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Exploring Multicultural Poetry in British Columbia's
and Ontario's Secondary School Curricula

by

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ABSTRACT

By adopting a critical pedagogy lens, and conducting a Textual Analysis, this thesis examined the literatures on secondary school English Language Arts curricula of British Columbia (BC), and English curricula of Ontario (ON). With the research question – how (if at all) are the English Language Arts curricula of BC and the English curricula of ON that focus on poetry, influenced by multiculturalism? – I studied the strengths and weaknesses of both the curriculums, particularly with their focus on multiculturalism and presented the implications of the limitations that emerged. The strengths of secondary school BC English Language Arts curricula focused on multicultural poetry are; core competencies fostering intercultural communication skills, big ideas nurturing empathy, collectivism, Freirean critical consciousness and praxis, appreciation of First Peoples’ traditions, promotion of social justice, flexibility and interdisciplinary space for teachers and students. The strengths of secondary school ON English curricula focused on multicultural poetry are; student autonomy, critical classroom discussions, and fostering of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. The study also assessed the implications of three major limitations: 1. lack of teacher prompts and vagueness around the implementation of BC curricula, 2. Overcrowding of ON curricula, and 3. Dearth of specific multicultural contents such as textbooks or resources for classroom perusal. This study found that poetry within the curricula of BC and ON, is only minimally influenced by multiculturalism. My thesis contributes to the English Language Arts/English curricula of BC and ON, teacher education programs and to the larger discourse of Canadian multiculturalism by providing suggestions for curriculum developers, policy makers and teacher educators.

Keywords: Multiculturalism, poetry, secondary school, curricula

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OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

This thesis is a conceptual study. Chapter One is an elaboration of my connection with poetry, my positionality as a researcher, an outline of the research question, the framing of the research, and the significance of this study.

Chapter Two is the detailed theoretical framework section. This section is divided into two parts, the first part elaborates the concepts of critical pedagogy as theorized originally by Paulo Freire. The second section will elaborate on the theme of social justice and multiculturalism within critical pedagogy.

Chapter Three is the methodology section. This chapter is divided into three parts: I introduce the reviewed curricula in the first part, followed by a description of Content Analyses approach of the Textual Analyses methodology for data analyses. The third part is my explanation of data source, sampling, and analysis strategies. In this chapter, I also elaborate on the validity of my findings.

Chapter Four is the detailed literature review section. This chapter is divided into two parts: the first part is a review of the curricular documents of BC and ON where I explore how poetry is defined in the secondary school British Columbia English Language Arts curricula, and the secondary school Ontario English curricula, and the second part is the review of literatures on the multicultural aspects of poetry.

Chapter Five is a detailed analysis of the literature review. This is done based on the concepts laid out in the theoretical framework section. The chapter is further divided into two sections; first section is a thorough examination of the strengths of both the poetry curricula wherein I look into the positive attributes regarding multiculturalism that the curriculums have to offer, and the second section is a general outline of the limitations.

Chapter Six addresses the implications of the existing gap within BC and ON secondary school poetry curricula. This chapter delves into key limitations of the curricula, their implications on the curricular practice and specifically connects these implications to the greater discourse of multiculturalism through and within poetry.

Finally, Chapter Seven identifies the significance of the findings with respect to three distinctive areas – on English Language Arts/ English curricula of BC and ON, on teacher education programs, and on Canadian multiculturalism. This is followed by the limitations of the study and the steps for future research.

Chapter One

Introduction

Why poetry for this thesis?

...more of your sonnets,
your odes, your epic fests.
I do, but in smile gaze,
Heaven has it brought to my face;
All I wish is to die
in your powerful imagination;
And then my soul would be
in harmony with the creation. (Mathew, 2016)

It gives me immense joy to begin with a portion of my own poetry that I composed praising William Wordsworth's poems, that has inspired and continue to inspire me. Before elaborating on the reason behind my research on poetry in curricula, I would like to reflect on a few anecdotes from my early poetry writing days in order to establish my connection with this art form and bring out the purpose of this conceptual thesis. I have loved poetry since Grade eight, when I used to compose lyrical songs and sing those songs with my guitar in school. However, it was not until my undergraduate college days that poetry composition and recitation became an exciting and rewarding hobby to me. It was partly because I was a student pursuing a degree in English literature, and poetry as an art form came very naturally to me. I connected with the works of famous poets, such as Wordsworth, Blake, Coleridge, Donne, Lawrence and Shakespeare, to name a few.

Poetry is of a bright sun,
warmth on a winter street;
Poetry is of a butterfly,
beauty in a garden of flowers;
with its flickering charisma;
with its aura like stars;
The butterfly is the poet,
its beauty, its poetry. (Mathew, 2016)

I was an average student obtaining average grade points for most of the courses while pursuing a degree in English literature. It was during my second year, that for one of my courses, I scored a lower grade for my assignments. The course was on Romanticism, and the lower grade came as a huge disappointment, as I perceived and feared rejection to good graduate schools. During the time before my final exams, I took to books, read Coleridge, Wordsworth, Blake and other Romantic poets thoroughly. I went well prepared to write the exam, and surprisingly, I not only scored good grades this time, I also started deeply admiring these poets and their works, leading to my own birth as a poet. Wordsworth's romantic poems on nature brought me immense happiness and I started observing everything around me with a poet's eyes. I started to admire nature and became appreciative of all the little things around me. I began writing with inspirations taken from my daily observations, and not more than two years later from then, I published my first book of poems. This incident happened in the latter half of 2014, and since then I have published two books, titled '*Mirth of Poesy*' and '*Drizzle and Zephyr*' respectively. The following is a stanza from Pablo Neruda's poem, which is also a prelude to how poetry became a passionate hobby for me.

And it was at that age ... Poetry arrived
in search of me. I don't know, I don't know where
it came from, from winter or a river.
I don't know how or when,
no they were not voices, they were not
words, nor silence,
but from a street I was summoned,
from the branches of night,
abruptly from the others,
among violent fires
or returning alone,
there I was without a face
and it touched me. (Neruda, 2005, p. 659)

As joyful as those memories appear today, I admit there have been times when I have faced difficulty in writing poems, as well as reading and comprehending poetry written by other scholars. This struggle in understanding poetry, I believe, is partly because of the way it was presented in the curriculum and partly because of how teachers taught this subject in the classrooms. As a student, I noticed that the Indian English curricula, for most of its parts, included foreign poets and their poetry instead of the poems from local poets. English textbooks in India are often deemed to be inadequate because of the inclusion of poetry by native English speakers, which appears to be linguistically difficult for the students and often becomes culturally alien to them (Vinod, 2019). When students are exposed to this type of poetry through their curricula, which holds no relevance to their own cultural setting, they lose interest in their lessons. Both during my schooling and college days, many of my classmates have admitted that poetry came with absolutely no excitement. Moreover, I am aware of at least some of my friends struggling in the class to decipher even a stanza. I used to wonder why poetry was even important within any language curricula. However, when I started reading the works of other poets, I realised how poetry provides a fresh perspective to my observations.

Furthermore, having been born and raised in India, a multicultural nation, I am typically interested in multicultural poetry, which according to Tso (2011) is “a critical abstraction in which poetry is classified by relation to a communal culture, history or customs” (p. 221). I love poetry written by diverse members of the society, as well as poems which are capable of promoting multiple perspectives, as I believe it can empathetically position readers or listeners in diverse cultural contexts. Moreover, multicultural poetry for me includes not only the poems that are composed by people hailing from diverse cultures,

but it also constitutes various poetry presentation styles, which in many cases have different cultural importance attached to them, such as haikus, pastoral poetry, slam poetry or performance poetry.

Throughout my educational career, I have strongly believed that poetry, in both writing and reciting, “frees students’ souls of the problems that may weigh them down” (Desai & Marsh, 2005, p.80). While writing poetry helps students to make sense of their emotions, reading or reciting connects them with the works of other poets. Michael Rosen (2011), a poet and Children’s Laureate, says: “(poetry) expresses who we are, what we’ve been and what we might be, and education should in part be about helping pupils do this too” (p.21). Based on this belief, and my own experiences with poetry, I have chosen this topic to study for my thesis.

Being an educator myself, I recognize an impactful curriculum must be a bridge between the society and students, which in turn focusses on the development of the individuals and the society. And it is with this belief, I intend to research poetry in curriculum, in order to serve the students and the society alike. I strongly connect with the Leggo’s (2018, p.73) views, that a “curriculum of poetry can transform our hearts, imaginations, intellects and conversations”. Being a graduate student in the Master of Education program in Canada and intending to serve a multicultural world through the learnings from this country which has welcomed me wholeheartedly, this research is primarily focussed on multicultural poetry within the English Language Arts/English curriculums of two provinces of Canada – British Columbia (BC) and Ontario (ON). Throughout my thesis, I will be referring to multicultural poetry within the English Language Arts/English curriculums of BC and ON as ‘poetry curricula’ of the respective provinces.

Positionality

According to Bourke (2014), positionality in research is representative of a space wherein amalgamation of objectivism and subjectivism takes place. This means that in research, however objective a researcher tries to become, the element of one's own subjectivity cannot be left behind. My positionality emanates from two aspects, first, my urban background, and second, my experience abroad, both of which provides me privilege as a researcher in the field of education. As a heterosexual, cisgender, racialized brown male from India, my upbringing in an urban metropolitan city makes me proficient in the usage of English language, connects me to diverse western and eastern cultures, and is the foundation of my experience with international humanitarian aid bodies. Furthermore, being a graduate in Bachelor of Arts (BA) English literature and having published two poetry books based on observations and reflections, I wear the hat of an author. By writing about social themes and addressing social issues through my work, I also consider myself to be socially responsible and empathetic. This is primarily because through my poems I repeatedly emphasize the importance of being empathetic in a multicultural world. Another privilege I have is the high quality of education, as my academic success with the Master of Arts (MA) Educational Planning and Administration degree, enabled me to be a humanitarian aid worker in Afghanistan, where I was exposed to a different cultural setting. Furthermore, my higher education abroad in Canada, and my courses in this multicultural setting, have helped me to empathetically position myself with further different racial and linguistic identities. Thus, my upbringing in India, one of the most diverse countries in the world, and my experiences in

Afghanistan and Canada, have made me secular and appreciative of plurality in the society; this positionality helps me connect freely to this research setting.

Purpose and Research Question

The purpose of this thesis is to conduct a critical conceptual study of British Columbia's Secondary School English Language Arts curricula (BCELAC) and Ontario's Secondary School English curricula (ONEC) by exploring and analysing multicultural poetry within the curricular documents through a critical pedagogy lens. The goal of this study is to examine, if any, the lack of multicultural based poetry and the implications that follow. My research topic is – Exploring Multicultural Poetry in British Columbia's and Ontario's Secondary School Curricula. The research question for this study is:

- How (if at all) are the high school English Language Arts curricula of British Columbia (BC) and the English curricula of Ontario (ON) that focus on poetry, influenced by multiculturalism?

Framing of this Research

In this section, I will explore the two most important aspects regarding the framing of my research topic. First and foremost, I will elaborate the reasons behind the selection of secondary school curricula from two distinctive provinces: BC English Language Arts curriculums and ON English curriculums, in particular. And secondly, I will focus on the elements of multicultural poetry that frames my research question.

The reason behind the selection of secondary school poetry curricula is primarily because of Grades 9-12 students, who are in their crucial adolescence stage. EduCanada (2020) gives a general outline of secondary schooling in Canada, and observes that in most Canadian provinces, Grades 9 to 12 students comprise of secondary school going students.

Furthermore, even though there is a conundrum in defining this developmental period with respect to a definite age group, taking account of the maturation of behaviours, and identity and relationship development factors, high school students falling in the latter half of adolescence are in a crucial stage of building essential skills for life (Sisk & Romeo, 2020; Somerville, 2016; Sawyer, Azzopardi, Wickremarathne & Patton, 2018). Educators are ‘frontline workers’ when it comes to dealing with the experiences of adolescents and their growing to maturation, both inside and frequently outside the school. This is precisely where poetry within the curricula helps. Arenas (2018) argue that poetry plays a significant role in fostering identity and meaning to the lives of secondary school students.

Poetry becomes a tool for educators to connect with their students, and through writing and reciting poems, they are able to create a space for students to articulate their feelings and thoughts (Desai & Marsh, 2005; Arenas, 2018). Davis (2018) argues that slam poetry, for instance, is an effective means for these students to apprehend their identities and is instrumental in creating social space for them to explore the flow of their emotions. This means that at a stage where students are constantly in the middle of understanding their position in the society by introspecting their role amongst their peers and society at large, poetry acts as a platform for them to regulate the array of emotions they experience. Poetry can support their personal growth in a multicultural society and thus, secondary school curricula becomes an important area in this research.

The purpose behind the selection of BC and ON curriculums has both academic and personal reasons. My first point of arrival in Canada and my brief interaction with the education system here, connects me well with the province of BC. At the time of writing this thesis, I am a graduate student in BC and my interactions with the schoolteachers as well as

my university professors here has connected me more to the education system of this province.

Ontario on the other hand is the province I have known from the experiences of my relatives who are settled there as second-generation Canadians and who have actively interacted with the education system of the province. Moreover, I have always admired the works of certain modern-day poets from Ontario; Margaret Atwood, Najwa Zebian and Rupi Kaur, to name a few. Additionally, poetry is a prescribed content area within the purview of both BC English Language Arts Curriculums and ON English Curriculums. Poetry is noted in the documented versions of these curriculums as an important area and pursuing poetry within the English classrooms is regarded as a necessary criterion towards the attainment of credits. Another significant reason behind the selection of the curricula from these two provinces is that, ON and BC being two larger provinces from central and western Canada respectively, are top performers in Education among the rest of the provinces and territories of Canada (The Conference Board of Canada, 2014), and by being different geographically, economically and in relation to immigration rates, they together serve as representatives of Canada in many ways.

The second aspect, that of multicultural poetry, is a vital component in the framing of this thesis. I intentionally chose multicultural poetry over any other type of poetry because it helps in addressing social issues such as sexism and classism and develops literacy in meeting social justice goals (McCall, 2004). Multicultural poetry also includes indigenous poetry alongside poetry from other cultures. I must make it clear though, that with multicultural poetry, I not only refer to the poems that are written by diverse community members or that which hails the diversity aspect of a country, rather multicultural poetry is

also a terminology that includes different *cultural forms* of poetry, such as pastoral poetry, haikus, slam poetry or written poetry, all of which as Xerri (2012, p.68) argues, promote “intercultural competencies”. Moreover, as multiculturalism itself is a bigger terminology that includes varied sexual orientations, religious affiliations, gender identities, people coming together from different nationalities and having varied abilities (Breunig, 2016) multicultural poetry too is a term that encompasses all these cultural diversities.

Multiculturalism is also linked to critical pedagogy, which is the lens taken for this research and will be discussed separately in the theoretical framework section. In what follows, I will briefly explain the importance of multicultural poetry and how it connects to Canadian multiculturalism, due to its importance in the framing of this research.

The Library of the Parliament of Canada defines multiculturalism in three distinctive ways – in terms of its sociological reality, the ideological dimension to it, and multiculturalism as a policy (Brosseau & Dewing, 2009).

As a sociological fact, multiculturalism refers to the presence of people from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. Ideologically, multiculturalism consists of a relatively coherent set of ideas and ideals pertaining to the celebration of Canada's cultural diversity. At the policy level, multiculturalism refers to the management of diversity through formal initiatives in the federal, provincial, territorial and municipal domains. (Brosseau & Dewing, 2009, p.1)

Due to the presence of diverse backgrounds, multicultural education is crucial for a convivial culture in Canada. Xerri (2012) states that multicultural poetry and education is important in multicultural nations such as Canada because the very idea of multiculturalism requires the dominant cultural groups in the society to dismiss their superiority manifestations.

Poetry itself can be found in numerous forms involving a variety of elements to offer for its audience or readers. Hanauer (2003) states that poetry within a classroom comes with

multileveled meanings for individuals hailing from diverse backgrounds, and there exist instances of contact between individualized experiences. This means that as much as a poem is an expression of its creator's experience, it also promotes shared experiences among members of diverse groups. This is why Hanauer (2003) states that poetry promotes unity within diverse societies. For instance, a war poem taught in the classroom may not only bring out elements of history, but also may be instrumental in highlighting the challenges of the present-day society to which students from multicultural backgrounds can easily relate.

Wood & Gilbert (2005) point out that Canadian multiculturalism is not only comprised of political and cultural pluralism, but it is also a social reality encompassing demographically plural and diverse cultures within the society. This means that although Canada is comprised of diverse cultures, including the diversity within Aboriginal cultures and the cultural plurality of the colonial settlers, the diverse cultures of the immigrants from all over the world come together with the existing cultures and newer cultures forming from the intermingling of two or more cultures. Since multiculturalism in Canada is a sociological reality, has an ideological dimension to it, and is an official policy, I strongly consider the provincial curricula should incorporate multiculturalism in its poetry content area. Thus, for the purpose of this study, multicultural poetry encompasses two main features: first it covers the wide range of multicultural forms of expressions of poetry, and second, it is a thesis on multiculturalism embodying the structural aspects of multiculturalism.

Statement of the Problem

It is indeed difficult to do a curriculum analysis, particularly when curriculum itself is believed to be non-static at every point of time, as well as a blend of both taught and untaught discourses (Eisner, 2002; Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018) leaving a researcher with the

mystery of dealing with what constitutes apt knowledge to be studied within curricula or to be included during a curricular reform (Apple, 2008). Indeed, curriculum is not just a document, rather a sum total and beyond, of everything associated with the educational discourse, including the common discourses within a classroom, the hidden curriculum and the less adopted or excluded standpoints otherwise known as null curriculum (Eisner, 2002). Despite this vastness and uncertainty, I believe the importance of a curriculum analysis is to evaluate its accomplishments and address the gaps that are present within an implemented curriculum.

With respect to the provincial curriculums of English in BC and ON, a study into the elements of multiculturalism in its contents is of vital importance. This is primarily because of Canada's policy on multiculturalism. It is a country appreciative of diversity. One could imagine that the literary content within the provincial curriculums in Canada, a country that officially adopted multiculturalism in 1985, as documented under the Canadian Multiculturalism Act of 1985 (Government of Canada, 2021) would be pluralistic and would favour contents from diverse backgrounds.

However, according to Young (2001), the inclusion of Canadian multiculturalism into the provincial curriculums with respect to the literary contents is a gradual process which takes a step-by-step course often neglecting and marginalizing many local artists in the process. This also means that the content which is already included in the curricula as the voice of a marginalised community, has taken a longer timeframe to make its place within the pedagogy taught in the classrooms. One could also assume by this then that the mainstream voices are no doubt always capable of silencing the vulnerable voices and not

bringing them into light. This is why a critical pedagogy lens is the most apt lens in analysing these curriculums.

Furthermore, Joshee et al. (2016) notes that Canadian multiculturalism in education has shifted from what was expected to be ‘meaningful inclusion’, based on the inclusion of identities and values of diverse people, to a very different positioning of minorities as having some sorts of deficits, in urgent need of addressing. While the idea itself of multiculturalism in Canada has changed to an idea of assimilation rather than acceptance as is (Gumiran, Solano & Abiera, 2021; Aoki, 2019), I believe the need to study the presence of multiculturalism in English curriculums become more important to delve into the aspects of equity and other strategies pertaining to inclusive education. My vision for multiculturalism embraces social justice as a key component in the society. In a globalised world, where people migrate from one place to another, understanding and acknowledging dissimilarities is the key for social justice and equity. Thus, studying the existing situation in Canada with respect to multiculturalism in curriculums is vital because of the context we are located in.

Significance of the Study

This study delves into multicultural poetry found in the secondary school English Language Arts curricula of BC and the English curricula of ON. The lens used for this study is the critical pedagogical lens. My thesis studies multicultural poetry from the secondary school curricular documents of BC and ON and explores the inclusion of multicultural poetry, and gaps (if any) present and their respective implications. This study is significant for English Language Arts/English curricula of BC and ON in particular, for teacher education programs, and to Canadian multiculturalism in general.

The major contributions of this research to the fields of Language Arts, Education and Sociology are: 1. The existing curricular content pertaining to multicultural poetry and multicultural forms of poetry will be highlighted and reviewed, 2. With respect to social justice, how the curricular content is implemented, and how it empowers students and teachers towards a multicultural society, will be another focus area which will be observed from a critical pedagogy lens. Both of these contributions are important for students, educators, as well as for the society in general, because the findings from the study will further aid curriculum developers, policy makers and teacher educators to envision an improved classroom discourse within the Canadian multicultural setting.

Chapter Two

Theoretical Framework

Introduction

I study poetry in curriculums from a critical pedagogy (CP) framework. According to McLaren (2002), in practice, diverse concepts make up critical pedagogy. Thus, a concise definition to CP is always at the risk of failing the multiplicity of its meaning.

Critical pedagogy is theoretically grounded; realizes that there is no such thing as a neutral education; is aware of the political nature of education; does not view education and life itself from a reductionistic or a deterministic point of view; seeks to comprehend the link between knowledge and power; is contextually attentive; promotes human rights, justice, and democracy; is a process of transformation; is a way of thinking; pays attention to gender, class, race, and ethnicity issues and its relationship with oppression/liberation; moves both teacher and student in a horizontal relationship as subjects; challenges the status quo; and is continuously evolving (Kirylo, 2011, p. 217).

Critical pedagogy was originally introduced by Freire (1970), who theorised that social injustice is prevalent in the education system and the society at large and could be addressed when both teachers and students share responsibilities and actively partake in the process of education. He urges the need for teachers to drift away from the traditional role of teacher authoritarianism within the classrooms. The above-mentioned definition by Kirylo (2011) strongly represents Freirean notions of critical pedagogy, wherein education is linked with politics, and pedagogy in general, is expected to overcome societal oppression.

Education is a moral and political practice whose purpose is not only to introduce students to the great reservoir of diverse intellectual ideas and traditions but also to engage those inherited bodies of knowledge through critical dialogue, analysis, and comprehension. (Giroux, 2009 p. 245)

Education is a process that connects students to diverse ideas while encouraging them critically engage with those ideas and bodies of knowledge during the teaching-learning

process. Critical pedagogues do not uphold the mere acceptance of inherited knowledge, rather they focus on critical evaluation, dialogue and comprehension as methods to engage with the available bodies of knowledge.

The proponents of the CP theory, such as but not limited to, Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux and Peter McLaren, amongst many others have all resonated with the notion of critical analysis, reflection, and action, that challenges how knowledge is transmitted in a passive way in the education process. Freire (1970) theorizes the importance of conscientization – a process where students are fostered with the greater ability of critical reflection which in turn induces learning. Giroux (2002) addresses how this can be achieved for students by encouraging teachers to become “transformative intellectuals” – who recognise educational institutions as cultural, social and economic zones that are inextricably attached to politics and power. Transformative intellectuals who have the ability to recognize the multiple facets in which their educational institutions are placed, are able to reform the traditional schooling practices and help students “overcome economic, political and social injustices” by facilitating critical reflection in classrooms (Giroux, 2002, p. 3). This is a very crucial element in critical pedagogy as teachers who foster the ability of critical reflection in students, prepare them to recognize and take action towards social and political injustices. Both teachers and students can then be called agents of social justice.

By extension of the CP dialogue, McLaren (2006) emphasizes the theme of social justice and urges critical educators to promote cross-cultural learning in schools, and in doing so address issues of race, class, gender, power, culture and other intersectional issues.

Critical educators (should) develop a multicultural curriculum and pedagogy that attends to the specificity (in terms of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, etc.) of difference (which is in keeping with ludic postmodernism) yet at the same time

addresses the community of diverse others under the law with respect to guiding referents of freedom and liberation (McLaren, 1995, p. 210).

However, McLaren (1995) is also cautious of the narratives that teachers include within their pedagogues and brings forth the importance of multiple narratives from societal members, students as well as teachers to be included in the pedagogy.

Thus, themes of social justice and multiculturalism are deeply rooted in the CP theory. For the purposes of this thesis, I will be focussing on social justice and multiculturalism as two key themes of critical pedagogy. In this chapter, I will first elaborate on critical pedagogy as originally theorized by Freire (1970), and then I will briefly cover the concepts of Giroux (1997) and McLaren (2006) which are deeply rooted in social justice and cultural pluralism.

Genesis

Paulo Freire's work is at the heart of all the adherents of critical pedagogy. Freire (1970) in the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* puts forth a key premise for the theorists of critical pedagogy, that of humans being inherently unfree and oppressed in a planet rife with power and prejudice. Within this scenario, the goal of education for Freire is not just a mere integration of the 'oppressed' into the mainstream society, rather he wishes the transformation of the structure of education itself. Freire categorizes two groups of people in the society, ones who are dominant and others who are subjugated in any possible way. The oppression within education, in the most relatable terms, is the denial of knowledge. Education for the dominant groups is the indoctrination of the learners so that they can "adapt to the world of oppression" (Freire, 1970, p.78). The understanding here is that dominant groups in society lead education and promote it amidst non-dominant groups, in a

way they deem it to be fit. This can be oppressive, with the paradox being, education becoming a hindrance in the complete development of a learner. A learner is reduced into acquiring knowledge which is refined by those who do not want these learners to come up to an equal or even higher status than themselves.

Furthermore, Freire (1970) also puts forth the famous ‘banking concept’ within educational practice. He states that often learners are reduced to become depositories of the instructors, and these instructors tend to “fill them” with partial and select knowledge. As in the banks, instructors are the depositors, and they are in full control of their wealth which they impart to these students. Students being the accounts are oppressed under the teachers’ knowledge. This is harmful as learners do not have a say in the process of their learning and they are deprived of their true knowledge of the reality.

To achieve this end (domination), the oppressors use the banking concept of education in conjunction with a paternalistic social action apparatus, within which the oppressed receive the euphemistic title of "welfare recipients". (Freire, 1970, p.74)

The underlying problem here is that learners are directed into one direction of becoming “welfare recipients” of the society. The fear of them knowing more and being critical of the societal and political actions is often taken care of by the banking approach. Teachers can feed the young minds with what is often perceived to be mandatory for the societal welfare. Freire (1970) calls this an oppression generating system. Students are not encouraged to become critical thinkers. In this way instructors achieve what the dominant groups would want from these learners.

For Freire, a solution to this is in critical pedagogy. In the *Pedagogy of the City*, Freire (1993) points out that education should aim at the creation of autonomy and opportunity for everyone, and knowledge should then originate from the experience learners

gain. Knowledge creation calls for the critical study of the reality to which students belong. Freire (1970) puts forth the concept of *critical consciousness* and dialogue as key in bringing students out of their oppressed state. Critical consciousness is a method of learning by perceiving one's social realities and political contradictions, and further based on this understanding of the oppressive reality, take action for change. Critical consciousness "should reach everyone regardless of their personal path" (Freire, 1970, p.159) and this alone transitions to *praxis* or an amalgamation of reflection and action which is pointed out by Freire as a vital aspect of the CP theory.

Critical pedagogy is built on the notion of praxis (Freire, 1970). Freire (1993) emphasizes on the importance of the unification of what is said, as well as the reflection and action taken on what is said. This means that for the liberation of minds through education, action as well as the recognition of the significance of action is important. Furthermore, this also means that critical pedagogy itself aims to be a merger of theory with practice, and not exclusively the elitism of theory or the non-conjuncture of the practice with the theory (Freire, 1993).

The second major component of critical pedagogy is dialogue, which resonates with the inquiry-based Socratic dialogue. In critical pedagogy, dialogue is a critical instrument for both teachers and students to become co-investigators of knowledge (Freire, 1970). This is where critical pedagogy gains its popularity, and in doing so embraces the aim of education, wherein the underlying element of critical consciousness, that which is nurtured through dialogue, merges with action to bring about the change envisioned by the theorists.

Critical consciousness can be encouraged among learners when teachers become participants of the learning process. Freire (1970) states,

Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist, and a new term emerges teacher-student with students-teachers. The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. (p. 80)

The idea here is the creation of autonomy and the rejection of authority within our educational practises. Teachers are invited by Freire to promote freedom among students. Dialogue can induce critical consciousness, as teachers and students equally take part in the educational process. Authority of teachers is reduced for the common goal of freedom in learning. Both teachers and students become active partakers of the learning process, and both critically address various issues pertaining to the social and political reality.

Critical Pedagogy and Social Justice

Social justice is a deeply rooted theme within critical pedagogy. Giroux (2016) states,

Critical pedagogy insists that one of the fundamental tasks of educators is to make sure that the future points the way to a more socially just world, a world in which critique and possibility—in conjunction with the values of reason, freedom, and equality—function to alter the grounds upon which life is lived. (p. 4)

This means that the very idea of critical reflection and action through critical pedagogy aimed at bringing about change makes a ‘socially just world’ possible. Critical pedagogy highlights education as a political intervention and in doing so envisions the possibility of social transformation (Freire, 1970).

While reckoning the possibilities for social change, Giroux (1997) solicits students and teachers to question themselves as they begin practically exploring the theory of critical pedagogy. These questions form a communion between the theory as is, and the notion of praxis. Giroux (1997, p.28) asks, (a) What are the areas that count as knowledge? (b) How can knowledge be produced? (c) How can knowledge be validated? (d) to which sections of

the society is knowledge most handy? (e) How is information circulated within classrooms? (f) In what all manner social relationships that exist within classrooms function to produce relationships in the larger community? (g) How do the existing models of assessment validate the existing knowledge bodies? (h) What are the existing disagreements between various forms of knowledge and the reality that it is derived from?

These questions are important because they rescue critical pedagogy from the dangers of elitism in education – the question of relevance of knowledge on one hand and the overshadow of an educator’s personal or cultural identity within the knowledge body on the other (McLaren, 1995). From this perspective, critical pedagogy delves into the creation of knowledge and questions existing knowledge bodies, while also analysing the connection of existing knowledge to power related influences in the society. This means that students and teachers through critical pedagogy are expected to reflect on the existing forms of knowledge, which open up the way(s) into understanding of societal differences. This introduces students to the dominant and subordinate cultures, as well as prepares them against hegemony – the exercise of maintenance of domination by the dominant groups over the others as a result of social practices (McLaren, 2001).

Giroux (2004) states that in critical pedagogy, teachers form a radical pedagogy that aims at social justice by connecting knowledge, values and social relations to power and empowering students to expand their understanding of democracy. Furthermore, Giroux (2004) also points out that critical pedagogy is democratic in nature and raises central questions about the society such as: “What is the relationship between social justice and the distribution of public resources and goods? What are the conditions, knowledge and skills that are a prerequisite for political agency and social change?” (p. 34). Giroux (2020) argues,

How students experience the world and speak to that experience is always a function of unconscious and conscious commitments, of politics, of access to multiple languages and literacies—thus experience always has to take a detour through theory as an object of self-reflection, critique, and possibility (p. 10)

The connection of ideas to the larger world, one's experiences and self-reflection are important concepts in Giroux's critical pedagogy. Giroux also adds to Freire's work on CP by the theorisation of critical pedagogy with the addition of cultural studies, aiming the goal of democracy and citizenry through the amalgamation of cultural studies with critical pedagogy (Kellner, 2001). In Giroux's words,

Culture is the site where young people and others imagine their relationship to the world; it produces the narratives, metaphors, and images for constructing and exercising a powerful pedagogical force over how people think of themselves and their relationship to others (Giroux, 2000, as cited in Kellner, 2001, p. 233)

By envisioning culture with critical pedagogy, Giroux has anticipated the possibility of providing competencies to teachers and students alike, in recognizing, analyzing and being critical of dominant cultures that are oppressive agents. Kellner (2001) states that Giroux's critical pedagogy can foster resistance whilst also maintaining a democratic and egalitarian society. This means that Giroux's vision of critical pedagogy empowers teachers to become cultural workforces, and students to learn important notions of resistance and resilience. In other words, through the inclusion of cultural studies in critical pedagogy, Giroux efforts to address the issue of cultural politics – students are able to learn the interplay of the dominant and subordinate cultures which in turn allows to understand the importance of equity and equality in the society. This is important for social justice, as by understanding cultural politics through education, students and teachers are able to become cultural workforces and work towards a society free of oppression.

Critical Pedagogy and Multiculturalism

The focus of Giroux's critical pedagogy is primarily on cultural reproduction through pedagogy, which is a function deriving from the distinctions within cultural capital (McLaren, 2002). Cultural capital holds a broad meaning encompassing any cultural background, artifacts of cultural relevance, ways of talking, language practice, gestures and so many other cultural carriers, which are handed over between generations (McLaren, 2002). By focusing on cultural reproduction stemming from the difference in cultural capital, Giroux's theorisation of critical pedagogy endeavours in fostering cultural competencies within classrooms. These cultural competencies are an important step towards nurturing interpersonal skills and this indeed is an important route towards fostering multiculturalism in classrooms and through classrooms, the larger society. Furthermore, Breunig (2016) also states that cultural competencies, when fostered within classrooms, further cultivate social justice competencies that go beyond the borders of cultural sets and develop interpersonal skills among students. This invite and encourages an expanded view of the socioeconomic classes in the society, positive considerations of varied sexual orientations, religious affiliations, gender identities, nationalities and abilities.

Giroux builds on Freirean critical pedagogy with a discussion on two objectives in educations – macro and micro objectives (Giroux, Freire & McLaren, 1988). While micro objectives are content bound, and related to the inclusion of specifics in classroom, macro objectives are deeper connections that grow out of micro objectives and connect with the larger society (McLaren, 2002). For instance, if the learning of dates and factual content is classified as micro objectives of a particular area of study, the connection and meaning

formation of this factual content with their reality is what Giroux upholds as macro objectives within the educational process.

McLaren (2002) points out that macro objectives within critical pedagogy should be centred on providing students with the ability to assess the cultural, social and political grounds of the society. This can foster multiculturalism as students are then nurtured with the ability to understand various cultures, know how different cultures co-exist with others, and learn the positioning of different cultures in the society.

The goal of a common culture is born out of a modernist legacy of trying to own knowledge, control knowledge...It is born out of the legacy of imperialism that privileges the “high” culture of the Western Enlightenment (McLaren, 2006, p. 150)

The inclusion of cultural pedagogy in schools means the production of alternate subjectivities in the struggles for social justice (Kellner, 2001). By learning about and critically reflecting on different cultures in classrooms, students and teachers recognize the real-time struggles being faced by different cultural groups, which in turn encourages awareness and action that strives for social justice. Cultural reproduction that takes place in classrooms, as well as the acknowledgement of cultural dissimilarities through the practice of critical pedagogy, makes a multicultural world possible.

Along these lines of culture, the framework of critical pedagogy is rooted in the principles of social justice and multiculturalism. Breunig (2016) states that praxis by Freire is social justice oriented: action taken based on critical consciousness should be relevant for the society, without limiting or controlling the freedom of others. Giroux’s macro objectives of education through critical pedagogy, is rooted in the principle of political consciousness, which promotes social justice and multiculturalism by fostering cultural competencies (McLaren, 2002; Kellner, 2001). From this framework, it should not be left without saying,

knowledge when created with a deeper understanding of the political and social realities promotes justice in the world, and further makes a multicultural world possible.

It can thus be said that critical pedagogy aims at creating a more just world. Even though this theory is political, its focus lies on ending authoritarianism and fascism, promoting autonomy and access to knowledge to everyone (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 2020) which is an essential aspect for democracy. This way, critical pedagogy is well suited in the modern century, particularly in the context of Canada, where democracy is the main political structure of the nation.

One of the main philosophical critiques of critical pedagogy is that it is not possible to always negate the original idea of authoritarianism and dogma in education. Martusewicz (2001) points out that the process of substituting one major ideology – often the ones with political outcomes – with another rooted in liberation of thought, is only a mere substitution of one authoritarian principle with another. This means that often students and teachers, while producing knowledge and meaning through the process of collective consciousness, succumb to another dogma and replace what needs to be replaced with some newer or different ideological perspective. This new replacement is referred to as the “regime of truth” (Gore, 1993, as cited in Martusewicz, 2001, p. 5) which brings back the idea of indoctrination, that was negated in the first place with the fundamental idea of critical pedagogy.

I believe the original Freirean critical pedagogy overcomes this philosophical concern by recommending not only the communion of theory and praxis, but also by focusing on the element of humility in practice. Moreover, the notion of *Dialogic Praxis*, that Freire (1970) puts forth, that “teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself

taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. (p. 80)” is also very relevant in avoiding indoctrination and dogmatic practices in education.

For Freire, action is not the complete reversal of the political structure with a similar dominating structure, rather critical pedagogy is founded on the notions of humility and reconciliation. The framework outlined in this chapter from Giroux’s point of view is then, I argue, also rooted in the structure of social justice and multiculturalism. The combined framework from these two most important critical pedagogy theorists – Freire and Giroux form my rebuttal to this philosophical critique. Thus, as Breunig’s (2016) notes, one cannot be completely free of institutional restrictions while enacting critical pedagogy for social justice and multiculturalism, however, when the theory and praxes are in communion, it is definitely worth the effort for the world we live in.

Summary

To summarize, this chapter elaborated on the key ideas within the framework of critical pedagogy, which is the theoretical framework I use in this study. Critical pedagogy as originally theorised by Freire was discussed in this chapter followed by the themes of social justice and multiculturalism. For the critical examination of the poetry curricula, I will be focussed on the themes of social justice, democracy and citizenry, and multiculturalism from the theoretical framework of critical pedagogy. The next section offers literature reviews for this thesis that synthesize literature on poetry in the high school English language arts curriculums that emerge from British Columbia and Ontario.

Chapter Three

Methodology and Methods

Introduction

This research uses a qualitative approach for analysing the curricular documents of BC and Ontario. Creswell (2014) defines qualitative approach in research as an inductive style of knowledge creation, wherein a researcher explores, understands and interprets meaning ascribed to the data. The research question guiding this study is – how (if at all) are the high school English Language Arts curricula of British Columbia (BC) and the English curricula of Ontario (ON) that focus on poetry, influenced by multiculturalism? This chapter is divided into three segments; in the first part, I introduce the BC and ON curriculums, followed by an introduction to the methodology used in this thesis, Text Analysis, the key data analysis technique adopted in this study. The third part includes my sampling details and research procedures, followed by a brief summary of the chapter.

Overview of the Curriculums reviewed

BC and ON curriculums both mention poetry as an integral part of the English Language Arts (ELA). While the new BC curricula has been implemented since 2015 (Storey, 2017), the Ontario English curricula has been in effect since 2007 (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2018). The curriculum model of BC is designed with three elements that promote learning among students. These three elements are: *Content*, which is focussed on the topics that students will comprehend by the end of their course; *Competencies*, that students are expected to perform in their day-to-day lives and add on to their skillset; and *Big Ideas*, that students will explore as their understanding beyond the scope of the grade level they are in (Storey, 2017; British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2015). The most

important aspect of these three elements is in their integration with each other (see figure 1) and with the general aim of education as prescribed within the BC education system.

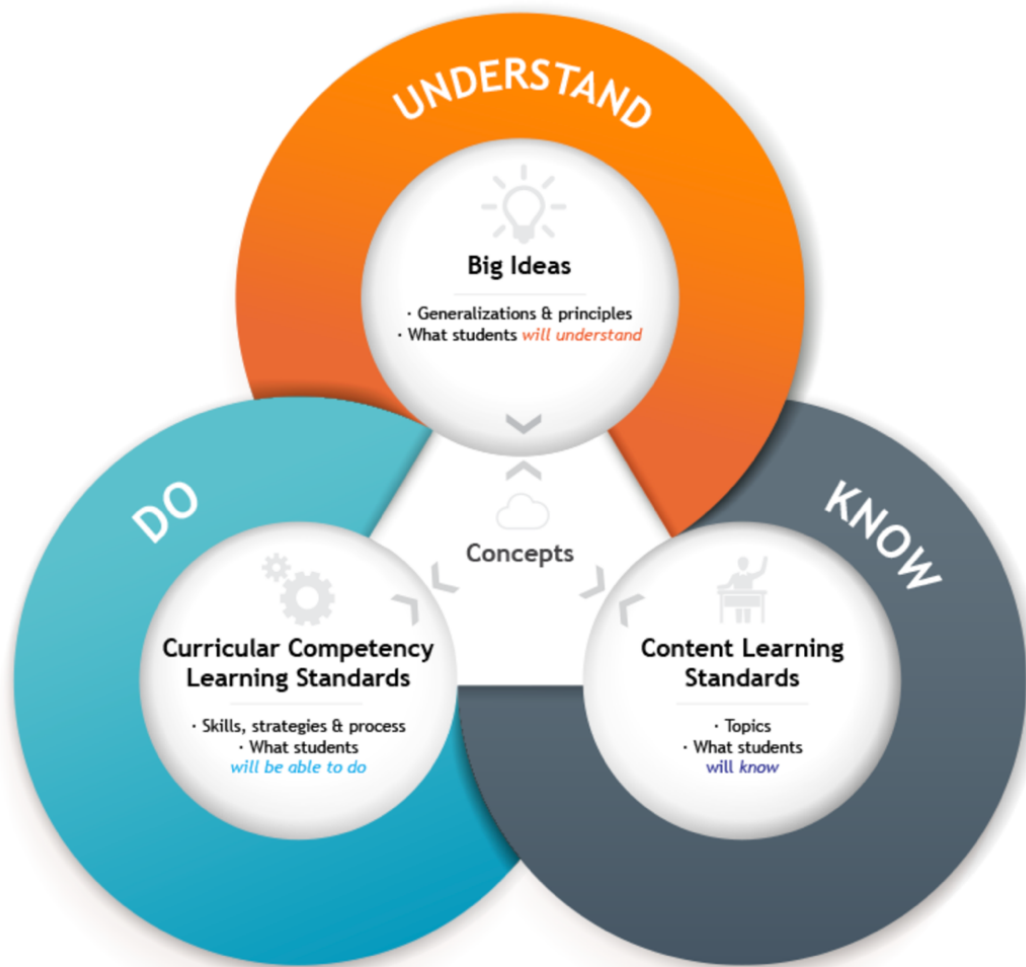


Figure 1: BC curriculum model containing three interlinking concepts: Big Ideas, Curricular Competency and Content. (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2015)

This general model of the BC curriculums for every student in kindergarten to Grade 12 is based on three elements: first, identifying core competencies which contain social, emotional, intellectual and individual-focused proficiencies in the form of quality education

for empowering students, so that they can further contribute to an educated, critical thinking, co-operative and productive society; second, the curriculums aim at cultivating higher-order thinking embodying the societal aspirations in the century we live in; and third, the BC curriculums aim at promoting literacy and numeracy with a focus on critical analysis of day-to-day events as well as promoting problem solving skills within multiple environments (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2015). Furthermore, BCELAC is premised on constructivism (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2018), which is focused on the construction of knowledge by active involvement of students in the process of learning.

The Ontario English curriculums are founded on the principle of the importance of learning language for becoming self-motivated and rational citizens. The curriculums recognize that students hail from a variety of backgrounds and bring a “unique set of perspectives, strengths, and needs” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007a, p. 5) to the classroom. Ontario’s English curriculum is premised on diversity and the realisation that rewarding careers for the students alone should not be the outcome of education, rather the focus should be on helping students to become citizens of a global society appreciating diversity and pursuing critical learning (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007a).

Textual Analysis: Content Analyses Approach

In McKee’s (2001, p.3) words, “textual analysis is a methodology: a way of gathering and analysing information in academic research”. Textual analysis is the data analysis strategy of this study which adheres to the definition by Bauer, Biquelet & Suerdem (2014);

“Text analysis aims to explain the life-world within which the text is embedded; to open up the perspective of the author that is delineated by their social and cultural context and to draw attention to the structural aspect of everyday practices and meaning patterns.” (p. xxii)

In this study, I analyse the curricula from a Critical Pedagogy lens. I conduct “an educated guess” to formulate the highest possible interpretations (McKee, 2001, p. 3) that I can derive from the analyses of the curricula. Textual Analysis in general is conducted based on four approaches, of which ‘Content Analysis approach’ (Frey, Botan & Kreps, 2000) is adopted in this research wherein I identify, delineate and analyze, multicultural poetry within the curricula. According to White & Marsh (2006, p. 27), “the two domains, within the content analyses approach – the texts and the context, are logically independent, and the researcher draws conclusions from one independent domain (the texts) to the other (the context)”. In this study, my texts are the secondary school English curricula of BC and ON, and my context is the Critical Pedagogy lens.

Data Source and Sampling

This study examined the curricular documents of BC’s English language Arts curricula and ON’s English curricula for Grades 9 to 12, accessible in the respective provincial Ministry of Education websites for BC and ON. These two provincial curriculum documents constitute my unit of analyses. My sampling portions – poetry curricula within English Language Arts/English curricula of BC and ON was selected based on document searches for key terminologies, which I will elaborate in the following paragraphs.

This study focused on multicultural poetry, and the sampling portions were selected by searching for keywords – poem(s), poetry, text, genres, voices, recite/recitation, form, verse, poet, poetic devices, creative writing, multicultural poetry, and literary elements/devices from the BC and ON English Language Arts/ English curricula for Grades 9 to 12. My initial attempt to look into poetry curricula was done by searching for words: 1. Poem(s), and 2. Poetry, within the BC and ON English Language Arts/ English curricula.

This was done because the meaning associated with these two terms, represent them as the fundamental terminologies indicating a genre within the English Language Arts. ‘Poetry’ is an art form in literature uniting content and form to create ‘poem (s)’ with the usage of certain elements of language (Tizhoosh, Sahba & Dara, 2008). The initial search with these two fundamental words, further helped me to discover certain other terminologies within the curricula, that contained ‘poem(s)’ and ‘poetry’, and other associated terms.

In the BC English Language Arts curricula, ‘Poem(s)’ is specifically contained under the word ‘Text(s)’, which also includes a plethora of other literary genres such as speeches, plays, stories, novels, visual and digital texts. Examining the terminology ‘Text(s)’ within the trio – Competencies, Big Ideas and Contents, was my initial attempt to delve into the poetry curricula within BC’s English Language Arts curricula. Within Grades 10 to 12 of the BC English Language Arts curricula, ‘poem(s)’ and ‘poetry’ was also found under the description given for two unique terms; 1. Text Forms, and 2. Genres. Based on my experience as a poet, I then searched for specific terminologies pertaining to poetry, 1. “Poetic Devices” and 2. “Literary Elements”, within the BC curricula, as I consider them to be fundamental to poetry. This search yielded into fewer results as compared to search with the terms ‘poem(s)’ and ‘poetry(s)’.

In the ON curricula, the results for the search for ‘poem(s)’ and ‘poetry’ yielded into three relevant terms related to poetry – 1. Genres, 2. Literary/Oral texts, and 3. Verse. These terms were found in the glossary of the curricular documents. Within the ON English curricula for Grades 9 to 12, ‘poem(s)’ and ‘poetry’ are frequently included in teacher prompts and examples. The words, 1. ‘Poet’, 2. ‘Poetic Elements/images’, 3. ‘Creative Writing’, and 4. ‘Recitation’, are also contained within a few teacher prompts and examples,

which I discovered as I proceeded with my initial search. My sampling portion on poetry curricula within the ON English curricula for Grades 9-12 is based on exploring these key terminologies within the curricular content – ‘poem(s)’, ‘poetry’, ‘genres’, ‘literary/oral texts’, ‘verse’, ‘poet’, ‘poetic elements/images’, ‘creative writing’, and ‘recitation’.

After delving into the specific portions of the curricula which contains terminologies pertaining to poetry within the English Language Arts/ English curricula of BC and ON for Grades 9 to 12, my next step was to delve into multicultural poetry. This included searching for the mention of poetry related key terminologies within First Peoples/Aboriginal texts, and searching for terms, 1. ‘Multicultural’, 2. ‘Multiculturalism’, 3 ‘Cultural’ 4. ‘First Peoples/Aboriginal/Indigenous’, and 5. ‘Diverse/Diversity’, within the curricula, to look for how poetry is included in fostering multicultural competencies. The above-mentioned key terminologies were also examined interchangeably within both BC and ON English Language Arts/English Curricula. This led me to formulate a wordlist for my search, which further aided me to distinguish my sampling portion from within the larger English Language Arts/English Curricula of BC and ON.

Process of Analysis and Strategies

My sample was compiled over a three-week period in the month of June 2020 from the websites: www.curriculum.gov.bc.ca and www.edu.gov.on.ca. In addition to these sites, data for literature review was compiled from Google Scholar, Jstor.Org, Sage.Org, Google Books, Poetry books from Indigo books, and poetry from Google search engine. I stored the curricular documents, articles for literature review, and poetry contents in PDF format, in my personal laptop, which I used for both offline and online analysis. Even though I made sure to extensively delve into the curricula and the literatures for my thesis, I connect with

Creswell (2014, p.308) in stating that since data from literatures are “dense and rich, not all the information can be used in a qualitative study”.

There are four key steps of content analyses utilized in this study: 1. Unitizing the content based on relevant terminologies 2. Sampling the text based on the relevance for this research, 3. Studying the text in context to relevant theory, and 4. Answering the research question based on the analyses comprising of a “thoughtful arrangement of a wealth of detailed observations” of the text and the context (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 83; White & Marsh, 2006, p. 39). I implement this “specialized procedure” of content analyses, wherein, followed by the initial two steps of unitizing the content based on relevant terminologies, and sampling, the next step was to study the text in relation to the “analytical construct” (White & Marsh, 2006, p. 27). Analytical constructs in Textual Analyses are inference points, that empowers a researcher to examine their texts for answering their research questions (White & Marsh, 2006). In my study, this is done based on two key techniques – 1. delving into the theory on critical pedagogy, and 2. examining knowledge bodies based on previous researches (Krippendorff, 2004). Based on the theoretical framework of critical pedagogy and examining previous researches on multicultural poetry in education, I recognized three important areas that constitute my analytical construct – 1. Social Justice, 2. Democracy and Citizenry, and 3. Multiculturalism. Based on these three important areas of critical pedagogy, I studied the secondary school poetry curricula of BC and ON.

For the final step of content analyses procedure – answering the research question (Krippendorff, 2004), I critically examined the curricula to derive the strengths and gaps with respect to multicultural poetry. This was done based on an extensive study of the available literatures on how multicultural poetry benefit learners, while also looking deeper into the

competencies mentioned in the curricula. I critically examined the curricula, delved into the competencies that promoted multiculturalism, formulated certain hypothetical examples on how poetry can be adopted in the classrooms to promote multiculturalism, and, evaluated how the gaps within the curricula with respect to multicultural poetry impacts students and teachers. Following this process, I recorded my findings, answered my research question – how (if at all) are the English Language Arts curricula of British Columbia (BC) and the English curricula of Ontario (ON) that focus on poetry, influenced by multiculturalism? – and stated the significance of this study and formulate areas for future research.

Validity of the Findings

To ensure the validity of this qualitative research, certain key strategies are adopted based on Creswell's (2014, p.316-318) recommendations –

To ensure the overall validity of the findings,

1. I have used “rich, thick descriptions” for communicating my findings by offering perspectives grounded on the critical pedagogical framework.
2. I have adopted “peer debriefing” and “external auditor” reviewing strategy to assess my thesis in order to look into multiple viewpoints and obtain an objective assessment.

Chapter Four

Literature Review

Introduction

The literature reviewed will be divided into two main themes. The first literature review will be an analysis of the curriculum documents of British Columbia (BC) and Ontario (ON) where I will explore how poetry is defined in the high school British Columbia English Language Arts curricula (BCELAC), as well as the secondary school Ontario English curricula (ONEC). The second literature review will examine literature on the multicultural aspects of poetry. Since the curricular documents itself are segregated in the website, that is, BC English Language Arts K-9 is included in a separate webpage and BC English Language Arts curricula for Grades 10-12 is included with respect to various sub-courses in yet another webpage, I will review Grade 9 curriculum separately from Grades 10-12 curricula. Similarly, for ON, Grades 9 and 10 English curricula are included together in a same document, as is the case for Grades 11 and 12 English curricula, and thus my criteria for reviewing will be based on the same pattern as it is available in the website.

Poetry in British Columbia English Language Arts curriculum for Grade 9

Poetry appears in Grade 9 of the English Language Arts curriculum in BC within the scope of *texts*, primarily *oral texts*. Oral texts include plays, oral stories, speeches and poetry, which are included in the curriculum as significant tools for developing communication (Storey, 2017) and language learning among students (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2018a). The key concepts or *Big Ideas* behind the adoption of poetry in Grade 9 BCELAC is fourfold: first, poetry promotes understanding of the self and the relation of the self with others and the world in general; second, poetry like other texts have social, cultural

and historical elements deeply rooted in them, thus making students connect deeper with their reality; third, everyone understands poetry differently based on the set of perspectives and worldviews they carry, making it a topic to be looked at from multiple lenses; and fourth, questioning of the themes and critical understanding of poetry contributes to becoming engaged citizens as well as educated social beings (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2016a; 2016b). On these lines, the *big ideas* help strengthen a learner's identity, and invite them to explore the world they live in, as well as critically reflect on personal and social realities.

Even though the *big ideas* for Grade 9 BCELAC is for most of the part similar to that of the *big ideas* mentioned for Grades 10, 11 and 12, the *curricular competencies* and *content* adopted in the classrooms vary considerably. Before exploring these two elements, it is important to take note of the role of teachers in the classroom as to understand the content implementation aspect of the curricula. Storey (2017) points out that the inclusion of texts in the classroom is deemed to be a process based on teacher's choice. On these lines, the curriculum document also notes the importance of including critical texts for students, while also focussing on texts based on students' choice in order to achieve in-depth learning (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2018). This means that teachers and students are at the centre of the curricular content. What is prescribed in the curriculum, is just a sort of 'menu' to select from; a reference point for teachers who are then expected to select content that invites the development of competencies. The curriculum itself is "vague" (Storey, 2017, p.44) and teachers have to identify the content that needs to be introduced into their classrooms, as well as how to teach it. The content in Grades 9 and 10 is not a definitive structured content, such as a particular novel or a certain poet's poems, rather, it is a

collection of certain compulsory elements and features that students should take away from the text. For instance, if the content in Grade 9 mentions intonation as an important aspect of poetry learning, teachers select materials from a wide array of poems to choose for imparting lessons on intonation styles. Furthermore, even though poetry falls under the purview of oral texts, the curricula has a provision for combining other forms of texts such as digital, visual or written texts with poetry in classrooms (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2016a; British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2016b). This means when a teacher wishes to teach intonation in poetry, a video as visual means in addition to the oral content is highly recommended by the curriculum.

In Grade 9, the content for poetry within the ELA curriculum is divided into three major categories: first, *poetic elements* such as literary devices, background of the poem, characterisation and other similar poetic features are expected to be introduced within the classrooms; second, *strategies* such as visualizing while reading, usage of phonics, intonation, expression of opinions, and *metacognitive strategies* like reflection and questioning are considered an integral aspect of poetry learning; and third, *language features* such as volume, pace, usage of gestures while reciting, understanding of old English, inclusive language and fluency are certain features that students are expected to take away while learning poetry (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2016a).

The curricular competencies that poetry promotes in Grade 9 curriculum is not exclusively mentioned from what other *texts* uphold. The curriculum expects students to access information from diverse text sources, including poetry; comprehend, synthesize texts and delve into inquiry based learning; become critical thinkers; learn the elements of diversity and messages in diverse range of genres; apply varied perspectives to the poetic

content; understand and become able to explain meaning formation through the variety of language used; appreciate oral traditions of the First Peoples; develop an awareness towards the values and beliefs of the First Peoples; improve clarity; improve grammar; and develop the ability to create poetry by themselves (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2016a). These competencies together with the prescribed content and big ideas, enrich the ELA curriculum for Grade 9.

Poetry in British Columbia English Language Arts curricula for Grades 10, 11 and 12

In Grades 10, 11 and 12, ELA curriculums are divided into two major categories – general English 10-12 and English First Peoples (EFP)10-12 – and students have to choose courses from either category (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2018). Within the scope of English for Grades 10-12, five different courses, namely, Composition 10-12, Creative Writing 10-12, Spoken Language 10-12, New Media 10-12, and Literary Studies 10-12 are available for the students. In Grade 12, however, all the above-mentioned five courses are electives, with an additional compulsory course offering, namely, English Studies 12 or English First Peoples 12 (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2018a; 2018b; 2018c). Within the purview of EFP 10, the course offerings are Literary Studies 10, New Media 10, Spoken Language 10 and Writing 10, which are all based on the principle of Reconciliation and the usage of authentic texts of the First Peoples in the classroom (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2018a). EFP 11 has 3 course offerings with a blend of Literary Studies with the trio, New Media 11, Spoken Language 11, and Writing 11, and these three courses are focussed on global, Canadian and BC First Peoples texts including poetry as an essential area of focus (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2018b). The common themes stated within these courses are for the purpose of Reconciliation and

acknowledgement of the oral traditions of the First Peoples. In Grade 12, EFP 12 or English Studies 12 is a compulsory course with EFP 12 focusing by and large on interdisciplinary study of literatures of the First Peoples (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2018c). The curriculums do explicitly state that a student can choose between EFP 10-12, or general ELA 10-12 courses, and both are mentioned as academically equivalent (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2016a).

In Grade 10, poetry is mentioned specifically in Literary Studies 10, Spoken Language 10, Creative Writing 10, EFP Spoken Language 10, and EFP Writing 10, with the documents for each of these courses emphasizing poetry to be an integral part of these courses (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2018a).

In Grade 11, poetry has its mention in EFP Literary Studies + Writing 11, EFP Literary Studies + Spoken Language 11, EFP Literary Studies + New Media 11, Spoken Language 11, Creative Writing 11, and Literary Studies 11, with the documents for these courses mentioning poetry as an essential area of study (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2018b).

In Grade 12, even though poetry is not mentioned specifically in the content prescribed for English Studies 12 which is a core compulsory course, it is prescribed for EFP 12 which is an alternate compulsory course. For the rest of the electives in Grade 12, Spoken Language 12, Literary Studies 12 and Creative Writing 12 find the mention of poetry in their respective focus areas (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2018c).

Within all the other curricular documents for Grades 10 to 12, where poetry or poem is a specified content, poetry is passively mentioned under the scope of texts, which further

refers to the teachers' discretion in choosing poetry from a wide array of texts to cover a topic in the classroom.

In Spoken Language curricula for Grades 10 to 12, spoken word poetry, slam poetry and poetry recitation are important focus areas for developing performance skills among students, and these are premised on the idea that voice is an evocative and powerful tool in communication (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2018a; 2018b; 2018c).

Creative Writing curricula for Grades 10-12 propose poetry and song lyrics writing as two important areas for course completion with four important big ideas:

- 1) language shapes one's ideas and influencing others,
- 2) creative writers passionately observe the world around them,
- 3) creative writers persevere while taking risks. (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2018a; 2018b; 2018c).

Literary Studies curricula for Grades 10-12 are focused on studying literatures of different themes, from different era or area, and the study of literatures in general. Poetry is studied from different eras such as Renaissance or Romanticism and from Canadian, global or First Peoples literatures in this course (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2018a; 2018b, 2018c).

The most important aspect of these three curriculums for Grades 10-12 – Spoken Language 10-12, Creative writing 10-12, Literary Studies 10-12 – is that the focus of these courses is largely on First Peoples literatures and other Canadian texts. The courses in EFP 10-12 are similar in nature, with a sheer distinction of their focussed nature on themes from First Peoples literatures as well as their interdisciplinary link.

With respect to the curricula on New Media for Grades 10-12, the focus is primarily on digital literacy, and poetry gets an indirect mention in the lessons pertaining to digital communication, which promotes skills related to writing for media, social media and web in general (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2018a; 2018b; 2018c). This means, poetry in New Media 10-12 is a content on expressing oneself in various media platforms.

To summarize this section, poetry in BCELAC Grades 10-12 is clearly mentioned under the scope of oral texts and is based on the classroom discourse as to when and where it can be used towards the curricular competencies. In some particular courses, which are, Spoken Language 10-12, Creative writing 10-12, Literary Studies 10-12 and almost all the EFP 10-12 courses, poetry is mentioned in BCELAC as a specialised area of study fostering certain skills for the learners.

General outline of Ontario English Curriculums for Grade 9-12

The Ontario English curriculums for Grade 9-12 identified both mandatory and ‘open’ courses. For Grade 9 and Grade 10, students select from courses that are academic or applied. An optional Literacy Skills course is available in many schools. The mandatory courses focus on theory and the application of the theory respectively, and the open course focus on the enhancement of literacy skills (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007a).

Academic courses connect to the essential concepts within an area of study and applied courses while focussing on essential theory also encourages hands-on application of the theory. In Grades 11 and 12, four types of courses are available for the students; courses that prepare students for their post-secondary destination of choice: university, college, or workplace. Optional courses are also available in many schools including: Canadian Literature, Literacy Skills, Presentation and Speaking Skills for Grade 11 and The Writers

Craft and Studies in Literature for Grade 12, and other essential courses that are electives (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007b). Students have to complete one compulsory course from either university precursory course, college preparatory or workplace preparation courses.

Poetry in Ontario English Curriculum for Grades 9 and 10

In ONEC for Grades 9 and 10, both academic and applied English course is structured to prepare students for the later grades as well as for their daily discourses, with a focus on reading skills, oral communication skills, writing ability, and media literacy aptitude (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007a). Poetry finds its dedicated mention in examples and prompts for teachers to be used in the classroom, within the documents for both academic and applied courses.

Within the scope of oral communication in ONEC for Grades 9 and 10, three skills are emphasized; listening in order to understand, speaking skills for better communication, and reflecting on the strengths, weaknesses and other strategies of listening and speaking (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007a). Even though both Grades 9 and 10 specify similar skills and expectations, Grade 10 involves more complex and challenging tasks requiring complex and challenging texts and methods within the classroom. Poetry is included in the examples, that relate to the specific expectations from the curricular practice for both Grade 9 and 10. These expectations are multifold. Poetry plays a crucial role in developing listening skills amongst students, and this is carried out by getting students to understand the purpose of listening, include various listening strategies such as reading from a cultural lens or from a historical lens, inclusion of comprehension strategies such as notetaking or summarizing for better listening, determination of the understanding levels by sharing thoughts, interpreting

complex texts, critical analysis, and understanding the presentation of the texts such as intonation or a poet's styles and techniques (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007a, p. 42-43, 84-87).

Within the purview of oral communication, poetry is lauded to enhance the speaking skills of the students by allowing them to learn through audio-visual aids; understand verbal cues such as pitch or tone and non-verbal cues such as eye contact; increase coherence and clarity by learning to communicate with appropriate words; and increase interpersonal speaking strategies (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007a).

Reading and Literature Studies is another component of ONEC for Grade 9 and 10. Poetry is used within this course as a vital component to understand the meaning of a text while reading, understand form and styles adopted in the texts, fluency and developing vocabulary, and reflection of skills developed in the classroom (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007a). This is done by adopting measures such as comparative analysis of poetry, making inferences, evaluation of poem and its background, reading familiar and unfamiliar words and using suitable decoding strategies.

Poetry is also a crucial element in the respective areas pertaining to writing and media studies in ONEC for Grade 9 and 10. Poetry writing with the inclusion of literary devices such as extended metaphors is promoted by the curriculums for students to develop and organize their content; use their knowledge of various poetic devices; and learn creating, editing, proofreading for the conception of a refined content (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007a). Although the mention of poetry within the scope of media studies is minimal, it is still deemed to be an essential aspect for media literacy skills. Certain examples within media studies that include poetry calls instructors to connect students with websites to either create

an anthology of poetry, or to understand taglines or quotes in television or newspaper advertisements (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007a). This connects students with poetry in a digital age where they can interact with diverse poems while also learning essential media related skills.

To summarize, poetry is mentioned as a significant tool within Grade 9 and Grade 10 of ONEC for teachers to foster oral, reading, writing, and media literacy skills among students. Poetry helps in enhancing verbal cues such as pitch and tone, and non-verbal cues such as gestures and eye-contact, poetry brings in clarity for spoken language and increases vocabulary, poetry also enables students to have an understanding of literary devices which is used in creative writing.

Poetry in Ontario English Curriculum for Grades 11 and 12

In Grades 11 and 12, poetry is mentioned in all the three preparation-based courses for university, college, and workplace respectively, as well as it is an essential component of mostly all the electives that are available for the students. In both Grades 11 and 12, for the courses dedicated for university preparation, college preparation and workplace preparation, poetry is included to enhance the learners' oral communication, writing skills, reading skills and media literacy aptitude (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007b). Even though the terms poem and poetry are mentioned under examples and prompts for the teachers under the expectation list, its regular mention is instrumental in its importance for the preparation of students for their future careers. Furthermore, in optional courses such as The Writer's Craft and Studies in Literature for Grade 12, poetry finds its utmost importance in areas pertaining to creative writing skills, reflective writing, analysis and study of literatures from various

eras, analysis and study of First Peoples literatures and literary criticism (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007b).

To summarize this section, poetry in Grades 11-12 with respect to the expectations of the curricula, is as similar an inclusion as it is in Grades 9-10, with teachers being at the centre of the curriculums to include poetry in classrooms so as to address various curricular competencies. Poetry, as observed in these literatures is an essential component for Grades 9-12 ONEC, which fosters spoken skills, writing ability, reading skills and media literacy.

Multiculturalism in Poetry

Canada is certainly a multicultural nation. Wood & Gilbert (2005) points out that Canadian multiculturalism as a public policy was derived from the notion of deeming the cultural experiences, beliefs, traditions and practices of every diverse cultures important. Canadian multiculturalism dates back to the time when Pierre Elliot Trudeau, the then Prime Minister of Canada in 1970s envisioned a future of peaceful coexistence of a culturally pluralistic society (Wood & Gilbert, 2005), and multiculturalism as an official policy was then adopted for Canada in the year 1985, famously known as the Canadian Multiculturalism Act of 1985 (Government of Canada, 2021). Presently, multiculturalism in Canada is not a policy alone, but it is also a sociological and ideological reality of the nation, which means Canada lawfully recognizes its diversity with respect to the presence of people in the society who belong to various racial, cultural, and ethnic communities, and accepts and celebrates the varied ideas and principles that people adhere to (Brosseau & Dewing, 2009). Within such a context, multicultural poetry brings out issues pertaining to cultural diversity, as well as throws light on racial and gender injustices, while also becoming a potential tool for addressing these issues (McCall, 2004).

In this Whiteland
Chinese coolies, black slaves, Indian indentures
Immigration, head tax, virginity tests
Apart-hate
Sudden attacks in the dark
In the dawn with cops and dogs
White cops play with her mouth – resuscitates
London Pretoria Toronto
Apart-hate (Bannerji, 1986, as cited in Alvarez, 2007, p. 19)

This stanza by Himani Bannerji, a Bengali-Canadian poet, is an example of her experiences in the Canadian society, which is rich in its metaphor of racism and discrimination.

Multicultural poetry explores both acceptable and unacceptable aspects of a diverse society and thus is important in a multicultural space as it becomes depictional of a variety of aspects related to pluralism (Rahbek, 2019). It should be noted here that multicultural poetry fosters the recognition of cross-cultural experiences in a society.

I am writing to tell you
that yes, indeed,
we have noticed
you have a new big pink eraser
we are well aware
you are trying to use it.
erasing Indians is a good idea
of course
the bleeding-heart liberals
and communists
can stop feeling bad
for the stealing
and raping
and murdering
and we can all move on
we can be reconciled
except, I am graffiti. (Simpson, 2015)

The poem by Simpson (2015) is depictional of her Aboriginal identity and the discrimination that many Aboriginal people like her had to face and still continue to face. Poetry by

Aboriginal people invite the readers to see the hardships they have gone through under the white supremacy. Simpson (2015) writes that it is not easy to *move on* from all the trauma that Aboriginal people went through, and reconciliation doesn't erase things from the past. Such poems which are the voices of a particular section of the society are important as depictional pieces of the larger society.

They often ask:
*Will you teach your
children your language?*
As if it is a weapon I carry.
Of course I will, ensure they are
more fluent than I was. Hope that
they can read and write it too.

Only teaching them english would
be like only giving them white to
paint everything they see. Like only
giving them one way to express
themselves. (Dhaliwal, 2017)

Multicultural poetry is at the heart of a multicultural society, as it brings forth both convivial and hostile aspects during cross-cultural contacts, which mirrors the societal discourses in order to help its members better appreciate the ideals of multiculturalism. Multicultural poetry as well as other forms of multicultural literatures foster intercultural communicators in our society (Hanauer, 2003; Knopf, 2005, Sholehhudin, Waluyo, Suyitno & Wardhani, 2020). Multicultural poetry endeavours to provide two main benefits for the society at-large: for an individual, it offers multi-leveled access to their emotional sphere (Hanauer, 2003) and for the community, it develops multi-leveled competence among its people (Francis, 2017). Multi-leveled access to one's emotions signifies the contact between the abstract and the specific at the same time (Hanauer, 2003). This means that an individual is then able to embrace the uniqueness of poetry and associate with its meaning, beauty and

the emotional response, in order to better appreciate their reality. This reality is deemed by Hanauer (2003) as an amalgamation of personal and fictional experience, wherein the latter may contain elements that nurture one's personal life.

“...poetry is a literary text that presents the experiences, thoughts and feelings of the writer through a self-referential use of language that creates for the reader and writer a new understanding of the experience, thought, or feeling related to in the text” (Hanauer, 2003, p.76).

When understood this in the context of multicultural poetry, a reader is aided with their access to the experiences contained in the text, which connects them to a new culture or their own culture and encourages them to respect and acknowledge diversity. With respect to a writer, multicultural poetry enables them to explore their experiences and share it with the world to make sense of their cultural identity.

Another aspect of multicultural poetry that Xerri (2012) states is that it enriches better language learning. The author points out that multicultural poetry helps in the establishment of a welcoming tradition, which endeavors to remove biases and create a community that becomes tolerant and appreciative of diverse languages and cultures. This enables better language learning as learners can better appreciate diverse languages and understand that their own language is meaningful and welcomed in the society they live in (Xerri, 2012).

Multiculturalism is also rooted in the style of poetry presentation. The presentation aspect of a poem can differ according to how the presenter chooses to deliver their or others' poetry. This is important because multiculturalism itself embodies the notion of diversity in practice (Wood & Gilbert, 2005). For instance, I may be comfortable expressing myself with a written piece of poetry while somebody else would be okay with the idea of recitation or spoken word poetry in order to express themselves better. In spoken word poetry itself, for

instance, slam poetry is often referred to as “interactive classroom... [that] animates the people listening to and watching it” (Smith & Kraynak, 2009, p.3). Boudreau (2009) states that slam poetry for children is not just reciting after memorizing a poem, rather it empowers them and through its performance structure, allows them to express their cultural norms and experiences. Poetry presentation is a vital component in multicultural poetry as it not only ensures that the content is multicultural, but through different presentation techniques, it establishes respect for one’s identity and brings about an attitude of acceptance by the people towards various cultures. The following are lines taken from two slam poems that were presented during the Toronto Poetry Slam in 2015.

You’re welcomed to love boys or girls, but when you change the “or” to “and”
nobody believes you. (Lanigan, 2015, as cited in Cornejo, 2017)

You don’t realize how often people put a gender on you until you realize that gender
isn’t you. And every single “girl” and “young lady” and “Miss” wears away at your
subconscious. (Kassirer, 2015 as cited in Cornejo, 2017)

These lines are powerful expression of one’s beliefs. These slam poets have addressed gender norms through these lines. Cornejo (2017) notes that through powerful theatrical gestures, fiery words and bold statements, these poets have tried to break-free from the conventional gender norms of the society. These bold poetic stanzas with their presentation technique together combine to empower the poet and others – the listeners or readers, and they’re then able to express their cultural norms, experiences, beliefs and perspectives. Desai & Marsh (2005) point out that spoken word poetry and performance poetry is like a mirror, which enables a person to understand their faults, learn resiliency, look inside the scars and elaborate on their hopes. The authors also point out that spoken word and performance poetry are important critical teaching devices which enables students to see the community with

multiple lenses. For instance, topics that are a taboo such as topics related to sex education or societal issues such as racism, when performed through poetry within classrooms can induce critical thinking among students, and this can also be used by teachers to induce critical learning.

Slam poetry, spoken word poetry and performance poetry are just a few different kinds of multicultural poetic expressions. Moreover, other forms of poetic expressions, such as poetry writing, or a simple classroom recitation can also be deemed as multicultural. Atwell (2014) states that students become representative of their truer selves when they express about themselves, state their opinion and bring forth their unique ideas in their writing. Xerri (2012) elaborates on these lines by stating that a certain category of poetry writing styles can be considered multicultural if they happen to include elements that appreciate or embrace one's own culture and invoke cultural empathy among others.

Summary

To summarize this chapter, it can be said that multicultural poetry is any poetry that creates a representational space of societal pluralism, in terms of its diverse cultures or languages among the readers and writers. Multicultural forms of poetic expression can involve wide range of poetic performances, such as slam poetry or spoken word performance, or can be as simple as plain poetry recitation or creative poetry writing which involves the elements of cultural empathy, and in doing so, bring forth both convivial and hostile aspects of cross-cultural interactions. This chapter explored poetry in the high school BC English Language Arts curriculums well as in high school ON English curriculums. The second section of this chapter explored multiculturalism and different multicultural forms of

poetic expression. Based on this, as well as the theoretical framework previous stated, in the next chapter, I will be analysing poetry with critical lens in the fourth chapter.

Chapter Five

Critical Examination of the British Columbia's and Ontario's Poetry Curricula

Introduction

The analysis of the reviewed literature will be done through a critical pedagogy lens. This chapter will be broadly divided into two main segments. The first section will be an examination of the strengths of the secondary school poetry curriculums of British Columbia (BC) and Ontario (ON) and the second section will concomitantly explore their limitations, followed by a conclusion. I will be referring to multicultural poetry within the English Language Arts/English curriculums of BC and ON as 'poetry curricula' of the respective provinces.

Strengths of BC Secondary School English Language Arts curricula focused on Poetry

The *core competency* of fostering communication skills through poetry (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2018a; Storey, 2017) is one of the most important strengths of the BC secondary school English Language Arts (ELA) curricula focussed on poetry. This is because of two main reasons. One, communication is one of the essential life skills in the world we live in. And two, the enhancement of language learning through poetry, which allows students to see, express and better comprehend their worlds, further enables them to become intercultural communicators, which is a vital tool for harmony within a multicultural environment (Mittal, 2016; Goldberg, 2016). I will analyse both these aspects thoroughly in this section. As for the first aspect, it is important to look into how specifically poetry plays a role in the enhancement of communication skills. By communication skills, I do not mean just a human to human oral interaction, but I also wish to underline the role of communication as a higher-order skill where expression of feelings and emotions are also a

crucial component (Threlfall, 2013). Poetry in particular is an essential element here because poems do not simply communicate an idea, but they also communicate experiences, and the thoughts and feelings associated with those experiences. Through poetry, students learn how to communicate their own feelings and emotions while also understanding others' expression of feelings and emotion. Poetry helps students to access varied emotions attached to varied experiences (Hanauer, 2003). Additionally, poetry also includes stronger usage of language and various literary devices that convey a meaning, which in turn enhances communication skills by allowing students to use stronger vocabulary in their day to day lives, as well as use and interpret various literary and linguistic devices in their communication. Poetry's usage of rhyme, rhythm, various poetic devices and rich vocabulary allows students to become fluent with their language usage while reading, speaking, listening or writing (Mittal, 2016).

Moreover, I also wish to emphasize here that communication includes many non-verbal aspects such as gestures, body movements, facial expressions and intonation. Performance poetry or slam poetry sessions, which are rich in poetic expressions through body gestures and intonations, foster these non-verbal communication skills among students, which further helps them to communicate effectively in their daily discourses.

Likewise, with respect to the second aspect, students becoming intercultural communicators can communicate with various cultural groups while minimizing barriers, and this is vital for harmony among diverse groups. With intercultural communication, I refer to the key skills necessary to communicate effectively, without discrimination, and with profound respect and empathy, to the members hailing from cultures that are not of one's own. The expression of one's feelings and emotions through poetry and the subsequent understanding of others' expression of feelings and emotions, is pivotal in intercultural

communication. When teachers introduce poems that are written by poets hailing from different cultures, it not only allows students to comprehend varied emotions and experiences, but also further helps them to understand varied cultures and cultural differences. For example –

“Considerate she was, varying the emphasis--
"ARE YOU DARK? OR VERY LIGHT?" Revelation came.
"You mean--like plain or milk chocolate?"
Her assent was clinical, crushing in its light
Impersonality. Rapidly, wavelength adjusted,
I chose. "West African sepia"--and as afterthought,
"Down in my passport." Silence for spectroscopic
Flight of fancy, till truthfulness clanged her accent
Hard on the mouthpiece. "WHAT'S THAT?" conceding
"DON'T KNOW WHAT THAT IS." "Like brunette."
"THAT'S DARK, ISN'T IT?" "Not altogether.
Facially, I am brunette, but, madam, you should see
The rest of me. Palm of my hand, soles of my feet
Are a peroxide blond..." (Soyinka, 2015)

The above stanza from the poem by the Nigerian poet Wole Soyinka, is a telephonic conversation between a black man and a white woman themed on racism. Poems like these, with the usage of certain literary devices, allow students to understand the prevalence of racism and other social boons in the contemporary times. Students consider seeing from multiple perspectives here – of that of the white woman, the black man, and an outsider. Students learn how certain poetic devices, *satire* in the above-mentioned example, helps them to understand their society. This understanding of the marginalized communities, through the usage of poetry in classrooms, can provide students with the ability to hear the oppressive voices, understand and reflect on the context of the oppressed. This allows them to foster their intercultural communication skills by becoming empathetic towards various cultures. Thus, poetry curriculum’s role in fostering communication skills is a very important

strength of the BC curriculums because as much as communication is crucial for our daily lives, intercultural communication too is really important within multicultural environments. In order to achieve this end, the curricula have several rich features that allow the fostering of communication skills among students. The many parts in poetry, rhythm, rhyme, literary devices, pitch and stronger vocabulary, and the many ways of presentation including reading, reciting, writing, performing, and intoning, paves way for students to comprehend their world, understand the feelings of others and express their own emotions (Mittal, 2016). Thus, by studying poetry, adopting various poetry performance styles, and by critically analysing poems in the classroom, students learn to communicate better and communicate harmoniously with diverse sections of the society, and this is an important strength of the BC curricula.

Secondly, *Big ideas* are a strength of the BC poetry curricula. This is because, through poetry, *big ideas* aim at four significant aspects of life: stimulating empathy, connecting students with their society, culture and history, enabling students to critically analyse their reality with multiple perspectives, and allowing them to become engaged citizens as well as educated social beings (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2016a; 2016b). These four areas can collectively be recognized as three key concepts – empathy, collectivism and Freirean critical consciousness and praxis – that allow students to get prepared for their daily life, as well as for their future discourses. Poetry’s distinguished role at aiming on these three key concepts, make the *big ideas* a strength of the BC curricula. Poetry, unlike prose covers excessive information within a few metrical stanzas; a poem as small as four lines may easily cover a large theme that may entail a few paragraphs for its explanation. This vast subjectivity that lies within a poem, invites a reader or a listener to

connect with the thoughts and feelings that a poet expresses. These thoughts and feelings of the poet further paves way for the listeners or readers to empathize with the greater issue or event that is discussed within the poem. Johnson (2019) states that through poetry, students actively engage and empathise with the experiences and events that are mentioned within the poem. Empathy as a core value allows students to recognize the perspectives of people from other sections of the society – including marginalized and vulnerable communities. This aspect of viewing multiple perspectives through poetry also allows students to “have a better understanding of others, a greater appreciation of diversity, and an awareness of how to live in a globalized world” (Clarke & Whitney, 2009, p. 534). Knowing about others, is also vital for self-reflection, as students who see multiple perspectives, evaluate and learn more about their own history, culture and societal practices. It is at this juncture that I wish to link the value of collectivism that is mentioned in the *big ideas*. With collectivism, I also intend to go beyond the scope of one’s affiliation to their own society, culture and history. Students who understand the perspective of others, learn about others’ history and culture, while also reflecting on their own society, culture and history, transcend to the level of universal collectivism. With universal collectivism, I imply the linkage of individuals towards a global collective. Individuals prioritizing multicultural goals over their own groups’ goals is essential in a multicultural environment. This is essential for harmony among diverse groups. Collectivism is a treasure because it creates harmony by fostering dutifulness among individuals for the collective and promotes egalitarianism (Hamedani, Purvis, Glazer & Dien, 2012). Furthermore, it is also through empathy and collectivism, that the curriculums can aid in creating engaged and educated social beings. Both empathy as well as the connection of students with their society, culture and history can allow students to see the oppressive reality

of their world and allow them to reflect on the power structures. This reflection empowers students for social change (Clarke & Whitney, 2009). Additionally, within the BC poetry curricula, Freirean critical consciousness and praxis is reflected through the big ideas as it aims at enabling students to become engaged citizens as well as educated social beings. Engaged citizenry transforms political and cultural activities of the society. When schools and curriculums focus on enabling students to become engaged citizens, they endeavour towards a socially just and politically democratic state (Giroux & McLaren, 1986). Thus, big ideas are definitely a strength of the BC poetry curricula due to the above-mentioned concepts that prepare students for their future and daily life discourses, while also empowering them to become engaged and informed citizens.

Thirdly, the curricular competencies that poetry promotes in the Grades 9-12 curricula with respect to appreciating the oral traditions of the First Peoples and developing an awareness towards the values and beliefs of the First Peoples is a very important strength of the BC poetry curricula. For a multicultural nation like Canada with a history of colonialization by European settlers and the subsequent ill treatment of the original inhabitants of this land, I recognize that a stronger decolonization procedure is vital for the future of its citizens. This process must accompany reconciliation which can be pursued in many ways, but one important way is when First Peoples literatures and traditions are acknowledged and used within the curriculums as recommended within the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015) report. The importance of the curricula that focusses on First Peoples literatures, traditions, history and beliefs, is not only for the benefit of the Indigenous students but also for the non-Indigenous students. When non-indigenous students learn more about First Peoples literatures, traditions, history and beliefs, the process

of reconciliation becomes more meaningful. Moreover, BC curricula's recognition of the First Peoples Principles of Learning (FPPL) and its subsequent usage within the classrooms have been beneficial for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students (Chrona, 2014). When non-indigenous students learn about the history of the colonial settlement, and understand the negative events of the past, they can connect more with the land and its oppressive history. For example, the following poem by Rita Joe is about her experience in a residential school and it elaborates on the experiences of the First Nations people who were colonised by the European settlers.

I lost my talk
The talk you took away.
When I was a little girl
At Shubenacadie school.

You snatched it away:
I speak like you
I think like you
I create like you
The scrambled ballad, about my word.

Two ways I talk
Both ways I say,
Your way is more powerful.

So gently I offer my hand and ask,
Let me find my talk
So I can teach you about me. (Joe, 2015)

This poem as well as similar other poems when introduced in the classroom promotes critical learning, by providing students, both indigenous and non-indigenous students, with the opportunity to reflect, question and learn about the events happened in the past. This reflection is important for the process of reconciliation. Chrona (2014) also states that the formulation of FPPL itself is an evidence to BC curricula's formal recognition of First

Peoples knowledge. It also adheres to “developing culturally appropriate curricula” laid down in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015) report. This consideration of inclusion of FPPL is a strength of BC curricula as it implies a greater understanding of First Peoples knowledge and traditions by the educators and non-Indigenous students in the classroom.

Moreover, there also lies a possibility of a socially just world because of the curricular competencies that promote First Peoples literatures, beliefs, traditions and history, and allow students to learn from diverse text sources in their classrooms. The inclusion of First Peoples literatures within the curricula definitely aims at “improving education attainment levels and success rates” of the First Peoples and (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015, p.2). The curricular expectations, that of accessing information from diverse text sources, comprehending and synthesizing texts of the First Peoples as well as that of other multicultural groups is definitely a strength of the BC poetry curricula. This is because, usage of diverse texts fosters critical thinking as students start evaluating and analyzing the practices and norms in which they are situated – students are able to view a situation from multiple perspectives. Additionally, for students, understanding multiple perspectives paves way towards the recognition of power and positioning within the society and they reflect on how various social groups are represented within texts as well as in their real lives, in turn promoting social justice (Clarke & Whitney, 2009). Social justice-oriented curriculums also prepare students to recognize and take action towards social and political injustices (Giroux, 2002). Thus, the curricular expectation in terms of connecting students with First Peoples texts as well as with other multicultural texts is a very strong aspect of the curriculums that helps embrace the richness of diversity.

Lastly, BC secondary school poetry curricula's strength lies in its flexibility and its interdisciplinary nature. While flexibility of the curriculum can be studied as both a strength and a limitation of the BC curriculum, I describe it as a strength here, while also elaborating on the limitation of this aspect in the next segment of this chapter. Flexibility of the BC curriculum is its strength because of three main reasons: first, flexibility allows teachers to initiate critical discussions in their classrooms, second, flexibility means more student autonomy by them becoming the regulators of the content they learn, and third, flexibility means personalized learning for different individuals in the classrooms. With the flexibility that teachers have, they can introduce critical discussions in their classrooms. Even though the BC curricula lack resource packages and teachers prompts, with the integration of *core competencies*, *big ideas* and *contents*, teachers are empowered to meet the expectation of this flexible curricula, utilizing creativity and innovation in the classrooms. Kaminskiene and DeUrza (2020) note from a student's perspective, that flexible curriculums mean more success in learning as then the learning pace or content is not determined by the schools or teachers, allowing students to be the regulators of their learning. This means more student autonomy in the teaching-learning process. From a critical pedagogy framework, flexibility of the curriculums can then be deemed as an essential aspect of education, because of how students get to be the regulators of their learning process. I consider flexibility as a strength for the BC curriculums because it gives teachers the ability to cater individual students differently. Teachers, with their immense freedom to look beyond any prescribed contents, can introduce personalized learning in their classrooms (Kaminskiene & DeUrza, 2020). Thus, these three aspects: teachers' initiation of critical discussions in their classrooms,

student autonomy, and personalized learning for individuals, makes flexibility a key strength of BC curriculums.

BC poetry curricula's strength also lies in its interdisciplinary nature. This is because, interdisciplinary space allows both teachers and students to simultaneously indulge with multiple knowledge bodies, paving way for critical learning. Poetry's role in interdisciplinary learning is significant. As I previously mentioned, poetry is subjective in nature. This subjectivity is important in looking beyond facts and seeing the events mentioned by the poet from multiple dimensions. For instance, a poem that describes American Civil War, such as "O Captain! my Captain!" by Walt Whitman, can also bring forth certain key events as well as the emotions attached with those events.

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still,
My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will,
The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, its voyage closed and done,
From fearful trip the victor ship comes in with object won; (Whitman, 2015)

This stanza will inform the death of the captain – Abraham Lincoln, while also noting the chronology of events that lead to the victory in the war. Similar poems not only introduce students to various rich poetic features, but also allows them to connect with other subject areas. Even though interdisciplinary approaches in pedagogy can sometimes be time consuming and confusing for teachers, if they can allow for a successful synthesis of two or more disciplines, then they can foster higher-order thinking capabilities in their students (Jones, 2009). This is beneficial, especially because critical pedagogy itself aims at building interdisciplinary spaces where knowledge becomes freely accessible without constraints (McArthur, 2010). This means that interdisciplinary space can allow both teachers and students to engage critically with various knowledge bodies. The secondary school poetry curriculums being flexible as well as interdisciplinary, benefits students by enabling them to

acquire higher order thinking as well as by allowing them to critically engage with various knowledge bodies.

Strengths of Ontario's Secondary School English curricula focussed on Poetry

Ontario's English curricula comprises of a variety of courses and I consider this to be one of the most important strengths of the ON curricula. One important reason for this is the promotion of student autonomy. Large pools of courses mean students can utilize the curriculum to the fullest and select the appropriate course that they wish to study. Moreover, since the purpose itself of these courses is multifold – first, to prepare students for their future careers or as an essential step towards university or workplace preparation, second, as a condition for admissibility in the next grade level, third, to allow them to opt for a specialisation course, and fourth, to study in a theory-based, application-based or a self-paced program (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007a; 2007b) – students are empowered to choose the courses based on their desired outcomes. This also means the variety of courses within the ON English curricula is diverse with respect to the skills they foster – including various common language-learning skills within all courses and specific skills within the electives – that allows students to choose what they perceive is the best option for their future. For instance, optional courses such as The Writer's Craft and Studies in Literature for Grade 12 (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007b) are specifically designed for students wishing to pursue a career in creative writing, reflective writing, research and analysis of literatures from various eras, analysis and study of First Peoples literatures and literary criticism. Many courses for students to opt from, is a sign of the curricula's learner-centered approach. This makes the curricula very strong with respect to how students are allowed to be partakers of their own learning, and not how teachers deem it fit for them. With such a variety available

for students, the teachers' role becomes that of being an equal in the process of teaching-learning, by students being the selectors of the course containing specified skills to which respective teachers tutor. Teachers are then not the owners of the knowledge bodies that are introduced in the classroom, rather they are just the transformative intellectuals who help students to critically evaluate and learn from the courses that they themselves have opted from this variety that is available for them. Thus, the presence of a variety of courses to learn poetry in the secondary school ON English curricula, is a key strength of the curricula as it enables students to choose the apt courses based on the requirement for their future undertakings.

Secondly, the availability of numerous examples and 'teacher prompts' is a strength of the ON secondary school poetry curricula. This is a strength because with numerous examples, teachers feel empowered in their classrooms to realise the expectations of the curriculum. This aspect can also be studied as a limitation of the ON curricula, because despite of its flexibility, various examples and teacher prompts can make the curricula prescriptive in nature, where teachers may get restricted to go beyond the scope of these mentioned examples. I will be exploring this aspect in the limitation segment of this chapter. Davis et al. (2017) points out that teachers having sufficient guidance for their curricular documents can easily meet the expectations of the curriculum and they are then able to foster the skills highlighted within the curriculum. For instance, one example of the prompt for teachers with respect to the presentation of a poem is: "How did the speaker's use of facial expressions, vocal effects, and body language contribute to the text?" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007a, p. 57). This prompt is particularly centred on video/live presentations of a poem in the classroom. Students who attend to this prompt in the classroom learn about three

dimensions of the poetry presentation - facial expressions, vocal effects, and body language. Teachers can also introduce how facial expressions, vocal effects, and body language, have significance in various cultures represented through the poem. For instance, the importance of bowing heads as salutation in the Asian context. This example shows how the usage of prompts and discussions in the classroom fosters language learning, as well as aid teachers to include cultural-sensitive contents in their classrooms. This aspect is also a strength because the curricular document not only provides multiple examples and prompts for teachers, but also urges teachers to go beyond the scope of these examples and prompts by introducing more context specific real-time examples in the classrooms and lead critical discussions based on contemporary themes. Various examples and prompts mentioned in the curricula, as well as various real-time examples allow in-depth language learning and lead students into critical discussions, making them more connected to their societal issues and needs. I consider this to be the juncture where teachers become transformative intellectuals by facilitating critical reflection in classrooms (Giroux, 2002). It is noteworthy, that the usage of real-time examples of poetry can help students not only learn about the skills associated with language learning, but also indulge with the contemporary themes and issues prevalent in the society. This makes the curricula stronger in terms of its link with the worldly affairs and concerns. For instance, following is a stanza taken from the poem by John Lithgow, which is about the Trump administration in USA.

“Trumpty Dumpty wanted a crown
To make certain he never would have to step down.
He wanted a robe made of ermine and velvet.
The Constitution? He wanted to shelve it.” (Lithgow, 2020, p. 11)

Discussions about this poem can be about the structure of the poem and teach students the skills associated with usage of literary devices. Deeper discussions of this poem may include the rising racist instances in North America during Trump's tenure. This two-way benefit for the students is the reason why the availability of examples and prompts is a key strength. Thus, various prompts, examples and real-life based themes and discussions are a strength of the ON curricula, as this can be utilised by teachers for not only the purpose of language learning, but also for the purpose of portraying educational institutions as cultural, social and economic zones that are inseparably attached to politics and power, prompting critical discussions.

Lastly, the interpersonal and intrapersonal skills promoted by the curriculums is an important strength of the ON secondary school poetry curricula. This is because the benefits of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills for students are multifold: first, these skills prepare students to be anti-discriminatory, second, it gives them a representational space in a multicultural setup, third, it allows them to thrive for social justice, and fourth, it increases their cross-cultural competencies. I believe these skills are a strength specifically in the context of Canada which is a multicultural nation, because students developing interpersonal and intrapersonal skills through the ON curricula will be able to bring harmony among diverse groups. For example, the curriculum for grade 9 mentions the understanding of "body language, gestures, level of assertiveness and facial expressions" to be important in developing interpersonal skills, where students learn strategies to demonstrate "sensitivity to cultural differences" (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007a, p. 57). In the case of intrapersonal skill, as an example, Grade 10 curriculum mentions a specific teacher prompt: "what pieces do you feel show your increasing awareness of yourself?", which helps students

to “reflect significant advances in their growth and competence” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007a, p. 79). Interpersonal and Intrapersonal skills are essential for the theme of reconciliation with the First Peoples. When students are encouraged to write, speak or recite during performance poetry sessions, they better express themselves (Atwell, 2014) appreciate their own cultural values, invoke cultural empathy among others (Xerri, 2012) learn resiliency, and start introspecting about themselves and their positioning in the society (Desai & Marsh, 2005). The exercise of introspection and the evaluation of one’s own culture encouraged by the poetry curricula, harnesses intrapersonal competency amongst students. Moreover, ON curricular document, by incorporating recitations and performance poetry sessions in the classroom allows students to have a representational space within the classroom, where they can perform or write poetry based on their own experiences or based on the real-life stories they have heard. Furman, Coyne & Negi (2008) point out that when students are asked to write poems based on their daily life occurrences in their classroom, self-reflection skills leading to higher order intrapersonal skills, as well as their cross-cultural competencies get improved. Self-reflection and interpersonal communication in a multicultural environment mean engaged citizenry of the youth, which is vital in realising social justice. Thus, interpersonal and intrapersonal skills are a strength of the ON curriculums because of its social justice orientation.

Flexible Curriculums may also be a Limitation

One important limitation to both BC and ON secondary school poetry curriculums can be derived from their flexible nature. The BC curricula is “vague” since teachers do not have resource packages to guide themselves in order to bring suitable content to the classroom (Storey, 2017, p.44). The studies and opinion-based literatures on the new BC

curricula have all elaborated on how the newer curricula do not become a valuable guide for teachers (Blades, 2019; Tuinstra, 2018). Even though the ON curricula ensures that teachers have numerous examples and prompts, it can make teachers lose their innovation in exploring and going beyond the mentioned prompts and examples. This can also be a challenge of the flexible nature of the ON curriculums, as teachers may restrict themselves to the contents that they would have been teaching for several years already.

Teachers play a significant role in the success of a curriculum. It must not be left unsaid that curriculum is not just an ordinary document and includes everything associated within the educational process (Eisner, 2002). A teacher's effective practice in the classroom makes a curriculum successful. In case of both BC and ON curriculums, the contents mentioned in the curricular document are just the major 'ingredients' within the actual content. For instance, the curricula of BC mention the importance of interdisciplinary approach in learning, however, it truly depends on teachers to adopt this measure in their classrooms. Teachers feel empowered when they have educative materials and resources for their classes; they feel secure with the guidance that they receive through the educative materials (Davis et al., 2017). Furthermore, even though I previously mentioned students' viewpoint on flexible curriculums as stated by Kaminskiene & DeUrraza (2020) that it promotes student autonomy, Jonker, Marz & Voogt (2020) point out from teachers' standpoint, that it creates confusion, tensions and professional pressure. Thus, flexible curricula can be a limitation of both the ON and BC curriculums based on its enactment. Teacher educators being at the center of curriculum enactment, may be under great scrutiny when anything related to the implementation of the curriculum goes wrong.

Summary

This chapter observed various strengths of the BC and ON curriculums. The BC secondary school poetry curricula's core competencies focused on fostering communication skills among students, big ideas that pave way for empathy, collectivism, and Freirean critical consciousness and praxis, the appreciation of oral traditions of the First Peoples, the promotion of social justice, flexibility, and its interdisciplinary nature are the key strengths of this curricula. The variety of courses in ON curriculums, availability of numerous examples and teacher prompts, and its promotion of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills are the key strengths of the ON secondary school poetry curricula. With respect to the limitations, the flexibility of both BC and ON curricula, that creates confusion, tension and professional pressure among teachers are notes in this chapter.

Chapter Six

Findings and Implications

Introduction

In this chapter, based on the critical examination of the curricula, I will further delve into answering the research question – How (if at all) are the English Language Arts curricula of British Columbia (BC) and the English curricula of Ontario (ON) that focus on poetry, influenced by multiculturalism? I will also look into the key implications that inform the existing gap within both Ontario and British Columbia’s English Language Arts curricula with a focus on poetry, and how poetry is situated to promote multiculturalism. I will specifically connect these implications to the greater discourse of multiculturalism through and within poetry. The chapter is divided into four main segments, first, I will connect my findings to the research question, second, I will elaborate on the implications of flexibility of the BC curricula, third, I will analyze the implication of ON’s poetry curricula’s inclusion of excessive expectations and its insertion of too many prompts and examples for the teachers, and fourth, I will explore the implications of not including any definitive multicultural poetry content in both BC and ON curriculums.

Findings of the Study

Based on the critical examination of the curriculums using Text Analysis methodology, this study’s findings demonstrate that poetry found within the English Language Arts curricula of BC and the English curricula of ON, is only minimally influenced by multiculturalism. Even though the critical examination of the curriculums paved different ways into looking at how the curriculum attempted to foster multiculturalism, the dearth in the emphasis on poetry over other genres, and the deficit in the direct mention of

‘multicultural poetry’ throughout the curriculums, present the outcome that curricula examined were minimally influenced by multiculturalism. In other words, when curriculums do not explicitly mention ‘multicultural poetry’ or poetry over other genres, it limits the scope and depth of understanding the presence and use of poetry, and any direct themes of multiculturalism in them.

The critical examination of the curricula documented in the previous chapter, informs that multiculturalism could be fostered by the Core Competencies and Big Ideas of the BC English Language Arts curricula for Grades 9 to 12. This is possible because of the focus on fostering communication skills, empathy, collectivism, Freirean critical consciousness and praxis, and due to the curricula’s appreciation of oral traditions of the First Peoples, promotion of social justice, flexibility, and its interdisciplinary nature. With respect to the ON curricula, its variety of courses, availability of numerous examples and teacher prompts, and its promotion of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, aid in a cursory way to promote multiculturalism through poetry. However, as both BC and ON secondary school curricula are flexible, and strongly mention the role of educators in the implementation of the multicultural poetry (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2015; 2016a; 2016b; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007a; 2007b), the findings of this study in terms of the strengths of the curricula in promoting multiculturalism through poetry, depends primarily on how teachers implement the curriculums in their classroom. This is also why I wish to reiterate what I stated earlier – poetry found within the English Language Arts curricula of BC and the English curricula of ON, is only minimally influenced by multiculturalism. The following sections further elaborate on the key implications and their impacts, that inform certain gaps within the BC and ON curricula, with respect to its promotion of multiculturalism.

Implication of flexibility of BC curriculums

Flexibility of the BC curricula is aimed towards encouraging teachers to design courses, units and experiences for students based on the principles of First Nations, other local contexts, and student interests and their needs (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2016). Even though flexibility implies autonomy with respect to how a teacher designs and teaches their classroom content, and how learners' perspectives are thoroughly reflected within the classroom discourses, the sheer lack of teacher prompts and the vagueness around how to engage in the discourses of First Nations people in the BC curricula implies confusion and stress for teachers (Storey, 2017; Blades, 2019). With teacher confusion and stress, I also intend to mention the complications those teachers face who are not particularly skilled in teaching poetry. This also means that without teacher prompts or sufficient guidelines, new teachers or teachers who are not confident in teaching poetry will feel a sense of unsettledness with their teaching practice. Jonker, Marz and Voogt (2020) mention that flexibility implies teacher confusion in course development, technology handling and enactment of lessons. Key impacts of this implication include professional pressure among teachers, a lack of connectedness to multicultural education through poetry, a lack of inclusion of the indigenous perspectives, contents and cultures within classrooms, and the non-fulfillment of the curricular expectations, all of which are problematic and worth examining for policy change. This implication of flexibility is also crucial to peruse because teacher confusion and stress can further imply alternative practices in the classroom to reach the curricular expectations, such as, a passive inclusion of poetry in the classroom content. I will further explore this implication of flexibility and its impacts in the following paragraphs.

Teacher confusion and stress due to the unavailability of sufficient guidelines, prompts and examples, could mean a passive usage of poetry in the classrooms to reach the curricular expectations. Poetry is mentioned under the scope of *texts* in the BC curricula. *Texts* also include other oral, visual, written and digital texts such as plays, stories, novels, articles, photographs etc. (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2016a; 2016b). In Grade 9-12, *big ideas*, *core competencies*, and *contents* do not explicitly mention ‘poetry’, instead include *texts* as a hypernym for poetry and other literary genres. Teachers who get overwhelmed while integrating *big ideas*, *core competencies*, and *contents*, or those who themselves do not have an aptitude for poetry, may choose to avoid using poetry and instead introduce contents from other genres to foster the skills mentioned under the curricula. For instance, to teach intonation, instead of poetry a teacher can use dialogues from a play, or to teach literary devices, a teacher can use fiction instead (Gabrielsen, Blikstad-Balas, & Tengberg, 2019). This means, a teacher who is not well-versed in poetry can easily avoid teaching about poetry in their classrooms while still addressing all the areas mentioned under *big ideas*, *core competencies*, and *contents*. Moreover, looking at this omission from a critical pedagogy lens, this impact caused by teachers’ confusion due to the lack of prompts, guidelines and examples in the curricular document will in turn result in teacher authoritarianism with respect to the knowledge body introduced in the classroom. This is because teachers who use alternate methods and rarely use poetry in their classrooms, deprive their students of the very benefits poetry has to offer to them. Teachers’ passive or negligible usage of poetry in the classrooms to reach the curricular expectations, means teachers’ authority over the contents they use, and this authoritarianism leads students to miss out on the positive attributes that poetry has to offer. The forceful adoption of contents in the

classroom delimits the real sense of autonomy (Houlden & Veletsianos, 2020), which is ironical in the case of flexible curriculums.

Furthermore, the vagueness of the curricula can also negatively impact the curricular expectations for poetry. The BC curricula expects the integration of *core competencies*, *big ideas* and *contents* in the classroom. However, realizing the specific content that covers the key concepts and fosters core competencies among students may be a confusing task for teachers (Storey, 2017; Blades, 2019). This can also lead to professional pressure. Tensions due to the lack of clarity induces pressure among teachers in realizing the goals of the curriculum (Jonker, Marz and Voogt, 2020). Furthermore, this stressful situation of introducing the appropriate knowledge body in their classrooms can also result into teachers referring back to the previously existed resource packages (Blades, 2019) in order to meet the expectation of the curriculum. Blades (2019) mention that teachers throughout BC still use the aged Integrated Resource Packages (IRPs), which are course contents that were available for teachers prior to the introduction of the 2016 BC curricula, and was an important document which the previous curricula entitled for every teacher's classroom practice. I consider the present usage of IRPs, due to the protracted confusion and stress among teachers to be a resultant negative implication, and because these resource packages are undoubtedly linked to the previously existed curricular expectations. One must note that since curriculum design is carried out after a thorough analysis of the deficiencies and needs of an existing curriculum and practice (Macalister & Nation, 2019), the continued usage of the IRPs in the present-day classrooms denote the non-fulfillment of the expectations laid down in the new curriculums of BC.

The non-fulfilment of the expectations of BC curriculums negatively impacts the multicultural environment envisioned in the BC curricula. Teacher confusion due to the lack of proper guidelines, examples and prompts can negatively impact BC secondary school poetry curricula's aim of promoting intercultural communication, which is an important component of multicultural education. This could only be achieved by rightfully including indigenous perspectives, contents and cultures, other diverse contents, and personalized learning into every course. Even though the curriculums extensively mention the integration of indigenous perspectives, cultures and contents into the classroom (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2016a; 2016b) there is a lack of advice regarding the compliance of this integration (Blades, 2019). For instance, teachers might include local Indigenous people's poetry in their classroom, however, if teachers are unable to bring out the importance of the issues and the multiple themes mentioned in the poetry stanzas, this could be problematic for multicultural education. Teachers who do not bring in culturally sensitive material and are unable to inform students of the background of the multicultural poems, provide students with partial information, which is harmful in every sense. Moreover, teachers who hail from non-Indigenous backgrounds will find it very difficult to cope up with this infusion without proper examples and guidance. This also means that it would be challenging for some teachers to include diverse content in the classroom resulting into the inability of teachers to foster personalized learning for students hailing from diverse backgrounds. For instance, teachers who have a European Ancestry may find it difficult to foster personalized learning for Asian students if they are not properly guided through the curriculum or exposed to this in teacher education programs. And even if they are able to introduce personalized content, there still might be a lack of understanding regarding the

themes and events mentioned in various poems that teachers have researched for this purpose. Thus, it is no doubt that that introduction of Aboriginal perspectives and contents, other diverse contents, and personalized learning in the classroom are all undoubtedly important in a multicultural environment like Canada where students from diverse backgrounds attend public school together.

There also lies the possibility of a gap between different classrooms and among different students from the same province due to their exposures to completely different classroom practices. For instance, a teacher from a certain school location, might have only focused on the academic course completion based on the previously existed IRPs. If they have done this without addressing First Peoples texts and other diverse poetry texts, then they are distancing their students from the other classrooms where other teachers were able to induce multiples perspectives among their students. This creates a gap among students within the same province. To summarize this section, the lack of teacher prompts and the vagueness associated with BC curriculums, will negatively impact multicultural education envisioned by the curriculum and this is ironical because at the first place the provision of flexible curriculums itself is to include diverse knowledge bodies in the classroom.

Implication of numerous expectations within the ON curriculums

Numerous expectations listed in the ON curricula with the addition of numerous examples and prompts for classroom consumption implies, first, partial inclusion of competencies within the classrooms, and second, lesser scope for innovation and creativity for teachers. It is interesting to note that unlike the BC curricula, for each competency mentioned in ON curriculums, there are several sub-categories of expectations, and for each of these sub-categories there are numerous prompts and examples available in the curricular

document for the teachers. The curriculums expect teachers to innovate and bring real life examples to the classroom, while also offering them a plethora of examples and prompts which they may or may not refer to, based on their personal teaching styles (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007a; 2007b). However, as much as it appears that the provision of additional support within the curricula empowers teachers; the inclusion of excessive prompts and examples pertaining to numerous expectations within the curriculums exceed to a point where it gets overly time-consuming for teachers to address most of these expectations in their classroom. When teachers address certain expectations and leave out certain others, the overall expectation of the curriculums are not met. Moreover, with respect to skills necessary in a multicultural environment, this would mean a growing gap between different learners. For instance, learners from a school where various multicultural competencies, such as intercultural communication and the promotion of social justice are fostered in the classroom, would possess these key skills for a multicultural environment, as opposed to learners from another school where students hail from a homogenous section of the society, and the teacher might not include any multicultural content or foster any of these skills.

Furthermore, according to Chan et al. (2017), teachers often refrain combining certain competencies with their course contents as they perceive it to be a time-consuming activity primarily because of two reasons, one, lack of guidelines and difficulties in the assessment of certain competencies and two, their own lack of experience dealing with a variety of competencies. One significant impact of this is an ardent focus only on the disciplinary knowledge content and not the fostering of key skills such as intercultural communication and empathy among students. In simple words, too many expectations within the ON curricular documents can be overwhelming for teachers, prompting them to not focus on all

of them and emphasizing largely on the disciplinary content alone. Despite the focus on disciplinary content being an important attribute, not focusing on key multicultural competencies such as intercultural communication and empathy is a negative aspect because this will lead into the creation of knowledgeable mindsets lacking the skills for survival in a multicultural environment. This might further lead to the fundamental question of what the aim of education is.

I will describe this further with an elaborate example: ‘Making inference’ is an important competency mentioned as a sub-category of the expectation, ‘reading for meaning’ in the ON curriculum for grade 9 (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007a, p. 45). Other than ‘making inference’, there are 7 other important competencies such as ‘critical literacy’ and ‘evaluating texts’ mentioned as sub-categories under the main expectation, *Reading for Meaning*. Now *Reading for Meaning* itself is a part of 4 overall expectations mentioned under the major skill of *Reading*, which together with *oral communication*, *writing*, and *media literacy* forms the course curriculum of Academic English for Grade 9. Simply eliminating ‘making inference’ from a classroom discourse by not leading an inferential study of poetry and its background, might not appear as a big change for a teacher who is already including various other crucial competencies mentioned in the curriculum. However, from a multicultural point of view, similar to many other key skills mentioned within the curricula, ‘making inference’ is too a crucial skill leading into the understanding of diverse backgrounds and generating empathy among students (Kendeou, Broek, Helder & Karlsson, 2014). One may argue here, that the skill of ‘making inference’ can be harnessed from reading literatures and it does not have to be specifically addressed through the usage of multicultural poetry, however, then they are neglecting the ability of multicultural poetry to

connect the multiple emotions and feelings attached to various situations. An example here would be a perspective on Residential schools by an Indigenous poet. Students may read about the Residential schools and events that happened within the schools by reading a prose on Residential schools. Students might also read about various experiences of the Indigenous students who went to Residential school. However, poetry alone will enable students to connect with the feelings and emotions that the poet has included through their various poetic devices, allowing students to actively engage and empathise with the experience of the poet (Mittal, 2016; Johnson, 2019). Thus, keeping multiculturalism in view, as much as I value the importance of this bombardment of several important competencies into poetry curriculums of ON, the irony of overcrowding it to a point where it would not be completely met, is also harmful for the curricula.

Another implication of numerous expectations and the abundant prompts and examples contained in the ON poetry curricula is that it lessens the scope for innovation and creativity for teachers. The ON curricula guides teachers with a ton of examples and prompts to a point where they might not have more opportunities to innovate, instead choose to settle by exercising what the curricula offers through its own numerous suggestions. For instance, when the curricula offer two to three prompts under one sub-category of a competency and mentions at least a few examples alongside with it for classroom discussion and learning, the scope for teachers to include more examples from outside sources, self-experiences or student experiences is often reduced. In simple words, “overspecification of standards” within a curriculum “tends to cramp the creativity of both students and teachers” (Noddings, 2013, p.212)

Moreover, the crowding of the ON curricula with respect to the several expectations laid down through too many prompts and examples for the use of teachers also imply a superficial addressing of topics, and a lesser regard to the inclusion of learning based on student experiences (Bialystok, Norris & Pinto, 2019; Adolfsson, 2018). This also means that when teachers settle down with the mentioned prompts and examples, they connect to topics superficially and not wholly. For instance, one specific prompt mentioned under reading skills in order to discuss ‘diverse cultures and historical periods’ for Grade 11 English course is: “What recurring themes emerge in your study of World War I poets from various nations?” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007b, p. 46). Other examples mentioned for the same topic are: “compare their (students’) own perspective on a topic with the perspective of the main character in a narrative from an earlier historical period”; “compare treatments of similar themes in stories from different cultures, including First Nation, Inuit, or Métis cultures”; “study literary essays, noting thesis statements and structural elements, as models for their own writing”; “research a topic of interest to develop an annotated bibliography for an independent study” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007b, p. 46). The inclusion of these many examples for analyzing one topic alone means that teachers are “held tightly” by the curriculum and there exists minimum opportunity for them to go beyond the scope of what the curriculum mentions (Noddings, 2013, p.213). Furthermore, assuming that a teacher might discuss recurrent themes of World War I poets from different nations to address this topic, the obvious question that comes to mind is what happens to all the other important examples mentioned under this section? Can a teacher bypass other examples, the more crucial ones such as the comparison of “treatments of themes in stories or poetries from different cultures, including First Nation, Inuit, or Métis cultures” in this case? I consider that

leading a classroom with one prompt alone will be time consuming in this case, let alone the inclusion of the rest of the examples.

From the above-mentioned example, if a teacher wishes to discuss recurrent themes in the study of world war I poets, students might get connected to these themes as well as to the historical context of World War 1 and its poetry. Students might be able to look at the contemporary issues by comparing it to the issues mentioned in World War I poetry. However, if a teacher chooses to exclude the other prompts and examples, such as the comparative study between diverse cultures, including that of the First Nation, Inuit, or Métis cultures, or an annotated bibliography or a researched write-up, due to their time consuming discussion and study, then teachers are definitely leaving out important areas in their classroom. Since teachers are expected to cover a lot of expectations and are required to attend to the remaining topics in a subject, instead of delving into the deeper meaning of the lessons and into elaborate discussion of contents, teachers address topics superficially (Adolfsson, 2018; Armstrong, Stahl & Kantner, 2015). This also means a lesser regard to the inclusion of learning based on student experiences. For instance, a refugee student who moved to Canada in recent times due to the conflict situations they faced in their own country might want to discuss their experiences in the classroom. Teachers on the other hand, due to their choice of prompts, might not even allow the inclusion of refugee students' perspectives and experiences in their class. This might make these students feel left out in comparison to the rest of the students. All of this implies teachers might not have more opportunities to innovate and bring creative ideas to the classroom, instead choose to settle by exercising what the curriculums offer through its own numerous suggestions.

Adopting multicultural education in the classroom through poetry would look something different than a normal classroom discourse. Creativity, for the above-mentioned topic can, hypothetically, be a poetry composition based on a photo walk in a museum that displays artefacts from a historical event, a poetry composition followed by a discussion based on one's own choice of a historical event, or, a comparative study of the struggles that the diverse students from diverse backgrounds faced, or, even an interdisciplinary approach where students connect a lesson in their history classroom to their English course and prepare for a poetry slam or a formal competition. There can be many other creative ways in which teachers can introduce multicultural poetry in their classrooms. Thus, the multifarious expectations listed in the ON curricula with the provision of a myriad of examples and prompts for classroom consumption imply a partial inclusion of competencies within the classroom, as well as lesser scope for innovation and creativity for teachers, further leading to a superficial addressing of topics in the classroom.

Further implications of the inclusion of multicultural contents

With respect to multicultural contents, the BC curriculums focus on the inclusion of local Indigenous content, and contents supporting and valuing diverse learners in the classroom (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2015). The ON curriculums on the other hand specifically mentions the inclusion of First Nations, Metis and Inuit people's content, as well as contents inclusive of diverse cultures (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007a; 2007b). In both BC and ON curriculums, even though the terms 'diversity' and 'culture' are defined with a broad definition, no groups are specifically exemplified, other than First Nations, Metis and Inuit people in the context of ON curriculums, and a broader terminology of 'First Peoples' in the context of BC curricula. It must also be noted here that instead of mentioning

any definitive content or prescribed textbook, both BC and ON poetry curriculums only mention components and competencies that must be contained within the contents that teachers adopt in their classrooms. Even though this implies teacher autonomy with respect to the adoption of multicultural contents in the classroom, one major negative implication of the unavailability of definitive multicultural content stems from the fact that many Indigenous community members and other diverse groups may not be primary English speakers and may not have poems or other literatures with proper English translations. There might also be a lack of awareness regarding the translated texts. This situation in the classroom might lead to a challenging classroom environment, even leading cultural appropriation as opposed to cultural appreciation. The implications of the unavailability of definitive multicultural content are multifold; one, in order to deal with the majority of the expectations of the curriculum, the contents adopted in the classroom might belong to culturally dominant groups, and two, even if teachers include culturally diverse contents, there might still be a lack of cultural sensitivity around the usage of these diverse contents in the classroom. Both these implications are important to be discussed here, as what might appear to be a multicultural environment in the classroom, might in reality be an environment promoting cultural appropriation and prejudice.

Indigenous communities and other diverse groups may not be native English speakers. This might impact the choice of contents in the classroom. For instance, students who have recently migrated with their families to Canada from non-English speaking countries may not have available translated poetry contents in English pertaining to the specified competencies that are mentioned in the curricula. Moreover, these students might also find it difficult to understand various cultural practices of other diverse groups when

they interact with the common classroom contents. Teachers resorting to contents that largely affiliate to a particular group, mostly the ones to the dominant groups, would be an immediate impact to the unavailability of multicultural contents. Interestingly, most teachers in Canadian schools are Caucasian and have a European background (Ryan, Pollock & Antonelli, 2009) which might also lead them to include mostly European poetry in their classroom, instead of texts from the First Nations or other parts of the world. In such situations, the cultural knowledge body of the dominant groups becomes universal knowledge body in the classroom (Petherick, 2018). This is fundamentally oppressive and a harmful practice for a classroom that is expected by the curricular document to promote multiculturalism. It is therefore no doubt, that with respect to the contents in the secondary school poetry curriculums of both BC and ON, teachers predominantly include Shakespearean poetry, and poems influenced largely by British poets (Colarusso, 2017). Moreover, even when teachers include culturally specific poetry content, there might remain a lack of cultural sensitivity around the content. For instance, teachers including haikus, pastoral poems in their classroom, or organizing poetry slams may not necessarily inform their classroom of the importance of these types of poetry with respect to its place of origin and cultural significance. Students and teachers might study various types of poems without being aware of the cultural significance around it (Sumiati, 2019; Finch, 2003). Lack of cultural information might lead to prejudice among students towards different multicultural content. Such a curriculum is adversely impacted when students have to settle with content that is presented without cultural context and moreover, does not indulge in critical learning as well as the understanding of the background of the information they access (Bialystok, Norris & Pinto, 2019). Thus, having no or very limited access to multicultural context and

having limited guidelines regarding the usage of multicultural content is a limitation of both BC and ON curriculums leading to a challenging classroom environment.

Summary

This chapter delved into three significant areas of implications pertaining to both BC and ON secondary school poetry curriculums. These three are significant areas as they are indicative of the gaps within the curricula. With respect to the flexibility of BC curriculums, the lack of teacher prompts and the vagueness around how to engage in the discourses of First Nations people implies confusion and stress for teachers. This confusion and stress also denote a lack of connectedness to multicultural education through poetry, a lack of inclusion of the indigenous perspectives, contents and cultures within classrooms, and leads to the non-fulfillment of the curricular expectations. This is because teachers who are not guided by the curriculums, might not know how to include local Indigenous content or might not be proficient in fostering the skills that are important for a multicultural environment such as empathy and intercultural communication. With respect to the numerous expectations listed in the ON curricula with the provision of numerous examples and prompts, the implication is that partial inclusion of competencies in the classroom, and a lesser scope for innovation and creativity for teachers. With respect to fostering multicultural education, the implication of ON curricula's many expectations as well as numerous examples and prompts is a visible gap between different opportunities given to learners, determined by teacher's knowledge and access to multicultural texts, and a superficial addressing of various important areas in the classroom. Lastly, the exclusion of any definitive multicultural contents in both BC and ON poetry curriculums may imply cultural appropriation and prejudice among various diverse groups.

Chapter Seven

Significance, Limitations and the Way Forward

Introduction

In this thesis, I have sought to explore multicultural poetry in secondary school English Language Arts curriculums of British Columbia (BC) and the English curriculums of Ontario (ON). With the research question – how (if at all) are the English Language Arts curricula of BC and the English curricula of ON that focus on poetry, influenced by multiculturalism? – my aim was to study the strengths and weaknesses of both the curricula, particularly with their focus on multiculturalism and evaluate the existing gaps with respect to their promotion of multiculturalism through poetry. Adopting a critical pedagogy lens, I have analyzed the key strengths and weaknesses of both the secondary school poetry curricula and based on the inclusion of multicultural education through poetry, examined the gaps and its significant implications. In this concluding chapter, I will begin by summarizing my findings, followed by stating the significance of the findings of this study to the English Language Arts curricula of BC and ON, teacher education programs, and Canadian policy on multiculturalism in general, and lastly I will consider the limitations of this study and possible steps for further research.

Brief recap on how poetry curriculums supports multiculturalism

The secondary school English Language Arts curriculums of BC and the English curriculums of ON that focuses on poetry, indeed foster multiculturalism. The BC secondary school English Language Arts curricula, with its focus on poetry, includes core competencies which foster intercultural communication skills among students, and incorporates big ideas that pave way for empathy, collectivism, Freirean critical consciousness and praxis,

appreciation of oral traditions of the First Peoples, promotion of social justice, flexibility, and creates an interdisciplinary space for both teachers and students to indulge with multiple knowledge bodies. The expression of one's feelings and emotions through poetry and the understanding of others' expression, fosters intercultural communication wherein students communicate with the members of other cultures without discrimination and with profound respect and empathy. Likewise, the role of *big ideas* in stimulating empathy through poetry, promoting collectivism, enabling students to critically analyse their reality with multiple perspectives, and allowing students to become engaged citizens as well as educated social beings through poetry is important for multiculturalism.

The secondary school ON English curricula focused on poetry, promotes student autonomy, critical classroom discussions, and interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. Student autonomy is promoted due to the availability of a large pool of courses – such as specialisations in poetry, creative writing, general English, and university or workplace preparation English. Inclusion of various prompts, examples and real-life based themes and discussions enable critical classroom discussions, which is an important step towards multicultural education. Lastly, interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, promoted by the secondary school ON English curricula focused on poetry fosters multiculturalism by preparing students to be anti-discriminatory, giving them a representational space, and allowing them to work for social justice.

Brief Recap on Gaps within the English curriculums

Even though both BC and ON curriculums foster multiculturalism, there are some gaps that need to be addressed within the curricula due to their serious implications on the policy. The flexibility of the BC curricula with the lack of teacher prompts and the vagueness

around its implementation which implies confusion and stress for teachers, means the non-fulfilment of the expectations of the BC curricula towards multiculturalism.

With respect to ON curriculums, ironically, the numerous expectations with the addition of numerous examples and prompts listed for teachers imply partial inclusion of competencies within the classrooms and lesser scope for innovation and creativity for teachers. This is because due to the crowding of the curriculums, teachers will superficially address certain topics in the classrooms and instead of bringing innovative ideas to the classroom, choose to settle with the existing knowledge body. Lastly, challenging classroom environments due to cultural appropriation, and the inclusion of cultural knowledge body of the dominant groups in the classroom, as a result of the dearth of specific multicultural contents for teachers, is a serious gap for both BC and ON poetry curriculums.

Significance of the Findings

The findings of this study indicate the importance of poetry in promoting multiculturalism through secondary school curricula and recognize teachers' crucial role in fostering multicultural skills among their students in both BC and ON. Even though these findings are only from two distinct provinces of Canada – BC, from the west of Canada and ON, a central province – I consider these findings contribute towards the greater literature of Canadian multiculturalism through education. I also consider the findings of this study are crucial for teacher education programs, policy makers and curriculum developers. The significance of the findings of this study will be further elaborated in this section based on three different areas – on the English Language Arts/English curriculums of BC and ON, on teacher education programs, and on Canada and its policy on multiculturalism in general.

Significance of the Findings on English Language Arts Curricula

This study is of profound importance to the English Language Arts/English curriculums of BC and ON. While the findings of this study suggest that the English Language Arts curricula, with its inclusion of poetry is a beneficial tool for fostering multiculturalism, through the discovery of certain gaps and its impacts, the study also informs an urgent need to reform the existing curricula of BC and ON. Curriculum analysis studies like these, are definitely crucial for policy makers to recognize the strengths of the existing curricula, while also considering ways to improve its ongoing implementation process.

By finding the unique potential of both the curricula in promoting multiculturalism through poetry and looking deeper into the implications of certain gaps, this study, in the words of Jackson (2017) informs curriculum developers and policy makers to adopt a systematic approach to curricular reform, wherein they must frequently connect with every stakeholder of education in order to facilitate multicultural education in classrooms. This study reflects the importance and need of regular consultations of policy makers and curriculum developers with diverse students, educators and parents, in order to address various gap areas that it successfully gauged. On these lines, I would also maintain Setyono & Widodo's (2019) claim of recognizing the function of textbooks which incorporate multicultural representations, as an entry-level support for multicultural education through poetry in the classrooms. Textbooks, together with regularly supplemented contents can be one of the most important tools in addressing the current gaps within the BC and ON English curricula. However, only when policy makers frequently connect with various stakeholders of education, biases and prejudices from within the adopted contents can be recognized and a

critical awareness of diversity be established among students (Jackson, 2017). Thus, the findings of this study are important for English Language Arts/ English curricula of BC and ON as it informs the policy makers and curriculum developers of various existing practices as well as various practices that need reformation.

Additionally, this study informs how the curricular documents of BC and ON specifically focus on harnessing various core competencies through poetry that aim towards fostering multiculturalism among students. Indeed, poetry is considered a vital tool for language acquisition due to its provision of opportunities for students to quicker memorisation and language learning through its richer vocabulary and metrical style (Wolf, 2018; Dahami, 2018) while also significantly contributing towards cognitive development of an individual (Jovanović, 2020; Barnes-Holmes et al., 2018). Combining this important aspect of poetry with the findings of this study, one can infer the substantial nature of poetry within the English Language Arts classrooms. Thus, for English Language Arts curricula, this study presents an important tool in the form of poetry for the successful promotion of multicultural education in the classrooms.

Significance of the Findings on Teacher Education programs

Taking into consideration the importance of poetry for English Language Arts, I consider teacher education programs must not shy away from giving due importance to poetry and its promotion of multicultural education. The findings of this study are significant when understood in terms of teacher education programs for both pre-service and in-service teachers because, even while the official education policy of BC and ON is that of promoting multiculturalism through education (George, Maier & Robson, 2020), currently the in-service teacher education programs and professional training and development programs of BC and

ON, superficially introduce multiculturalism for teachers (Miled, 2019), meaning the emphasis is more on subject specific knowledge body. To teacher education programs and teacher educators, this study is then an important assessment of the present-day classroom requirements for multicultural education in an English classroom. For instance, teachers need to know and learn the importance of poetry over other literary genres when it comes to certain competencies such as intercultural communication through the expression of one's emotions and feelings in the classroom. While the curriculums of BC and ON include multicultural poetry within its purview, it is only through teacher education programs and development programs that teachers can be made aware of different practices and contents that they may use in classrooms. As a result, this study informs the importance of including poetry in the classrooms so as to foster both language learning competencies as well as multicultural competencies. Thus, because this study points out the crucial role teachers are expected to play in executing flexible curriculums which foster the multicultural competencies in English language curriculums, teacher education programs will benefit from the findings of this study.

Another very important area to which this study contributes in terms of teacher education programs, is the understanding of the importance of preparing teachers to be able to change curricula based on recognizing perspectives of multiple cultures (Tabatadze & Gorgadze, 2017). This means instead of teachers being perplexed in a multicultural environment or while dealing with multicultural education (Miled, 2019), this study prompts teacher education programs and teacher educators to fill the gaps due to which teachers are not fully able to exercise their autonomy in a multicultural setting.

Significance of the Findings on Canadian Multiculturalism

While in academia, it is a proven theory that simple poetry such as nursery rhymes are an effective means for language acquisition (Mittal, 2016), this study explores the enhanced usage of poetry beyond its language learning capabilities and delves into its ability to promote multicultural education in classrooms (Hanauer, 2003). Multiculturalism in Canada is an official governmental policy which recognizes, supports and encourages ethnic, racial, linguistic, cultural and religious diversity (Brosseau & Dewing, 2009). This study, while looking at multiculturalism through poetry in BC and ON explores the representational space for students where they get connected with various core competencies that are required to survive in a multicultural world. It is by exploring this representational space, that this study becomes significant for Canadian multiculturalism policy. The findings of this study reveal poetry's unique nature which allows students to interact with the diversity around them that prepares them to learn, express and harmoniously co-exists with the diverse sections of the society.

As an example, currently the students in Canada hailing from war-torn countries who are already in the risk of poor mental well-being with immense trauma associated to their past life, face discrimination in Canadian schools and in the society in general, resulting into depression and stress (Walker & Zuberi, 2020). This study informs us that the provision of multicultural poetry in classrooms can allow students to be empathetic towards each other and promote better intercultural communication amongst them, which in turn is significant to the bigger picture of Canadian multiculturalism. This is because students from a young age can get connected to multicultural education which can further help reduce instances of discrimination in the Canadian societies. For instance, by intercultural communication skills

and empathy through multicultural poetry, students can better learn to communicate to refugee students.

On the other hand, this study also recognizes a few gaps in both BC and ON curricula, which are important to be addressed in order to positively connect students with multicultural education. In the words of George, Maier & Robson (2019, p. 13), “multiculturalism has offered a safer, more palatable vocabulary for discussing uncomfortable subjects like racism and immigration, but in so doing, has blurred harsh realities about marginalisation and racialization in this country and its education system”. I consider this gap between the narrative of multiculturalism and the actual harsh realities of the Canadian societies as an area that can be addressed only through policies in education that can potentially empower educators to facilitate a multicultural classroom.

As education is a very important aspect of any society, education that fosters a multicultural environment is vital for countries like Canada with a huge multicultural population. This study, which reflects upon the curriculums and educational processes of BC and ON, gives a general outline of Canadian multicultural education system as a whole. It is at this juncture that this study becomes significant for the greater literature on how English curriculums can contribute and support an understanding of Canadian multiculturalism.

Limitations of the study

Due to the nature of my research question, this thesis was limited to studying poetry from within the English Language Arts curricula of BC and the English curricula of ON. This qualitative research only studied multiculturalism in poetry from this one specific subject area – English Language Arts in the case of BC, and English in the case of ON. However, it is also possible that multicultural poetry could be studied from within other subjects available

for secondary students of BC and ON, such as Arts Education, English as Second Language, Social Studies and Humanities, French, Interdisciplinary Studies, Canadian and World Studies, and Native Studies. This is because multicultural poetry is a subject area inclusive of additional competencies than just the language learning competencies within English Language Arts and is not limited to studies in English language alone.

Some of these additional competencies we looked in this study include intercultural communication skills, empathy, Freirean consciousness and praxis. Poetry from a specific era or by specific poets can be found as a major content area by teachers while teaching French, English as Second Language, or Arts Education. In subject areas like Social Studies and Humanities, Interdisciplinary Studies, Canadian and World Studies, and Native Studies, poetry can be found in specific texts that represents a particular culture's prominent work or in other texts pertaining to diverse cultures. For instance, the religious texts of Hinduism and Sikhism are composed as poems. Thus, this study was limited to exploring poetry from within the subject area of English Language Arts in the case of BC and English in ON.

Areas for Future Research

Taking in account the limitations of this study, an immediate area for future research is, studying multicultural poetry within other subjects taught in BC and ON secondary classrooms. This is important because, as discussed in the limitations section, poetry as a subject area may be used in the classrooms to nurture competencies other than the core competencies for language learning. Moreover, on similar lines, a comprehensive study of the curriculums including all subjects in a single study can also be conducted in order to explore multicultural education taught through poetry. This can be done as a conceptual document analysis or by taking into account the perspectives of educators from BC and ON.

Another important consideration for future research is to review the assessment policies for multicultural poetry at the school and provincial levels for each province of Canada. This study can delve into the presence or absence of standardized exams not limited to the English Language Arts curricula. This study can further encourage curriculum developers and educators to approach topics related to multiculturalism in classrooms.

Thirdly, the larger influence of British poets, specifically Shakespearean poetry in the Canadian curriculums (Colarusso, 2017) needs to be studied in order to evaluate the scope for the inclusion of local Indigenous poetry and poetry of other diverse groups.

Lastly, from a multicultural point of view, a study to recognize the curricular contents used in the classrooms by different teachers, would be a great way for me to further add to the research findings of this study. One hypothetical way to conduct this study can be by taking the perspectives of teachers into account through interviews and questionnaires and study the content area vis a vis the curricular recommendations. This can be done, to address within a multicultural setting, what Dharker (1994) writes,

There's always that point where
the language flips
into an unfamiliar taste;
where words tumble over
a cunning tripwire on the tongue;
where the frame slips,
the reception of an image
not quite tuned, ghost-outlined,
that signals, in their midst,
an alien.

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