entire educational finance task force from Saskatchewan, the chairman of The Ministers’ Advisory Committee on School Finance from Manitoba and my counterpart from Ontario.”667 In 1974, Ontario sent two officials to all provinces to gather information on the financing of education. Afterwards, they wrote a report which the province sent to officials in the other provinces.668 In 1976, when Saskatchewan was examining how much it was spending on school construction, it also did a comparative analysis so as to see how much other provinces, specifically Manitoba, Alberta, and Ontario, spent.669

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666 Provincial Archives of Alberta, Records of the Deputy Minister and Assistant Deputy Minister of Instruction and Support Including Records on ACCESS Project, Accreditation, Association, Societies, Boards, and Committees, GR1996.0016, Box 15.
667 Provincial Archives of Alberta, Private Files of Minister Hon. Louis Hyndman, PR1979.0067, Box 43, File: 463.
668 Provincial Archives of Alberta, Private Files of Minister Hon. Louis Hyndman, PR1979.0067, Box 42, File: 461.
669 The Saskatchewan Archives, E.L. Tchorzewski Papers, R-485, File: 75 (Financial Management).
In addition to the above means of ideational exchange, another way in which officials in the provinces became aware of policies of other jurisdictions, thus allowing for similar policies to be implemented, was via the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) meetings. CMEC was created in 1967 “to enable the provincial ministers to consult on such matters as are of common interest, and to provide a means for the fullest possible cooperation among provincial governments in areas of mutual interest and concern in education at all levels.”\(^{670}\) Each year, two meetings would be held for the ministers, which were always preceded by meetings of deputy ministers. It is during these meetings that senior officials, from all provinces, were able to exchange information about policies that they had implemented. It was not unusual for this form of ideational exchange to be focused on a very specific aspect of the sector. For example, in the 1970s, a relatively new area of focus for the provincial education systems was implementing minority languages as part of their curricula. Various ministerial and deputy ministerial meetings throughout the decade set aside time to discuss this topic. In fact, the ministers decided that there should be a formal study so that they could each learn about the policies of other provinces. The report also suggested policies that the provinces should adopt in this area. It was studied and “unanimously adopted” by the ministers in their January 1978 meeting.\(^{671}\)

In addition to holding meetings, CMEC was also an important means of policy transfer because such an organization allowed the provinces to undertake data collection and research projects. The interaction that such an organization allowed for created an opportunity for provinces to work together in ways that they otherwise may not have, and


thus have access to comparative studies about various aspects of the sector. For example, one of the key committees of the organization (*in both periods*) was the curriculum committee. This committee would examine the areas of similarity and difference in how each province structured the content of, and by extension, the main objectives of education in the provinces. The committee would regularly brief the deputy ministers and ministers at meetings on the work it was doing. Agenda items always contained time for this committee to make a presentation. As a result, this work would allow the dictates of the key paradigms in the two periods that were discussed in chapter two—the person-regarding paradigm and the accountability paradigm—to spread as provincial officials would clearly have knowledge of how their counterparts structured their education systems.  

It should be noted that the four Western provinces’ directors of curriculum would meet regularly every year, which allowed for ideational exchange among those officials. Sometimes officials from other provinces, such as Ontario, would also attend these meetings.

Furthermore, CMEC was instrumental in providing information to all ministries regarding the content of discussions that took place at various international conferences. This was an important task because at most conferences CMEC would organize a delegation that included officials from *some* provinces. As a result, those provinces that did not have officials present at the conferences may not have been as well informed about policy problems and solutions in other jurisdictions, which is why CMEC’s dissemination of

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673 Provincial Archives of Alberta, Records Created by J. Jeffries, the Research Assistant to the Deputy Minister, GR1990.0489, V13-47-1-1, Box 4, File: 72.
674 Provincial Archives of Alberta, Records Created by Deputy Minister and Assistant Deputy Minister of Instruction and Support, GR1983.0091, Box 24, File: 259.
delegation reports was critical.675 This type of service also applies to trips that CMEC would spearhead to other jurisdictions in which only officials from some provinces had been part of the delegation, such as the 1978 trip to the Federal Republic of Germany.676

Besides CMEC, another organization which allowed officials from the provinces to exchange ideas with other policymakers was the OECD, mostly via its Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI). This organization would hold regular conferences and meetings in which provincial officials would attend and meet officials from other countries. In fact, the OECD held numerous conferences and meetings related to the education sector. For example, between April and December of 1975, one senior official from Alberta’s ministry (the associate deputy minister) attended seven OECD related conferences and meetings.677

Furthermore, like CMEC, the OECD would spearhead research projects in which the provinces would take part in and learn about the policies of other jurisdictions. For example, in 1976, Ontario agreed to take part in the organization’s Study on Educational Policy and Finance.678 In addition, the OECD would at times examine a particular aspect of the provincial education systems, and produce a comparative research report and send the findings to officials in all provinces, allowing them to gain insight into what other provinces were doing. One such example is a report on early childhood education that was completed.

676 Provincial Archives of Alberta, Ministerial Files and Correspondence, GR1980.0110, Box 4.
677 Provincial Archives of Alberta, Records of the Deputy Minister and Assistant Deputy Minister of Instruction and Support Including Records on ACCESS Project, Accreditation, Association, Societies, Boards, and Committees, GR1996.0016, Box 14.
678 Archives of Ontario, Files of Tom Wells, Minister of Education, RG 2-151, B173851, File: OECD/OISE Cross National Study.
in 1973. In addition, the OECD spearheaded a major report on all aspects of education in Canada in the mid-1970s. In order to assist the OECD and also respond to the report, it resulted in the provinces working together via CMEC, and becoming familiar with each other’s education systems. This was because, unlike other jurisdictions, no national department/ministry of education was available to provide assistance to the organization.

The Canadian Education Association (CEA) was another key organization in which provincial policymakers were able to interact with each other and gain knowledge about the policies of other jurisdictions. For example, after one of its annual conventions, a senior official from Alberta’s ministry of education sent a memorandum to a colleague, writing: “Three matters caught my attention at the CEA Convention in Vancouver; (1) the address of the Honourable Eileen Dailly concerning recent developments in B.C. education, (2) the discussion of the Faure Report and, (3) the informal contacts outside of session seem to me to be most important.” Furthermore, such conventions allowed officials to discuss major issues of the day, such as a discussion of whether during the era of the person-regarding paradigm, education systems were neglecting the three R’s. In addition, like CMEC, the CEA also allowed provinces to work together on comparative reports which would allow all provinces to learn about each other’s policies. One example is a committee that was established in 1976 to study the evaluation and examination policies of the provinces.

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Archives of Ontario, Files of the Assistant Deputy Minister of the Program Division of the Ministry of Education, RG 2-264, B216220, File: IMTEC.


Provincial Archives of Alberta, Records of the Deputy Minister and Assistant Deputy Minister of Instruction and Support Including Records on ACCESS Project, Accreditation, Association, Societies, Boards, and Committees, GR1996.0016, Box 12.
Furthermore, the CEA secretariat would also release reports about various aspects of the provincial education systems, such as a study of provincial assistance to private schools, school board decentralization, and alternative schools.684

What is unique about the CEA is that it was led by the senior officials (mostly deputy ministers and assistant deputy ministers) from the provinces (i.e. they comprised the board of directors along with other individuals involved in the education systems of the provinces such as superintendents and directors of education). Furthermore, they would meet twice a year, which further allowed for easy ideational exchange.685

The CEA also allowed for ideational exchange via its newsletter. Senior officials within the ministries would read it and became aware of policies in other jurisdictions. For example, in 1975, Alberta’s associate deputy minister, after reading one of the newsletters, wrote a letter to the director of curriculum, stating: “In the October 1975 issue of the CEA Newsletter, it is noted that the Ontario Ministry of Education has set up a Learning Materials Development Plan with funding of $750,000. I would like to be informed in greater detail with respect to this plan. If you have any materials, you might forward them to me or perhaps you might want to discuss the project with Pat Fleck at your next curriculum meeting and relay the information to me.”686 Another example is a letter by Ontario’s deputy minister writing a letter to his counterpart in Alberta to say: “I notice in the January, 1970, edition of the CEA newsletter, that the school finance committee of the Alberta Department of

684 Ibid.
685 Archives of Ontario, Files of the Assistant Deputy Minister of the Education Administration Division, RG 2-154, B162094, File: C.E.A. Board of Directors.
686 Provincial Archives of Alberta, Records Created by Deputy Minister and Assistant Deputy Minister of Instruction and Support, GR1983.0091, Box 21, File: 264.
Education has completed its report to the Minister of Education. If this report is available for distribution, I should very much appreciate receiving three copies at your convenience.”

It should not be assumed that the three aforementioned organizations are the only multi-provincial or international conferences that officials from the provinces attended. They are simply three of the key ones. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and Commonwealth of Nations conferences on education were other important conferences. Sometimes the conferences would be very small in terms of membership of the organizations that organized them, and geared towards very specific policy makers. An example is the Western Canada Educational Administrators’ Conference, which officials from Alberta and Saskatchewan attended.

It should be noted that even though usually one official or at most a few officials from a given ministry would attend such conferences or meetings, when they would return, they would write memorandums that contained a summary of what transpired, thus allowing other officials who had not attended to gain insight. Furthermore, the utility of conferences and meetings of organizations such as those discussed above in terms of ideational exchange should not be questioned, because as stated in a report written by a senior official in Alberta’s ministry of education in 1974, such forums bring “much information and many insights to those attending. But equally important are the informal opportunities for

687 Provincial Archives of Alberta, Records of Education Minister Hon. R.C. Clark and his Predecessors, GR1979.0066, Box 36, File: 323a.
689 Provincial Archives of Alberta, Minister of Education Correspondence Files with Education-Related Groups and School Jurisdictions, GR1995.0090, Box 7.
690 Provincial Archives of Alberta, Records Created by J. Jeffries, the Research Assistant to the Deputy Minister, GR1990.0489, Box 2.
691 Archives of Ontario, Files of the Assistant Deputy Minister of the Education Administration Division, RG 2-154, B173851, File: O.E.C.D.—Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development 1975-76; Provincial Archives of Alberta, Records Created by Deputy Minister and Assistant Deputy Minister of Instruction and Support, GR1983.0091, Box 23, File: 257.
professionals of widely different backgrounds to get together and exchange information and ideas."\textsuperscript{692}

In addition, there should be no question about the extent to which the publications of such organizations were analyzed in order for provincial officials to learn about the policies of other jurisdictions or how they compared to others. For example, in 1973 after receiving a report from UNESCO’s International Commission on Education, Saskatchewan’s minister of education made the following comment: “It is interesting to note the most progressive thinkers at an international level are finally coming around to Saskatchewan’s philosophy \[regarding the education system]\textsuperscript{693}.

**Evidence of Policy Transfer in the Second Period**

The search for solutions to address policy problems by policymakers in the three provinces was also evident in the second period. For example, a former official from Saskatchewan stated that his province would examine the policies of other jurisdictions, both inside and outside of Canada, to see “what if anything we could learn from them which could be applicable to Saskatchewan.”\textsuperscript{694} Another official from Saskatchewan who served in the early 1990s stated that the two provinces that were studied the most were British Columbia and Alberta. The official also mentioned that the government at that time closely monitored Ontario’s policies when the NDP was in office.\textsuperscript{695}

\textsuperscript{692} Provincial Archives of Alberta, Records Created by Deputy Minister and Assistant Deputy Minister of Instruction and Support, GR1983.0091, Box 55, File: 626.

\textsuperscript{693} The Saskatchewan Archives, G.S. MacMurchy Papers, R-901, File: II.11a—18.1 (Miscellaneous: Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, etc.).

\textsuperscript{694} Personal interview, November 22\textsuperscript{nd}, 2014.

\textsuperscript{695} Personal interview, January 9\textsuperscript{th}, 2015.
In Ontario, a former official who served during the time the NDP was in office stated that the fact that testing was being introduced in other jurisdictions was taken note of by the ministry and was a factor in explaining why the government pursued this policy.\textsuperscript{696} In addition, when the province was in the process of establishing standardized tests, a study was completed to see if other provinces had implemented such tests and how they were structured (i.e. which students wrote them, when the tests were administered, and which subjects were covered).\textsuperscript{697} Furthermore, a report by the United States’ Department of Education concerning indicators was also studied and considered “a valuable resource for the ministry in the identification and development of indicators to measure the success of Ontario’s education system.”\textsuperscript{698} An official from the province who served during the time the Tories were in office also stated that the policies of other jurisdictions would be examined, in particular the United Kingdom, the United States, and Alberta, as well as learning about policies based on the reports of the C.D. Howe Institute.\textsuperscript{699} The official stated that one specific area of the sector that they would seek information about from other jurisdictions is how much they spent on education and where they spent the money. For example, the official stated that they would examine the education systems of jurisdictions that ranked highly in international tests, but often spent less than Ontario. An official from the province who served during the time the Liberals were in office also stated that the policies of other jurisdictions were

\textsuperscript{696} Personal interview, November 13\textsuperscript{th}, 2014.
\textsuperscript{697} Archives of Ontario, Deputy Minister of Education Files, RG 2-38, B190070, File: I.
\textsuperscript{698} Archives of Ontario, Deputy Minister of Education Files, RG 2-38, B190063, File: 2.5. There are other examples of policy transfer and how it was used by the Tories as they sought to reform the education system in Ontario in the 1990s. For example, the then premier visited Michigan in 1996. After talking with that state’s governor about certain issues, such as the national goals for education, the premier asked the education ministry for more information. This was provided to the premier with the minister stating that “certainly, there is an opportunity for a productive exchange of views and information between Ontario and Michigan on education issues. Governor Engler’s work on education finance reform and on testing could help support Ontario’s initiatives. I note that Michigan appears to be playing a leadership role in national education initiatives. This could be instructive for Ontario in terms of our participation in the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada.” Source: Archives of Ontario, Deputy Minister of Education Files, RG 2-38, B190070, File: I.
\textsuperscript{699} Personal interview, November 17\textsuperscript{th}, 2014.
influential in shaping the McGuinty government’s approach to education policy: “Our spending resolve was influenced in an indirect way by the UK education reforms and the progress they had gained in improving student outcomes, a version of which we made a cornerstone of our education platform and policies once in government…. Commitments for smaller primary class sizes were influenced in part by projects in American local school systems while academic targeting involved regard for UK, Australian, New Zealand and Singapore experiences…. Efforts in the UK in particular had been examined closely for lessons in influencing system wide progress, including a visit there by Mr. McGuinty while Leader of the Opposition. We saw an opportunity not in copying their approach per se but rather modifying it to the Ontario context.”

As in the previous period, the selection of jurisdictions that were studied was somewhat odd because obvious choices (e.g. provincial counterparts) were not always chosen. For example, when the Ontario government was studying the issue of class sizes, California, South Carolina, and Tennessee were chosen as jurisdictions that the ministry researched. Another example is when Ontario and Alberta were studying year-round schooling in the early 1990s; both provinces examined California’s policy regarding this issue. As a former official from Ontario stated, “The ministry advocated serious consideration of altering our delivery to a year-round schedule to minimize the capital and staffing costs of education; indeed there were some who seemed to see this idea as a panacea…. Alberta was also looking at this issue at the time, based on Fraser Institute studies, and the favorite example used by both their Ministry and ours was California…. I

700 Personal interview, January 15th, 2015.
took time from a vacation in California to speak with my political counterpoint there on the pros and cons.”

Sometimes a province would volunteer (i.e. without being asked) to provide information to other jurisdictions. For example, in a March 1995 letter addressed to Alberta’s education minister, Ontario’s minister describes the new accountability related policies the province put in place after the release of the report by the Royal Commission on Learning. This form of voluntary sending of information was common and not just limited to the provinces being studied. For example, when British Columbia established new curricula outcomes, it sent copies of the outcomes to all the provinces.

Also like the previous period, ideational exchange at times would be very specific. For example, in Saskatchewan, when the province was re-examining its policy concerning school councils, a report submitted to the then minister of education by a panel contained an overview of how other provinces and territories structured such bodies. Also, when the province was in the process of establishing a new health education curriculum, Ontario sent Saskatchewan a resource guide. The province’s education minister informed Ontario’s deputy minister that her “department will be incorporating some of the topics addressed in your resource guide in our new curriculum.” There are other examples of such specific forms of ideational exchange. In Ontario, for example, when the Tories came into office, there was a high deficit that they wanted to reduce. However, the government also had to address certain issues. For example, the education system needed funding for new schools.

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702 Personal interview, January 10th, 2015.
703 Archives of Ontario, Deputy Minister of Education Files, RG 2-38, B316259, File: V.
704 Archives of Ontario, Deputy Minister of Education Files, RG 2-38, B316259, File: III.
705 Ministry of Learning, Local Partnerships and Accountability Panel (Regina: Government of Saskatchewan, 2005).
706 Archives of Ontario, Deputy Minister of Education Files, RG 2-38, B190063, File: II.
Therefore, in order to figure out how this could be done without, as the then minister stated, going “further into debt,” there was a need for research so that they could understand “how this problem is being addressed in other provinces and in some areas of the United States. A consultant has been hired who will submit a report…on ways in which we may address this need, and still reduce the provincial deficit.”

In addition, as we saw in chapter four, there was ideational exchange between the provinces in the 1990s as removing taxation powers from school boards became a very popular policy option. Furthermore, as discussed in the previous chapter, Ontario analyzed Alberta’s policies regarding charter schools. Also, Alberta provided information regarding its policies concerning school councils when Ontario was in the process of establishing such bodies.

Turning to organizations, as in the 1970s, CMEC was a key means of policy transfer in the second period. Although policymakers often complained about the degree of difficulty in getting every jurisdiction to agree to common initiatives (i.e. nationalizing curricula or standards) or being a body that spearheaded education reform, they nevertheless agreed that CMEC meetings provided opportunities to learn about what other jurisdictions were doing with their education systems. As a former official from Saskatchewan stated, there would be roundtables in which officials would discuss the sorts of policies they had implemented and what their ministry was doing, and an official from Ontario stated that the informal sessions over dinner were also very useful in terms of learning about the policies of other jurisdictions. In fact, in a briefing note written in 1992 for Ontario’s minister of education

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707 Archives of Ontario, Deputy Minister of Education Files, RG 2-38, B190070, File: 12.
708 Archives of Ontario, Deputy Minister of Education Files, RG 2-38, B316259, File: I.
710 Personal interview, November 10th, 2014.
711 Personal interview, November 11th, 2014.
regarding the effectiveness of CMEC, it was noted that “despite its drawbacks, CMEC can be a useful forum...for information exchange.”

What is noteworthy, given the focus of this chapter, is that at the start of the second period, CMEC re-examined and reformed the manner in which it would assist in ideational exchange. The cause of this was a ministers’ meeting in May of 1992, in which they instructed their ministries of education to establish a new means for provinces to learn about each other’s policies. As a result, during their August 1992 meeting, the deputy ministers of education “adopted a more systematic way of sharing information on issues in their jurisdiction—information to be compiled (in the form of a series of one-pagers than [sic] the provinces will provide) and then distributed through the CMEC secretariat. It is understood that the secretariat will do no analytic work—simply focus on compilation and distribution.”

Similarly, as in the previous period, CMEC was also important by providing important information to ministries. For example, in 1995, the organization’s director of research and development sent Ontario’s deputy minister a summary of an OECD meeting about the connections between schooling and the world of work because the director knew that the deputy minister had an “interest in...[that] area of study.” Also, when the organization would receive reports from international organizations, it would inform the ministries of the publications that it had received so as to allow interested officials to have access to them.

714 Archives of Ontario, Deputy Minister of Education Files, RG 2-38, B316259.
A new aspect of CMEC in the second period was the establishment of periodic “national consultations bringing together partners in the education and learning system.” The first such consultation took place in May of 1994. These consultations were important because they focused on key issues that were central in the education debates of the day. For example, the theme of the second consultation, which took place in May of 1996, was “Accountability in Canadian Education: Are We Getting What We Pay For?” which would address “questions dealing with public and policy expectations, academic achievement, accessibility, transferability and Canada’s educational and economic competitiveness.” Needless to say, this issue was a very important one in the 1990s as the need to reduce spending and increase accountability were major priorities for all governments, as discussed in chapter two, because of the neoliberal consensus.716 Furthermore, as we saw in chapter two, CMEC played a key role in ensuring that a key policy implication of the accountability paradigm—the need for standardized tests—was accepted by the provinces by creating and eventually having all provinces agree to its testing program. In a sense, there was some pressure placed upon CMEC by the premiers of the country who declared, in their August 1991 meeting, that the organization should “continue [its] efforts to put in place effective mechanisms for appropriate evaluation and improved accountability in provincial and territorial education systems.”717

OECD conferences and meetings, as in the first period, continued to be key forums for ideational exchange. In particular, the OECD was a key organization in the second period for focusing on the challenges and opportunities faced by its member countries in the era of neoliberalism. With the emergence of this consensus there was “clearly a discernable

716 Archives of Ontario, Deputy Minister of Education Files, RG 2-38, B316261, File: 2.4.
redirection of OECD policies toward education. During this time OECD documents adopted a more neoliberal take on the relationship between knowledge, economy and state where governments were seen as less active but more supportive players.\textsuperscript{718} This marked a change because “until the mid-1970s, the OECD reflected the postwar conventional wisdom of Keynesianism. Thereafter, the organization gradually came to adopt a different policy paradigm, generally referred to as monetarism or neo-liberalism, contemporary renditions of traditional neo-classical economics.”\textsuperscript{719} This is why the OECD was instrumental in the first period in helping the transmission of policy ideas that reflected the person-regarding paradigm, which was based on the Keynesian consensus.

Sometimes, key insights would be gained on the sidelines of OECD meetings. For example, a former official from Ontario stated that when the province was contemplating how to structure the agency that would be in charge of testing in the province (what would become the Education Quality and Accountability Office), he gained useful insight by talking to an official from another country—insight which would directly be used by the province as it went about creating and structuring the agency.\textsuperscript{720}

Similarly, the CEA and its conferences continued to also be used for ideational exchange.\textsuperscript{721} In fact, what seemed to be a new development was the fact that unlike in the previous period, in the post-1990 years, the CEA would organize a two-day meeting of senior officials from the provinces prior to its yearly conference, meaning there would be greater opportunities for ideational exchange.\textsuperscript{722}

\textsuperscript{718} Steven C. Ward, \textit{Neoliberalism and the Global Restructuring of Knowledge and Education} (New York: Routledge, 2012).
\textsuperscript{720} Personal interview, November 11th, 2014.
\textsuperscript{721} Archives of Ontario, Deputy Minister of Education Files, RG 2-38, B316259, File: II.
\textsuperscript{722} Archives of Ontario, Deputy Minister of Education Files, RG 2-38, B316257, File: 2.
Two new organizations that were also important in the second period in terms of allowing the provinces to gain insight into the policies of other jurisdictions were the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meetings of ministers of education and the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO). Although only some provincial officials would be part of the Canadian delegations that attended the conferences of these organizations, those that did not attend would be provided with a summary of the proceedings at CMEC meetings.\textsuperscript{723}

Although specific proceedings of such conferences and meetings were not discussed above because such material could not be obtained, we should not discount the usefulness of these forums for ideational exchange. Indications that officials found such forums to be useful are even evident in personal notes that policymakers sent to each other. For example, after an OECD meeting in 1995, New Zealand’s secretary for education sent a letter to Ontario’s deputy minister of education, writing “how much I enjoyed seeing you in Paris recently. I find these international exchanges and networks very useful for policy, implementation and day to day operations.”\textsuperscript{724} In addition, a former official from Ontario stated that such organizations allowed jurisdictions to “track” what sorts of policies were being implemented to deal with issues in all areas of the sector.\textsuperscript{725} In addition, another former official had this to say when asked whether CMEC, CEA, and OECD meetings, conferences, and reports were useful: “All of the organizations you mention provided huge learning opportunities, both about what was currently being done and what the participants foresaw for the future. There were always extensive materials prepared in the way of research papers

\textsuperscript{723} Archives of Ontario, Council of Ministers of Education Files, RG 2-40, B700670, File: ACDME—56\textsuperscript{th} Meeting—(August 20-21, 1992).
\textsuperscript{724} Archives of Ontario, Deputy Minister of Education Files, RG 2-38, B316257, File: 2.
\textsuperscript{725} Personal interview, November 13\textsuperscript{th}, 2014.
and policy proposals that certainly helped me to understand the issues better. I understood as well the wide differences in how policies had developed, what principles informed those policies.\footnote{726 Personal interview, January 10\textsuperscript{th}, 2015.}

**Conclusion**

It is clear based on the evidence provided above, that the provinces learned about, and studied, what other jurisdictions—both inside Canada and outside the country—were doing when deciding on a particular policy. What is interesting, however, given the fact that the provinces were interested in the policies of other jurisdictions, was the haphazard manner in which information was gathered. There was no systematic means of establishing channels with other jurisdictions or organizations so that information about various aspects of the sector would be regularly exchanged and received. Rather, what would often happen is that when a particular policy was on the agenda of a given government or if an official was interested in a given topic (by hearing or reading about it), information would be gathered; this means that research was done on a case by case, ad-hoc basis. Officials in all three provinces who served in the second period confirmed this fact.\footnote{727 Personal interviews, November 13\textsuperscript{th}, 2014; November 10\textsuperscript{th}, 2014; November 11\textsuperscript{th}, 2014; November 17\textsuperscript{th}, 2014; January 9\textsuperscript{th}, 2015; January 10\textsuperscript{th}, 2015.}

Another key finding of this chapter has been that policy transfer is a continuous and integral component of how the education ministries of these provinces operated. In fact, a major component of the policy development process in all three provinces was to see what other jurisdictions had done so as to have some guide as they sought to address a policy problem in a given area of the sector. It should also be noted that this finding is not just applicable to the second period when communication between officials in different
jurisdictions was far easier as compared to the 1970s. In that period, policy transfer was just as prevalent.

What we have also seen is the voluntary nature of the ideational transfer in this sector. At no point was there evidence—archival, from interviews, from the secondary literature, or from media accounts—that indicated that policymakers in the three provinces were forced to adopt a particular policy or forced to seek ideas from other jurisdictions about how they should approach a given policy issue. Although policymakers were constrained as to what policies they could pursue due to the dictates of dominant ideas in the two periods, this does not negate agency, and by extension, being able to freely examine policy options and select a particular solution.

Finally, the evidence above has also allowed us to see the extent to which the officials in all three provinces, during both periods, were influenced by international organizations. This is noteworthy because a case could be made that without officials from the provinces engaging with officials from other jurisdictions during the meetings and conferences of international organizations, the dictates of dominant ideas would not have had as great a causal impact as they did. After all, it is hard for policy consensuses and paradigms to be consequential in different jurisdictions without policymakers discussing with one another the policies that they implemented based on their dictates. It is only by this means that such dictates can spread and cause such forces to become dominant and guiding principles. In fact, the influence of such organizations is something that the policy transfer literature should emphasize much more.
Chapter 7

Conclusion

This study has attempted to address a key political puzzle: why does partisanship not have a major causal effect on education policy outputs, even though it is very consequential in other social policy sectors? In order to answer this question, four areas of the education policy sectors of Ontario, Saskatchewan, and Alberta over two periods—the 1970s and 1990 to 2008—were analyzed: policies concerning the objectives of schooling; spending decisions; policies related to school boards; and policies concerning private and charter schools. As was shown in chapters two to four, because of the impact of dominant ideas, policymakers in the three provinces usually viewed policy problems and ways to improve their education systems in similar ways during the two periods, which in turn resulted in them seeing only particular policies as solutions and as being viable.

However, to reiterate an important point that was made in the introductory chapter, the findings of this study do not mean that it is only ideational factors, to the exclusion of others (i.e. proximate causes), that influence education policymaking. Like all studies, this one had a specific focus; it sought to examine the ultimate causes of education policy outputs so as to be able to explain why partisanship does not have an impact on all aspects of this particular sector when it does in other social policy sectors. As such, a focus on how the ultimate cause (i.e. ideas) influenced members of the policy networks, who in turn recommended certain policy options to provincial policymakers based on the dictates of the dominant ideas in both periods (i.e. proximate causes), was outside the scope of this study. However, future studies can and should examine this complex causal process (analyzing
what each of the members of the provincial policy networks recommended to governments, not to mention analyzing why some members of the networks were more likely to be influential when a given type of governing party was in office) so as to further substantiate the findings of this study.

In terms of the specific findings of this study, it was shown that in the 1970s, due to the Keynesian consensus, governments in all three provinces did not have to pursue policies in a manner that stressed limited spending or formal mechanisms to track the performance of their education systems, via standardized tests, to justify the high costs of public education. As such, governments in all three provinces consistently supported their education systems by increasing funding and expanding the sector by, for instance, introducing kindergarten, even if their fiscal and economic situations did not make such a policy ideal. They did not pursue policies just for the sake of saving money (e.g. amalgamating school boards or taking away the taxing powers from local trustees). Furthermore, the Keynesian consensus allowed for a paradigm (person-regarding) to become dominant which, at its core, required governments to be able to spend liberally so as to ensure that their education systems satisfied the wide variety of interests and needs of students.

In the second period, in which globalization had re-emerged as a dominant force, new ideas had come to influence policymaking. One such idea was neoliberalism. The dictates of this consensus caused policymakers to see unlimited spending, including on education, as a problem when the issue of reducing budget deficits was high on the policy agenda of provinces. This caused governments in all three provinces to make cuts to education spending or to implement policies that would reduce or control spending (e.g. amalgamating school boards). This consensus also paved the way for a paradigm (accountability) to become
entrenched that caused policymakers to value policies that would ensure that their education systems were performing as expected so as to justify the large price tag that came with supporting a public education system (e.g. introducing standardized testing).

However, another idea that became dominant in the second period due to globalization was human capital theory. This idea had a causal effect on spending decisions. As discussed in chapter three, we saw how it caused policymakers in the provinces to recognize the importance of investing in their education systems, especially after budget deficits were addressed. They did this to ensure economic success in a knowledge-based, globalized economy. This finding is consistent with the “compensation thesis” that some globalization scholars have advanced. This thesis states that globalization does not result in a rush to the bottom in terms of spending on social programs by governments. Instead, policymakers seek to support those policy sectors that will help them compete economically in a globalized, competitive era which requires, among other things, an educated workforce. This is why policymakers in all three provinces consistently argued in speeches, documents, and official reports that remaining committed to, and strengthening, their education systems was necessary.

Clearly, these two globalization-associated ideas had distinctive implications for the education sector, as discussed in detail in chapter three. When evaluating the spending decisions of the three provinces for the second period as a whole, rather than a limited number of years, it was shown that the two competing ideational forces offset one another. Neoliberalism dictated spending reductions, which were implemented in all three provinces under the constraint of high deficits during the 1990s. But the fact that human capital theory was also a guiding ideational influence on policymakers resulted in spending reductions to be
limited and impermanent; they were broadly reversed after 2000 once the fiscal situation of the provinces had improved.

Despite such dominant ideas contributing to the provinces structuring their education systems in a similar way, in certain instances partisanship helped us to understand why policies were pursued by a given province at a particular time. Specifically, we saw that the partisanship variable partially explained changes in the financial commitments made to the sector and also the policies of governments concerning private and charter schools, but this was true only in the second period examined in this study.

Beginning with spending, it was shown in chapter three that when neoliberal parties came into office in the three provinces in the post-1990 years, they spent less than other parties. We saw this not only in the case of total spending per student figures, but also when a specific aspect of the provinces’ education systems was examined: funding for kindergarten. Having said that, it was also shown that the impact of ideas is not completely irrelevant in this aspect of the sector either. This is because governments, regardless of their ideologies, followed the same spending patterns. In other words, even though neoliberal parties spent less than other governing parties when cutbacks were made to the sector (e.g. when provinces were focused on reducing budget deficits in the early 1990s), all parties reduced spending. The New Democratic governments in Saskatchewan and Ontario reduced spending just as the neoliberal Progressive Conservative governments in Ontario and Alberta did, but the former less so than the latter. Similarly, when financial circumstances allowed for more commitments to the sector (i.e. when provincial economies and budgets had improved) all parties increased spending, not just centrist or left-wing parties. The neoliberal
Progressive Conservative Party in Alberta increased spending just like the New Democratic government in Saskatchewan and the Liberal government in Ontario.

Therefore, although partisanship matters to a certain extent when trying to understand the decisions of governments concerning spending, this only presents a partial picture. All governing parties were guided by the dictates of the two dominant ideas which influenced policymakers in the second period: neoliberalism and human capital theory.

Turning to policies concerning private schools and charter schools, we saw that in all three provinces in the second period, neoliberal parties were more supportive of policies which would make such schools an attractive option for parents (e.g. the Alberta Progressive Conservative Party increasing the per pupil grant to private schools, the Saskatchewan Party making all private schools eligible for the per pupil grant, and the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party introducing a tax credit for parents that sent their children to private schools) and in the case of the Alberta Progressive Conservative Party, putting in place a policy so as to permit charter schools to operate. In all three provinces, however, we saw non-neoliberal parties criticize these policies, and in the case of Ontario, one such party abolish the tax credit policy.

Since it was shown that in these two instances partisanship can be a useful causal variable in terms of understanding why certain decisions concerning spending and non-traditional schools were made only when neoliberal parties were in office in the three provinces in the second period, an obvious question arises: Why does partisanship have a causal effect only in these two aspects of the education sector (more limited in case of the former than the latter), but not others? That is, what is unique about the education sector, compared to other social policy sectors, which leads ideologically distinct parties to adopt
similar policy positions? One possible explanation—an explanation that requires analysis in future studies—is that unlike other social programs, such as social assistance, education is different because it less of a distributive program. It (i.e. comprehensive public education) is something that all segments of society, and thus all political parties that seek to appeal to particular segments, believe benefits society as a whole. As such, it is not surprising to see that the aspect of the sector in which we saw the greatest evidence of partisan differences is that which is perceived by some individuals and political parties as challenging the importance and prominence of public education (i.e. policies concerning non-traditional schools), though supporters of such policies argue that supporting public education and private schools are not mutually exclusive (i.e. they continue to see the importance of public education in a modern, industrialized society). Again, it is important to stress that this is only a tentative explanation that requires analysis in future studies to fully substantiate.

Another obvious question that needs to be addressed is the extent to which the findings of this study are applicable beyond the cases that were analyzed or other research puzzles. In terms of the education systems of other provinces, this study can certainly be a guide to understanding how they have evolved since the 1970s and why they went down particular paths. In fact, we can even understand the evolution of the education systems of jurisdictions outside of Canada, specifically the Western, industrialized world. This is because of the fact that it was shown that dominant ideas were a key determinant of the trajectory and characteristics of three education systems as opposed to education policymaking being based strictly on local factors and circumstances. This point regarding the applicability of the findings of this study to understanding the education policies of other jurisdictions is confirmed by the few studies that have examined the education policies of
other jurisdictions and focused on the effects of the aforementioned ideational forces on education systems. Accordingly, this study contributes to a growing literature which proves that modern education systems are largely, but not completely, structured in a way that reflects exogenous, ideational forces. Education policymakers are guided by them as they go down particular policy paths.

In addition, this study is applicable to our understanding of the nature and causes of why certain ideas become influential and why they are eventually supplanted. In this study, we saw that dominant ideas in a given period (e.g. Keynesianism in the first period) were closely linked with the economic and fiscal realities of jurisdictions. Once those ideas cease to provide policy solutions so as to address challenges brought forth by economic and fiscal changes (e.g. slower economic growth and every increasing budget deficits and overall debt), new ideas, which existed in the background and had their own advocates, move into the foreground and begin to be seen as attractive by policymakers due to the alignment of their dictates with new economic and fiscal realities (e.g. neoliberalism in the post-1980 years).

Furthermore, this study has allowed us to understand how policy paradigms in a given policy sector (e.g. the person-regarding and accountability paradigms in education) are based on broader policy consensuses and that changes in the latter bring about changes in the former due to the inability of an existing paradigm to provide acceptable and realistic policy solutions that are consistent with the dictates of a new, emerging policy consensus. These are not new findings, given that the ideas literature, as discussed in chapter one, has examined these matters. Rather, what these findings do is substantiate the existing claims in that literature by relying on empirical evidence based on the examination of a specific policy sector.

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728 These were cited in the introductory chapter.
Finally, the analysis presented in the previous chapters, in particular chapters two and three, contributes to our understanding of why not only education, but related policy fields such as skills attainment and labour market policies, are treated differently than other types of social policies (e.g. social assistance, healthcare, employment insurance, childcare, etc.) by governments. In particular, the findings of this study underline the importance of recognizing that modern governments view spending on policy areas that will help citizens enter or re-enter the labour force (e.g. increasing funding for pre- and post-secondary education, tax credits for those that enrol in trade colleges, tax credits for employers that hire apprentices, etc.) as qualitatively different than spending on those social policy areas that simply provide a social safety net. Accordingly such findings are applicable to the research on welfare states and can help researchers that contribute to the literature on that topic present a more nuanced account—in addition to discussing the causal effect of such factors as support of a given policy among middle-class voters—of why certain policy sectors are treated differently when governments retrench when faced with fiscal or economic challenges (e.g. budget deficits and recessions).

The discussion up to this point has reviewed some of the key findings and contributions of this study. However, this study has some shortcomings. First, due to the importance of ideational effects on education policy outputs, the findings of this study would have been even more valuable if a case from outside of Canada had been examined, given the fact that dominant ideas are not bound by the political borders of jurisdictions and often have an international impact. This was partially shown in the previous chapter on policy transfer, in which officials from the three provinces were shown to have examined the policies of non-Canadian jurisdictions during both periods. They recognized that other
jurisdictions were also implementing policies based on the dictates of the Keynesianism in the first period and neoliberalism and human capital theory in the second period.

Second, because this study only focused on primary and secondary schooling, we are unable to determine if provincial governments were influenced by the aforementioned ideas when formulating their policies for post-secondary education during the two periods. These two areas of education are treated distinctly by governments (e.g. having separate ministries for each) and scholars, due to the mandatory and “free” nature of the former, and the different objectives each has. However, by extending the focus of analysis beyond the high school grades, the finding of this study can be strengthened if it is found that provincial policymakers were influenced by dominant ideas when shaping their post-secondary policies just as they were when implementing policies concerning primary and secondary schooling.

Third, this study did not consider whether key stakeholders, such as teacher unions or prominent parent groups, in the policy network associated with the education sector had any effect on policymakers. Although there was not any obvious evidence—based on the review of archival material and interviews with former officials—that such stakeholders were prominent actors in terms of influencing education policy outputs, a case could be made that an evaluation of the extent of the influence of such stakeholders, even if the influence was minimal, was warranted.

Needless to say, all of these shortcomings can be addressed by building on this study in future scholarship. Doing so would allow for the creation of a research community that seeks to further our understanding of such a critical policy sector. Although the public policy sub-field in the political science literature is, overall, a rich and comprehensive area of study, when evaluating the particular areas of the sub-field, one discovers gaps or superficial
analyses of certain policy sectors. One of those sectors is education policy. It is not an exaggeration to say that “education has remained a ‘homeless’ and widely underestimated topic during the last decades. Although education policy made some guest appearances in policy analysis, it remained a subordinated issue and, compared to environmental policy, social policy or foreign policy, it has not become an original, autonomous policy field in its own right.”

Given the fact that education has a direct influence on the lives of citizens, and in view of the amount of time and money governments spend on policies concerning their education systems, it is somewhat odd that political scientists have not devoted more attention to studying education policies. Although this study has allowed for a greater understanding of the causes of specific education policies, there are still many aspects of this key sector that deserve attention. Hopefully, in the coming years, more political scientists, both inside and outside Canada, will devote more attention to either seeking to address the shortcomings of this study or exploring completely distinct questions and issues concerning education policies.

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