

TIME, LABOUR, TEXTS:

NEW ENGLISH TEACHERS' SELECTIVE USE OF INSTRUCTIONAL DOCUMENTS

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to examine how new Saskatchewan secondary school English Language Arts teachers, under the pressure of substantial time demands, make decisions about what texts and corresponding instructional practices to use in their classrooms. The intent of this analysis is to understand why new English Language Arts teachers regularly reuse curricular materials from their colleagues and embed them in instructional practices that often run counter to their espoused philosophies of education. My analysis of this process of the reproduction of texts and practices in new teachers' classrooms is anchored in a critical sociological perspective of schooling. I examine the relation between seemingly liberal provincial policies of teacher autonomy and curricular implementation, the role of time demands on the use of curricular materials, and the connection between the need for resources and structural demands on teacher work. I conclude by arguing the need for further research into the circulation of physical resources in schools and their impact on teacher instruction.

Keywords: critical pedagogy, new teachers, labour intensification

For contemporary teachers, professional autonomy and decision-making have become key issues in the fight for establishing legitimacy. The struggle over who makes what decisions about classrooms is central to the current conditions of teaching in an era when the very concept of professionalization is now beset on all sides by a bevy of accountability structures, testing regimes, and scripted curricula. Together, these developments simultaneously deprofessionalize teaching—moving it from a form of creative and critical symbolic labor to the reproduction of packaged goods and pedagogies—and circulate huge swathes of mass-produced instructional documents, from tests to worksheets to professional development materials, imbedding local teaching in large global publishing networks (Leander, Phillips, & Taylor, 2010). These networks of circulating materials—papers and documents and policies—participate in a multi-scaled political economy of teaching. Further, longstanding ideologies of teaching as a recontextualizing occupation, rehearsing and repurposing official knowledge through long-hardened instructional technologies—most prominently the Initiate-Respond-Evaluate classroom interactional structure (Rampton, 2006)—mean that despite years of curricular reform, technological integration, and the influence of critical pedagogy in colleges of education across North America, classrooms look and feel very similar to previous generations (Cuban, 2008).

This article seeks to address these issues by focusing on a narrow site of educational reproduction: the (re)use of traditional or routinized instructional documents in the classrooms of critically-oriented educators. Why do teachers, even those educated in critical traditions, often turn to traditional or uncritical teaching practices when they close their classroom door? How does the “small-scale traffic of texts across time and space” (Kell, 2011, p. 607) participate in a local political economy of teacher labor? While this kind of instructional reproduction has a number of expressions, the intent of this analysis is to understand why new English Language Arts teachers regularly reuse curricular materials from their colleagues and embed them in instructional practices that often run counter to their espoused critical philosophies of education. In doing so, I wish to

look to a fundamentally local political economy of the circulation of resources—instructional documents—in order to reanimate *time* as a central construct in understanding teacher work.

To these questions, I turn to a qualitative case study conducted in high schools in an unlikely place: the rural Canadian province of Saskatchewan. In this article, I use data from an inquiry into Canadian English classrooms to foreground the necessity to rethink the local political economy of teacher labor with regards to critical pedagogy, and to ask critical pedagogues to consider what we're asking of teachers. Unlike many of their American counterparts, high school English teachers in Saskatchewan are free to make a range of curricular decisions about what goes on in their classrooms, including what texts to use, what literature to teach, and how to assess students' performance. The two colleges of education—University of Saskatchewan and University of Regina—are both explicitly centered on social justice pedagogy and “committed to enacting social and ecological justice, indigenization, sustainability, cultural and linguistic diversity, life-long learning, service, outreach and the collaborative processes that flourish in a community of caring and mutual respect” (University of Regina, 2015).^{*1} Bolstered by strong teacher unionization that has helped construct a professional environment that values professional autonomy, Saskatchewan teachers are relatively unburdened by the prescriptive mandates of scripted curriculum, mandatory texts, or litigious assessment oversight, burdens widely prevalent in US contexts (Shannon, 2007). The Saskatchewan Ministry of Education's English Language Arts (ELA) curriculum provides spare guidelines through broad foundational objectives, and potential curricular trajectories through sample unit plans, but teachers are granted substantial autonomy and freedom regarding choices of materials and instructional approaches (Saskatchewan Education, 2000). ELA courses are ‘resource-based’, meaning no textbooks are stipulated for any ELA class; consequently, students in one teacher's room may read and use an entirely different set of texts from the same

^{*1}In Saskatchewan, these two colleges of education hold a virtual monopoly on teacher education, preparing teachers through coursework and clinical experiences for licensure.

course offered directly across the hallway. What some have deemed *a critical whole language* philosophy undergirds much of this framing: holding together the notions that reading “is both a social practice and a meaning-making process” and making “whole language live up to its liberatory potential [by]...highlighting the relationship of language and power” (Edelsky, 1999, p. 17). Given this professional context, one would expect to find different teachers utilizing a range of instructional approaches that vary widely from traditional, worksheet-based pedagogies, particularly among those new teachers who espouse overtly critical whole language pedagogies in congruence with the local colleges of education.

This article attempts to account for the seemingly ironic counter-finding of this research: that new teachers who begin their careers using politically-charged, discussion-based pedagogies in the spirit of critical whole language pedagogy begin to deploy worksheet-based curricular materials received from their colleagues within months of starting work. By worksheet-based or traditional curricular materials, I mean instructional documents that embody particularly teacher-centered subject positions (Freebody, Luke, & Gilbert, 1991) by directing and standardizing interactional patterns (e.g., Initiate-Respond-Evaluate interactions with students) or students’ interactions with texts, often by limiting interactions to demonstrations of literal understanding by filling in boxes with ‘correct’ answers or answering multiple choice questions based on text content.

In a policy landscape which allows teachers to envision and create their own units and curricular materials, and where teachers are encouraged to enact “social and ecological justice,” my particular concern is in the process that facilitates the continual circulation of packaged, pre-prepared, and heavily-structured curricular materials (Luke, 2004), often in the form of multiple-choice questions, grammar worksheets, and fill-in-the-blank photocopied papers used in a manner devoid of the sort of progressive, critical political approaches to literacy and language espoused by many new teachers. Wherein literacy scholars have articulated rethinking classrooms less as contained and bounded spaces and more as sites of trajectories and flows (cf., Leander, Phillips, & Taylor, 2010)—including trajectories

and flows of instructional documents—I wish to combine this insight with a critical appraisal of the impact of labor conditions on circulation and replication. And where others have examined English teachers choosing instructional documents by way of Foucauldian analyses (Greig & Holloway, 2016), my discussion of new teachers’ work is framed within the classic concept from the (neo)Marxian educational literature, “labor intensification” (Marx, 1906/2011), to explain how overwork and a dearth of available resources influence the circulation of particular instructional documents.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: TEACHER WORK AND LABOR INTENSIFICATION

Despite the voluminous research on teacher retention rates, the value of critical teaching practices, and the challenges facing new teachers, more research is needed to specifically address the day-to-day construction of instructional documents within new teachers’ classrooms in relation to the time demands posed by being a new teacher. This omission is significant, both to critical pedagogues seeking to understand how to sustain critical teaching practices in the early days of teaching and to policy makers interested in the implementation of curriculum (including seemingly liberal curriculum like the Saskatchewan ELA framework). To address this issue, I turn to the concept of labor intensification: *more work in less time*.

Commenting on the changing industrial context in England, Marx writes in *Capital: Volume One* (1906/2011) that of the strategies available and necessary to capitalists in extracting surplus-value from workers, labor intensification is among the most potent. Described as the “substitution of a more intensified labour for labour of more extensive duration”, Marx situates the necessity for this labor strategy against worker self-organization, wherein social norms have limited the extension of the work day beyond what is reasonable:

The immoderate lengthening of the working day...leads to a reaction on the part of society, the very sources of whose life is menaced; and thence, to a normal working day whose length is fixed by law. Therefore... the intensification of labour, develops into a great importance. (p. 447)

In short, this amounts to more work in less time, and for teachers and teacher labor organizers, this rings painfully true for the contemporary school context, and reminds us of the centrality of time and time constraints in this form of analysis. Given the (relative) victories of North American teacher labor organizing over the last hundred years to secure a living wage; relative professional autonomy; and reasonable working hours, “a normal working day whose length is fixed by law”, the response has been to increase the volume of work required during the fixed working day. One need only spend a day shadowing a teacher to see this at work, or to see how much of this intensification is mediated by the proliferation of paperwork, much of it of a highly bureaucratic nature—personalized learning plans, attendance forms, standardized tests—all of which embeds these labor conditions in higher-scaled processes of circulation (Brandt & Clinton, 2002). As such these various labor victories have had a (quasi-)pyrrhic quality insofar as they have been contravened by massively increased workloads, in part to smooth over contradictions in the ongoing manufactured ‘crises of education,’ and corresponding deprofessionalization of teaching itself (Kumashiro, 2008) through the long transformation of schools into bureaucracies.

It was Michael Apple who brought the concept of labor intensification most explicitly into the educational literature. Writing against the hardline social reproduction and correspondence literature of the 1970s/80s (both American and French varieties), one of Apple’s principle contributions was in translating the critical economic research of Harry Braverman (1974) to an educational audience. Bridging Braverman’s Weberian analysis of the increasing bureaucratic overlay of working relations— “the relentless penetration of corporate logic into the organization and control of day-to-day life in the workplace” (Apple, 1980, p. 51)—with schools, Apple sees the skilling/deskilling of white, blue and pink collar workers as a parallel process to the skilling/deskilling of teachers, as decision-making is moved further and further away from the site of production: in this case, the classroom: where “the chronic sense of work overload that has escalated over time” (1989, p. 41). Alongside degrading worker sociality by stripping away downtime, labor intensification has the

capacity to erode the quality of the work itself. Contemporarily, the marketization of materials and schools by way of voucher programs and charters, universal standardized achievement tests on which the fates of teacher tenure or the schools themselves hang, growing behavior management programs and compensatory programming (Reading Recovery, speech pathology, ESL programming, Reading First, scripted curricula) and accompanying paperwork mount cumulatively: all of these add to the increasing overwork of teachers by administrators and policies in increasingly globalized contexts which seek to extract more and more value from teachers' labor in a narrowing amounts of time (see also Shannon, 2001 on alienation and reification in teacher labor). Of most concern for my argument is the relation between labor intensification and the transformation of teachers into Marx's well-trodden 'commodity fetishists': that is, the (textual) commodity itself—papers and worksheets and packaged instructional outlines—comes to be understood as having capacity in and of itself, capable of transforming classrooms and alleviating educational woes. Luke (2004) describes the “increased usage of packaged and commodified instruction, reinforcing worksheet pedagogic practices” (p. 1426) as a direct outcome of contemporary labor intensification, a “retrograde recommodification of knowledge... with packages, tests, and standardized pedagogic sequences seen as enabling... simple occupational survival” (p. 1428).^{2*} For teachers in system wherein resources circulate by way of administrative fiat, this can have a profound impact on day to day instruction.

^{2*} Shannon (2001), in one of the few sustained Marxian critiques of the commodification of American literacy programming, offers the general processes of 'reification' and 'alienation' in education—products of the standardization and synchronization of teacher work as an extension of capitalist logics into education—as the culprits in teachers' general acceptance in the programs. However, amidst this robust critique, Shannon never addresses time or labor intensification as core processes contributing to this general acceptance (in part positioning teachers as willing participants). Further, as Sennett (2006) outlines, what some have deemed 'late capitalism' is undergoing a substantial revision of cultures of predictability, efficiency, and certainty, making us rethink where teacher labor fits into this process.

METHODOLOGY

To understand these interconnected issues, I draw on data from a semester-long qualitative study into the relationship between local teaching labor conditions and the circulation of instructional documents in three Saskatchewan classrooms, focusing on the work conditions of new English teachers with a critical whole language perspective on instruction (Edelsky, 2006). All three participants—Barb, Henry, and Elle³—taught in rural or semi-rural schools in the province, had graduated from one of the two provincial colleges of education, and expressed a critical whole language approach in initial interviews.

CONTEXT

Saskatchewan is large prairie province, located in the Canadian West. Though currently going through a minor recession, in large part due to falling oil and gas prices, the past decade has been one of economic resurgence and subsequent population boom (Campbell, 2011). Historically, Saskatchewan has been an agricultural province. Immigration, population resurgence, and full provincial coffers have meant a restructuring of the local political economy, and in turn the education landscape. Recent economic gains have corresponded with increased neoliberal governmental policy, felt across the education, social services, and economic sectors. These include an increased willingness by the government to grapple with organized labor, including a revision of Essential Services legislation; lowering of indirect taxes; and the initiation of bi-lateral talks with other Western provinces to discuss the dismantling of economic barriers (Cameron, 2008). These new policies also include an alignment of schools with the demands of industry. However, Saskatchewan schools remain marked by a previous period of liberal curricular reform, nearly total teacher unionization, and a strong relationship between the colleges of education and the Ministry of Education.

PARTICIPANTS

All three participants were new English Language Arts teachers who had zero to one year of teaching experience prior to beginning this study. Reflecting the general demographics of the teaching population in rural Saskatchewan, all three participants were white and middle class. The two female teachers, Elle and Barb, worked in the same school.

Table 1

Participant Profiles

<u>Pseudonym</u>	<u>Barb</u>	<u>Elle</u>	<u>Henry</u>
<u>Age</u>	27	24	25
<u>School community</u>	Predominantly agricultural-resource-service	Predominantly agricultural-resource-service	Agricultural
<u>School type</u>	Catholic	Catholic	Public
<u>Approximate class size</u>	25	25	15
<u>Courses observed each observation</u>	ELA- 9 th Grade ELA- 10 th Grade ELA- 11 th Grade Social Studies- 9 th Grade	ELA- 11 th Grade EL- 12 th Grade Psychology- 12 th Grade	ELA- 9 th Grade ELA-10 th Grade ELA-11 th Grade ELA-12 th Grade Health- 9 th Grade
<u>Years of full-time teaching experience</u>	0	1	1

Barb, Henry, and Elle all agreed to participate in this study in part as an exploration of their own professional trajectory and in part as an inquiry to their own frustrations with the workload in the early years of their teaching career, marking this work as a form of collaborative teacher research (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Kincheloe, 2002).

DATA COLLECTION

Over the course of the semester, I conducted multiple semi-structured interviews with each participant, focused on instructional decision-making and in particular on the selection of instructional documents in their classrooms. Alongside interviews, I engaged in participant observation in the participants' school, classroom, staff room, and conference rooms over the course of the Fall semester for approximately twenty hours with each participant. Four day-long observations were conducted over the course of the semester, and during each, I took lengthy structured field notes, focused on describing instructional activities and classroom documents (Castanheira, Crawford, Dixon, & Green, 2001). After Knobel (1999), I used a heuristic called Event Mapping to help separate instructional periods by transitions and teacher activity: an 'event' is defined as a "bounded activity around a particular topic on a given [school] day" (p. 8). Teacher action described in field notes was later coded in order to differentiate instructional activities by participation structures (lecture, whole group discussion, student seatwork, etc.). During my observations, I continually moved back and forth between lengthy descriptive field notes and event maps in order to thoroughly record teacher action and catalogue instructional activities by time and frequency.

DATA ANALYSIS

My data analysis centers on two primary questions:

1. From where do the instructional documents that teachers use in their classroom come?
2. Why did these teachers decide to use those documents and not others?

During my research period, I collected every instructional document the teachers used during classroom observations and many that I did not observe 'in action' but which were highlighted by teachers during interviews. These included handouts, unit exams, short stories, worksheets, and any instructional 'text' used to teach. I also collected

vast quantities of documents associated with curriculum and unit plans regularly used by the teachers during the coming semester.

The classroom teacher and I later coded documents in a collaborative process (Kincheloe, 2002). In subsequent interviews, documents from their classroom were presented to the teacher and coded by the document's original author. Codes eventually included the classroom teacher, colleagues, sample unit plans from the Saskatchewan ELA curriculum, online unit plans, fellow university students and classmates, and purchased curricular products. While I was concerned with the content of a text's use, notably through its recontextualization into new settings (Silverstein & Urban, 1996), for the purpose of this project I focus directly on the circulation and original production of the instructional document.

My document coding was linked to field notes that described the implementation of those documents, as well as interviews where participants were prompted to describe how they used (or intended to use) instructional documents. Ultimately, instructional documents that were coded as "routinized" were those that supported primarily teacher-directed instruction (e.g., fill-in-the-blank worksheets that accompanied lectures) or that led students through rote memorization or decontextualized fact recall (e.g., a list of twenty short answer questions following a short story that asked for students to rehearse information found in the text), divorced from broader social, cultural, political or economic contexts.

FINDINGS

Several key themes emerged from the data analysis that addressed the selection and circulation of instructional documents in new teachers' classrooms. Among these were themes related to (1) demands on new teachers' time directing curricular decision-making, and (2) the replacement of critical whole language-oriented self-prepared documents with colleagues' instructional documents. What follows is an overview of these findings, followed by a discussion of their significance and the need for further critical research to investigate the impact of circulating curricular resources in schools on teacher practice.

UNDER PRESSURE: DEMANDS ON NEW TEACHERS' TIME

All three teachers reported that pressure related to “time constraints,” “lack of time,” and “overwork” significantly altered their selection of instructional material, particularly as it related to self-prepared or ‘borrowed’ documents they were able to implement in their classroom. Before elaborating on the day-to-day manifestation of these constraints, which I frame through the classic critical term “labor intensification.” I first discuss how Barb, Elle, and Henry described the continual pressures of time and overburdened labor.

“Survival” was a frequent theme that arose during our conversations about work conditions. And whereas ‘survival’ is a longstanding trope in the sociology of education literature, notably as it is naturalized in research on teacher induction (cf., Woods, 2000), a critical stance on this emic category reveals the structuration of ‘survival’ by way of local and more broadly scaled labor conditions. All three teachers described their daily life as excessively time burdened, as overly preoccupied with the demands of their job, and regularly mentioned that the first year of teaching was so hectic and overwhelming that they felt as though their task was simply to “get by”, to “just survive.” One participant described their feeling of overwhelming exhaustion this way:

[I]t was the coaching, it was the stress... I’ve never ever known what it feels like to honestly have a hundred people want something from you in one day... And everyone of them needs and expects something from you.

Though new to the profession, each of the participants was expected to attend regular staff meetings, hold parent conferences, develop professionally through seminars and conferences, coordinate assessment with other members of their subject area, and coach a sport or supervise a school activity (in many cases, more than one) just as a more experienced teacher was expected to. While they claimed this overwork manifested in various portions of their day such as staff meetings, extracurricular activities, professional development, etc., it was especially acute in their daily instruction. These represent, in many ways, classic time demands for new teachers (Renard, 2003),

though heavily intensified through new bureaucratic procedures (Apple, 1989).

Particular to Saskatchewan and its critical whole language curriculum was the incorporation of time demands by way of professional development and critical inquiry-focused curricular development meetings, which ironically contributed to the production of more routinized lessons by equally overly burdening teachers. That is, while teacher autonomy had been bolstered by way of collective labor organizing a generation prior, liberalized curricula provided new forms of internal labor intensification. Henry was especially vocal about these meetings and development opportunities as providing additional time pressure:

We talked about [inquiry-based activities] almost ad nauseam at staff meetings [I]t was always a topic on the agenda [T]he administration in the school is gonna come into your classroom ... and say, okay what are we doing for inquiry?

Given the mounting daily pressures on their time—prepping 4-5 full lessons each day and collecting resources to enact those lessons, alongside professional development and routine paperwork—each participant was adamant about the need to make lessons that were just “good enough,” that “didn’t try to reinvent the wheel”, and that fit pre-described or traditional models of instruction they had experienced as students themselves in order to be completed before the coming lesson; that is, the liberalized curriculum, which carved out curricular autonomy, sent them back to relatively familiar ground in search of the familiar and understandably quicker. After a particularly arduous day, Barb admitted:

I honestly had a hysterical breakdown. And I said to my husband, if this takes three to five years for a teacher to not feel like this, sign me out now. I’m done. And he laughed, he’s like, no you’re not, cause you’re not a quitter and I know you’re not. But I (.) Monday night, it was really tough for me to get up and come here Tuesday morning and I’ve never had a day like that. And that was the one thing I said at the end of internship, there were

hard days but there was never a day where I woke up going, God don't make me go there.

Preparing lessons for the coming day—notably the burden of producing their own instructional documents, lesson and unit plans—preoccupied Barb, Elle, and Henry in ways that regularly affected what types of documents found their way into their classroom. This seemed to be a particular manifestation of the constraints found in the Saskatchewan curriculum. The province's ELA curriculum's unique open-ended construction, broad objectives with no prescribed method for how to instruct them, and lack of universal procedures, no prescribed texts, questions, or activities, meant that new teachers were under an enormous strain, especially in the first few months of their career, to create, collect, and borrow resources in order to have an instructional plan for their classes. Labor intensification, consequently, was complicit in engendering a particular kind of document in their classroom. Whereas teacher professionalization is regularly lauded as the counterpoint to forms of labor intensification and general neoliberalization of schools, here it had a pyrrhic effect, sending teachers back into the arms of the familiar, “reinforcing worksheet pedagogic practices” (Luke, 2004, p. 1462) as a seeming commodity solution to a labor problem.

Because so little had been provided to new teachers in terms of day-to-day instructional direction or physical materials, whether literary or resources in support of critical whole language instructional activities, teachers needed to prepare vast quantities of their own instructional material around units and lessons of their own devising. This became particularly onerous for new teachers assigned to classes outside of their subject area expertise and background. Henry describes his desire to create and use his own material in relation to a Health class he was assigned to teach:

I decided to [use a particular instructional activity] because of the materials that were available for the Health class. Health, as I've said before, is certainly not my specialty and anything that I have I get from stuff that's been left here by my predecessors... I don't wanna try to just teach from the binder. I want to avoid that where I can. I know that I can try to make it more interesting

and more relevant. But the reality is for me anyway that this is something that I don't know a whole lot about.

Each teacher worked diligently over the summer to prepare lessons and unit plans which, in their conceptualization, embraced a critical whole language orientation (Edelsky, 2006): localized curricular content developing from student interests, investigating the relation between power and language, concern with social change. All three teachers prepared on average one unit plan per class during the summer months, units that typically lasted the first month of school. As a result, by mid-October, teacher documents demonstrably shifted from self-prepared to those culled from various sources external to their classroom. By way of their ongoing labor intensification and the relative dearth of critical whole language resources available to them, the “small-scale traffic of texts across time and space” (Kell, 2011, p. 607) drew on a wholly different political economy of circulation, this one internal to the school itself (more on this in the following section). Time pressure, consequently had a direct impact on the flows and trajectories of instructional resources. This problem was only exacerbated for teachers like Henry who were teaching far outside areas of knowledge: with little direction, from the first day of class Henry relied on prepared instructional materials left behind by his predecessor. The pressure and immediacy of the next day's classes meant that what was implemented was often what was most easily implementable.

“IT'S ELEVEN O'CLOCK": CIRCULATING COLLEAGUES' INSTRUCTIONAL DOCUMENTS

New teachers receive their instructional resources through a complicated, circulating process (Silverstein & Urban, 1996), one heavily influenced by local school culture but equally by the labor intensification ongoing in the province. This process moves in a particular direction for new English teachers in Saskatchewan as a kind of pragmatic necessity, particularly in the early months of teaching. It should be reiterated here that the Saskatchewan curriculum contains only a paucity of resources for teachers, typically one or two sample units, requiring them to gather, filter, and cull texts, handouts, worksheets, and activities on their own, in hopes of creating

an eclectic and ‘resource based’ enacted curriculum (Saskatchewan Education, 1999). This means new teachers are particularly reliant upon the resources, notably textual (stories, handouts, etc.), from other teachers in their school. To this, the political economy of instructional documents leads to a circulation of materials from ‘inside’ the institution itself, all driven in response to the labor intensification of the liberalized curriculum.

A significant number of Elle’s resources were given to her during internship in the form of a flash drive, which had been copied en masse from her school’s online electronic ‘teacher drive’ and which contained all lessons, handouts, and ideas from teachers in that school in all subjects. Elle’s shelves were also filled with binders and folders, stuffed with stories, activities and questions, all of which had been photocopied from other teachers. The contents of these binders were varied, but the instructional approach implicit in the material was unmistakably routinized—asking little of students beyond the most basic recall of information immediately available in the text. Most pages contained a story, poem, or essay followed by a series of comprehension questions or a brief worksheet for students to complete and hand in for evaluation. Perhaps most startling, many of the texts had been around since the 1980s (literally facsimiles of facsimiles), highlighting the circulating inner textual economy of this school and the division. When asked about the content of the binders, she described them as, “story, questions, story, question, story, questions, assignment, story, story, questions ... all the readings are laid out ahead of time, all the questions are prepared ahead of time.” Elle admitted that these handouts were rarely of interest to her, but became a regular part of her classroom routine by necessity. This format—stories followed by a series of multiple choice or short answer questions that were largely limited to direct-from-text responses—was replicated in Henry and Barb’s borrowed instructional material as well. Elle laments that while her critical whole language commitments lead her to reject these kinds of routinizing materials, utility and convenience led her to adopt several units whole cloth from other teachers:

I find personally that I can't buy [instructional material] out of the store. I look at the questions and they're all comprehension based and they're all ridiculous. I would never use store purchased materials. However, when I first got here, that was the resource that I had for *To Kill a Mockingbird* to use.

This kind of 'textual' appropriation was not limited to Elle, though she did have some of the most explicit examples of it. For example, Elle's first teaching contract was a temporary maternity leave that began at the end of September, nearly six weeks after classes had started. All five of her English classes were already in the midst of novel studies, the routine for which was almost exclusively limited to spelling tests, questions on overhead transparencies, and teacher-directed oral questioning. Not wanting to transition the students away from the established routine and burden herself with even more work, Elle continued on with the former teacher's novel study plan, admitting, "I don't think I even opened the curriculum because when I came in, they had already started for me." Elle used the previous teacher's resources in total and rarely strayed from the instructional plan already determined by her predecessor.

Barb's resources were also culled from her colleagues and delivered to her students in a blended form with her own material. Barb did create her own handouts, forms, and worksheets, but these were all heavily supplemented with resources she had 'at hand', and which had been provided to her via internship or in the early days of teaching. Here she describes the pragmatic melding and hewing to which she had to daily attend in order to satisfy classroom demands:

It's eleven o'clock and if I don't go to bed I'm not gonna get up in the morning to meet my carpool. ((laughs))... So I guess I better photocopy it and be done with it... And it's funny because I sit at home stressed and when I'm getting stressed out about how many hours this takes, and my husband asks me, he said, are there other teachers there all day Saturday, all day Sunday? No. So why are you the only one? Like, how come this is so much harder for you? And I said, because this stuff is crap. And I'd rather spend all day Saturday changing it so that I think my grade 11 students will be a little bit more interested in it. You

know, I was given a binder and it was a correspondence unit for the grade 11 [English] unit. So it's (.) and the teacher that gave it to me said, it's great, it's ready to teach. And I'm looking at it and I'm going, ya, it's ready to teach and they're gonna hate me for it. They're gonna hate it.

So I spent four hours one night. I took (.) it's about media and there's an activity about reading a news article, reading an editorial and then they have samples. I'm like, those are terrible. So then I had to go find (.) I found a real news article about school and teenagers. And it was kind of fun for them because I found one from the [the local newspaper] two weeks ago about how school is not preparing students for what they need to be prepared for.

And so it gave them a chance to go, ya, and kind of get excited about it and talk about why they don't like school. I'm like, it's good, tell me why you don't like school. Do you agree with this article? But I had to go through and change, retype the entire handout and change it. You know? But I'd rather take the time to do that then give them something crap. Cause if I can't get through the story, how can I expect them to if I can't get through it?

This small exchange illustrates that Barb's instructional ideal is to teach a critical lesson on media discourse of schooling around broad personal themes such as students' perceptions of school structure. However, she articulates the time-consuming nature of creating new resources and the inherent temptation of borrowing a colleague's in the form of a text/resource/series of questions. In this particular case, Barb spent the most of the weekend ("all day Saturday, all day Sunday") preparing lessons that resonated with her teaching philosophy, but this was not always possible; numerous times, Barb demonstrated a willingness to use traditional resources or activities in her classroom out of pragmatic necessity. Some days "it's eleven o'clock" and the simplest move is to utilize the resources at hand in order to carry on with the day's work: In this case, the resources at hand are 'traditional' and uncritically ask students to simply rehearse known information.

Elle neatly summarizes the rationale for using borrowed materials from other teachers:

To make life easier for yourself. It's work. It's (.) are you prepared to reinvent handouts and reinvent assignments and essentially reinvent the wheel? In every single class, five classes all year round? Or are you going to (.) like I like to do pick and choose? Oh, I'm going to take and modify this, but I'm going to keep this exactly as it is.... So I'd say my style right now is that I pick and choose what I use. I've modified things, I create new things and I use things that have never been changed.

Teachers did not use handouts of a routinized type because of their relevance to the intended outcomes of the class, or because of their resonance with the teachers' own ideal of teaching critically. Rather, they were circulated because they were readily accessible and simple to implement. Blending purchased and borrowed instructional materials (and their corresponding implicit method of instructional delivery) with their own created documents, all three teachers demonstrated the complexity of English instruction, and the continual circulation of traditional materials through the schools.

CONCLUSION

Labor intensification fundamentally shaped the “small traffic of texts”—shifting the three participants over the course of a semester from utilizing self-generated critical texts and critical whole language pedagogy (Edeksly, 2006) to using pre-prepared texts from colleagues or commercially-derived materials. The particular burdens of first-year teaching, notably in a ‘resource curriculum’ where teachers were required to piece together materials themselves, coupled with the necessity for immediate materials for instruction, led all three participants to borrow vast quantities of standardized and traditional teacher-generated instructional documents from colleagues and a movement towards forms of instruction that require the least amount of work in order to enable teachers to move on to planning the next task. While the inherent flexibility and liberalization of the English curriculum would seemingly allow critical discourses and practices to flourish, the labor intensification inherent in that flexibility by the need

to gather texts, the need to plan lessons without significant guidance from the ELA curriculum, and the need to self-select texts without much structure meant routinized, uncritical instructional practices were simply reproduced in these new teachers' classrooms.

Understanding this process helps explain how three teachers with seemingly progressive philosophies of reading and instruction quickly replicated traditional, conventional, teacher-driven instructional patterns, using traditional, conventional teacher-driven instructional documents texts. In a province with an open-ended English Language Arts curriculum and provincial universities that are thoroughly supportive of classroom routines, activities, and textual approaches that resonate with critical and whole language approaches, it was perhaps surprising to witness new teachers increasingly utilizing traditional instructional texts and their accompanying pedagogies that are near facsimiles of their older colleagues. To that, an account of textual circulation is needed, in tandem with understanding curricular reform as a singular lever that is nonetheless embedded in a complex network of global and local trends.

Returning to the centrality of teacher professionalization—the ability to make instructional decisions and reframe teacher work as a form of craft—we can see tensions in the liberalization of curricula as a panacea. New teachers regularly use handouts, overhead transparencies, worksheets, unit plans, and other materials from their colleagues simply because of their availability—as a mechanism to buttress their classrooms against creeping labor intensification—even when such practices and texts directly contradict their philosophies of teaching or desires for their classroom. Lefstein (2002), in a sympathetic critique of progressive pedagogy's deconstruction of traditional teaching methods (and their disciplinary apparatus), notes that part of their failure to take hold in many schools (cf., Cuban, 2008) is in some respects because they have gone “without proposing an alternative classroom supervision theory” (p. 1627). I wish to build on this to suggest that critical whole language perspectives on classrooms and teacher professionalism have offered a profound critique of routinized classroom structures, but have yet to adequately theorize textual circulation and the politics of liberalized labor

intensification in light of their admirable gains. Further, while labor mobilization and professionalization in the province have restrained some of the more pernicious importations of bare economic logic into reading instruction—standardization and synchronization of instruction through reading curricula, scripting of instruction, efficiency mandates, and the general commodification of labor (Shannon, 2001, 2007)—it has yet to address the lingering issue of labor intensification. This has produced for classroom teachers a contradiction, the demands of time pulling against their own pedagogic commitments. If the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education or other progressive school districts are serious about maintaining an English curriculum that is open to a range of instructional approaches, then it is crucial they supply or provide avenues for new teachers to access a variety of critical, authentic, and local instructional resources. Further alternatives could include teacher organizing and teacher inquiry groups (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009), which work specifically toward alleviating forms of labor intensification in schools through collective action.

Whatever form it takes, future qualitative research is required to look into the movement and circulation of texts across schools and districts to help illustrate how critical pedagogy is supported by the availability of resources and diminished by their relative absence. Given the pragmatic necessities of the lives of new teachers and the need for substantive alternatives to the current course of schooling, we ignore these concerns at the peril of our field.

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