Abstract:

Many educators hope to facilitate certain political and philosophical ideologies through educational practise. But are their interests, and those of their subject, supported in official curricula? In researching the history of home economics education, I have found support for ecological understandings and social justice ideology. I recently applied Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to the 2007 official BC home economics curriculum, seeking to find the ideologies underpinning curricular discourse, hoping that such analyses would be useful for informing pedagogies and future curricular rewrites. My research (Johnson, 2015) uncovered neo-liberal ideology dominating language in the official curriculum. The presence of this ideology promoted a social hierarchy in which the interests of current government were foregrounded over passive and subordinate construction of educators and students. The declarative language and transmissive style of education that I found contradicted possibilities for social justice education. This conservative approach prevented transformative potentials among educators and students and reduced the personal obligation of these actors to safeguard wholism, equity and ecological health.

I propose to share my research findings, as well as to model how CDA can be applied to official and unofficial curricula. This could assist educators in better understanding the underlying ideologies and meanings present in the curricula they work with daily, and how such ideologies support or hinder professional aims.
Good morning! While my title is, “Critically investigating ideology underlying teaching practise” the real meaning of this is: Whose ideology are we teaching in our classrooms?

Is it the ideology we really want to teach?

Henry Giroux, an American founder of critical pedagogy, said that educators need to be wary of harmful effects of ideology on students. In the 1980s, Marjorie Brown and Eleanore Vaines opened up this discussion in the field of home economics. I recently tried to determine if the ideologies underlying home economics theory, such as ecological literacy, conceptual wholism, and social justice education, were present in BC curricula.

I am Ayala Johnson. I currently teach in the Saanich School District.

I have 3 main points for my talk today:

1. I will briefly summarize the methodology and research findings of my master’s studies, as it relates to the following point...

2. We will workshop on how to learn what ideologies are represented and underlying the language you use as educators, daily. We will use the research tool I used, CDA. This tool can be used on all that is semiotic, relating to language, communication, and text, including the official and unofficial curricula you use.

3. We will discuss how and why you could change the ideology underlying your teaching by simply changing the way you say things: the language you use, spoken or written.
First point: My master’s research

As I was saying, some decades ago, prominent home economics researchers, Eleanore Vaines and Marjorie Brown expressed concern that home economics ideological theory was inconsistent with what home economics educators taught and practised. Eleanore Vaines recommended ecology as a unifying theme for the field in order to reconnect the social justice and libertarian roots of the field to modern day practice. Though this recommendation has popularized in recent home economics scholarship, it is still not uncommon for outsiders to view the field as primarily addressing obscure information about casseroles, the biomechanics of yeasted breads, and how to sew together a simple pair of pajama pants.

Before we proceed, I want to offer you some quick definitions, for clarity’s sake:

- **Ecology**: this concept promotes the wholistic notion that everything on Earth is interconnected. Thus the actions we take in our daily lives are meaningful as they impact many other individuals (human and otherwise) and environments.

- **Social justice ideologists**: these educators try to correct injustices and inequalities they see promoted by dominant ideology, relating to how capital, privilege, and opportunity are distributed in society.

- **Liberatory ideologists**: try to transform and emancipate society by transforming understandings of reality, instead of being party to blanket acceptance of past and traditional learnings.

- **Neo-liberal ideology**: is present in education that aims first and foremost to benefit the market.

- **Ideology**: generally, is how thoughts are constructed and held by individuals in society - thus justifying and rationalizing existing social orders. Ideology is how we understand
the world, despite that we may be unaware that our understandings are only partial, relative truths.

Finally, official curricula, in this talk, is as that which is published by the government. At the time of my research, this was the 2007 IRP. Now it is transforming into ‘BC’s new curriculum’. Because of its legal mandate for application, official curricula have potential for spreading ideology: they represent what subject matter is considered important and considered unimportant, and they perpetuate ideologies that can shape and affect society when they are taught. If underlying ideologies are implemented along with curricula, there is potential for the perspectives and personal philosophies of students, educators, parents, and policymakers to be influenced in a specific direction - a direction which typically underlies the current dominant government political ideology, as this is what mandates education.

For my research, I specifically asked: What underlying ideologies are represented in the BC home economics IRPs? What are the implications of the representation of these ideologies for developing home economics curriculum through ecology as a unifying theme? Basically, what I strove to understand was how ideologies underlying the official curricula promoted or undermined the ecological, social justice, and libertarian intentions for the field.

To do this I studied the discourse, specifically the language used in the writing of the outgoing home economics IRP. I used a research tool called, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) because of its demonstrated ability to reveal underlying meanings and ideology in discourse, including text.
CDA can be used to analyze any type of discourse: spoken, inferred, and written. Because “people acquire, express and reproduce their ideologies largely by text or talk” (Van Dijk, 2006), it can reveal textual, or discursive tools that contribute to ideological representations.

Using it on official curricula was not an easy task since I am not a linguist! However, once found these tools, I put them in context by analyzing their meanings and implications for stakeholders. Due to my literature review findings, I expected to find that neo-liberal political undertones in educational discourses were common. This was concerning because market-driven undertones threatened socially just intentions. However, I needed evidence since there was little research published on this topic, relating to BC curricular ideology.

Overall, my research findings for the BC curriculum reflected more widely spread findings, that neo-liberal ideology dominated the political curricular landscape. I could go into great depth on this, but rather I will refer you to my thesis, if you fancy a light read. I would like to emphasise that it is important to question official curriculum documents so that the underlying values and beliefs do not become normalized.

In brief, I found that ecology was only minimally supported as a unifying theme in home economics curriculum. Also, the interests of provincial government were foregrounded and dominant; while educators and students were passively constructed. I recommended that future curriculum become more inclusive and transformative: re-connecting students and educators with the interconnected and wholistic nature of the world.
Now for the second part of this presentation, workshopping together on how to learn what ideologies underlie the language we use professionally:

You can use CDA on your official curriculum, be it BC’s New Curriculum, another provincial curriculum, your personal teaching documents, such as the handouts you use in the class, the way in which you speak with your students, and textbook literature. Experts on CDA include Norman Fairclough, James Paul Gee, Rebecca Rogers, and Teun A. van Dijk.

Additionally, we will look at how dominant ideologies can be transformed to become more socially just, simply by trying to change the way we speak and write.

Insert HANDOUT here (see following pages)

After handout:

In conclusion, it is my hope that eventually the government will get to where they should be to create a more socially just curriculum. In the meantime, we can set the example in our own classrooms.

Now it’s your turn to share, ask questions, or try these tools on this small excerpt from BC’s New Curriculum.

Thank you.

References
Critically investigating the ideology underlying teaching practice
Presentation by: Ayala Johnson
Session E | 11:05 – 11:25 | Room 208

Sample text from BC’s New Curriculum

Science 9
Applying and innovating
● Contribute to care for self, others, community, and world through personal or collaborative approaches
● Co-operatively design projects with local and/or global connections and applications
● Transfer and apply learning to new situations
● Generate and introduce new or refined ideas when problem solving
● Contribute to finding solutions to problems at a local and/or global level through inquiry

Science 9
Communicating
● Formulate physical or mental theoretical models to describe a phenomenon
● Communicate scientific ideas, information, and perhaps a suggested course of action for a specific purpose and audience, constructing evidence-based arguments and using appropriate scientific language, conventions, and representations
● Express and reflect on a variety of experiences, perspectives, and worldviews of place

How to use some tools of CDA
MICRO-ANALYSES
One: Transitivity
● Meaning/purpose: transitive verb processes are found to represent absolutism and certainty.
● Process: identify verb process in sentence clause as transitive and intransitive
● Identify:
  ○ Transitive verb process: has a direct object and identifies an action
    ■ Structure: subject / verb process / direct object
  ○ Intransitive verb process: has no direct object and identifies a state
    ■ Structure: subject / verb process
● Tip: to determine if the verb process is transitive, the question, ‘what?’ or ‘who?’ must be answerable.

Two: Grammatical Mood
● Meaning: predominant use of declarative language has been seen as an attack on teacher autonomy and tighter control of education that is common in governments where neo-liberal ideology dominates.
● Process: use transitivity to identify grammatical mood.
● Identify: the order and placement of the verb process is distinct for determining grammatical mood.
  ○ Declarative (making a statement) clause structure: subject precedes the verb as in transitive verb process
  ○ Imperative (giving an order) clause structure: transitive verb process / direct object (the subject is inferred)
  ○ Interrogative: questioning
Three: Nominalization
- **Meaning:** the process of representing worldwide processes as entities instead of processes is used to make them seem natural or normal; has an isolating and disconnecting effect; removes agency. It is associated with transmissive educational styles.
- **Process:** Identify through the presence of the ending ‘-tion’

Four: Content Analysis
- **Meaning:** consider which terms may be related to social justice and ecoliteracy conceptualizations
- **Process:** Choose relevant terms and count their frequency/inclusion

Findings from MICRO-ANALYSES (1 - 4):
- All sentence clauses are transitive
- All sentence clauses are declarative/imperative
- Nominalization is dominant, occurring in 5 of 8 sentence clauses

MACRO-ANALYSIS: What does this mean?
1. Literature suggests that transitivity, declarative/imperative language, and nominalization are all representative of neoliberalism, which is conceptually different from social justice ideology.
2. Text is absolute, offering no opportunity for resistance.
3. Text is transmissive, distancing the reader
4. Some socially just content words are present.

Changing the underlying ideology: How can we increase social justice ideology underlying discourse?
1. Use interrogative language whenever possible
2. Reduce or remove nominalization - rewrite nominalized terms as verbs to make them active and to increase agency and connection
3. See thesis: pp. 135 - 136 for further recommendations

Example:
Change: ‘Co-operatively design projects with local and/or global connections and applications’
...to: While cooperatively designing projects, how should/can/will you connect and apply them (and yourself) to your home and the greater world?

Now you try!