FOR ALL INTENTS AND PURPOSES: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE DISCOURSES OF GENERAL EDUCATION AT AN ONTARIO COLLEGE OF APPLIED ARTS AND TECHNOLOGY

Kerry Surman

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(Co) Supervisor:

Dr. Sharon Rich

Examiner(s)

Dr. Carmen Shields

Dr. Rosamund Stooke

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Marguerite Donohue

Dr. Susan Elliott-Johns

Dr. Tara-Lynn Sheffel

The dissertation by

Kerry Surman

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Dr. Lorraine Frost

Chair of the Examination Committee

Abstract

The Ontario college system's delivery of general education within its postsecondary credentials is guided by Appendix C of the *Binding Policy Directive Framework for Programs of Instruction for Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology in Ontario*. An understanding of this policy's history and its definition and purpose in light of Ontario's technical-education model led to the exploration of its interpretation at one college: In what ways might the policy of General Education be reflected in discourses at an Ontario College of Applied Arts and Technology? The selection of the methodology of institutional ethnography (IE) reflected the considerations of an interpretive critical poststructural approach to this question, including IE's particular use of the problematic and its potential for identification of multiple discourses. The texts of the transcripts from interviews conducted with fourteen informants, in conjunction with institutional documents, were examined for themes in a process that resembled interpretative phenomenological analysis (Walby, 2013) in its interest in the construction and interpretation of meaning. The discovery of these texts' themes was supplemented by an identification of the construction done by the language using Gee's (2005) framework. The subsequent characterization of the texts' dichotomous discourses permitted a tracing of the institutional workings and a map of the general education course outline review process that exemplified these workings. A critical analysis of the constitutive and constructive effects of these discourses of general education extended to a discussion of the disjuncture between different versions of reality and the effect of ruling relations on local actions from an IE perspective. This analysis has the capacity to explicate the social relations underlying the actual activities of academic life so that the participants in those actualities better understand their contributions to those relations and their co-constructed reality. Intervention and redirection of the discourses is made possible

through such understanding, and more reflexive research in an ongoing effort to resist institutional capture in terms of language, discourses, and actions is made possible through this research as text.

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Chapter 1: The Starting Point for The Research

The Ontario Ministry of Education passed legislation in the mid 1960s to establish a category of postsecondary educational institutions that emphasized vocational education in the form of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (CAATs). The *Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Act, 2002* subsequently gave these 24 CAATs the responsibility for autonomous program approval and development.

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) released the *Binding Policy Directive Framework for Programs of Instruction for Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology in Ontario* in 2003, defining the expectations for all credentials offered by the colleges, regardless of the funding source. On the advice of the college system that time and resources were needed to establish and implement effective structures to support this framework, the policy was revised to become effective in 2003. It was subsequently revised in 2009. While Appendix A of this policy outlined the credentials framework for programs of instruction, Appendix B outlined the Essential Employability Skills requirements for college credentials. Appendix C outlined the requirements for General Education (Gen Ed) in credentials in terms of themes and courses. It is Appendix C that is relevant to my research.

Appendix C declared that the purpose of general education was to "to contribute to the development of citizens who … are able to contribute thoughtfully, creatively, and positively to the society in which they live and work" (Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, 2005, p. 21). This purpose could be interpreted as a need for graduates to have more than just technical skills as they entered the workforce; the wording suggests the inclusion of breadth in what are often narrowly focused, vocationally-oriented programs of study. But the definition of breadth remained vague: whether this general education was intended to be liberal,

moral, or supportive of democratic citizenship is unclear – if these terms can even be considered synonymous. My curiosity regarding the intent and assumptions of general education in this policy was prompted.

In addition to the varied interpretations that could result regarding the intent and assumptions of this policy, leeway was granted to the colleges regarding its operationalization. While the policy outlined the requirements for the numbers of courses to be completed by category of credential and the themes to be covered by the courses, the colleges had flexibility in the composition, mandated or elective nature, and mode of delivery, among other factors. Over time, the operationalization of Appendix C has resulted in diverse implementation models and efforts across the 24 CAATs. In this study, I explore the implementation of general education at Fontanel, one of the CAATs established by the province, not for purposes of evaluation, but as a way of explicating the institutional relations intrinsic to the implementation. I employ the methodology of institutional ethnography to focus on one particular process for my data gathering and analysis.

In this chapter, I describe my standpoint in relation to general education as it is delivered at this one particular college of applied arts and technology. My standpoint leads to a discussion of my theoretical perspective as I undertake an exploration of general education within this single institution. I continue with a description of the context for the research, premised on my theoretical stance, as a foundation for presenting my research question.

My Standpoint in Relation to General Education

I selected Fontanel College as the site of this research due to my decade-long involvement in general education (Gen Ed) during my employment there. As a full-time employee of Fontanel, my involvement had taken the form of coordination of courses and of

part-time faculty; Gen Ed committee participation; curriculum design, development, and review; course teaching; and content development work for textbooks used in mandated Gen Ed courses at Ontario colleges, including Fontanel. I became involved with general education shortly after the *Binding Policy Directive Framework for Programs of Instruction* was revised in 2005 by the MTCU.

While my long involvement could, at first glance, be construed as unwavering commitment to the ideals and necessity of the policy and its enactment, this perception was not entirely accurate. My ambivalence regarding the Gen Ed requirement had been reflected in my inconsistent and, at times, seemingly uneven application of the policy. I resigned from the Gen Ed coordinator role and withdrew from the committee in frustration, only to return to the duties a year or two later. My troubled stance resulted from internal conflict based on a self-identification of the value that I placed on my own liberal arts education, my perception of Fontanel's vocational roots and mindset and its inconsistency with the aims of Gen Ed, and the professional ethic that I possessed in regards to student potential to engage in critical thought.

As a committee member, I participated in its biannual review of general education courses that were situated in programs undergoing Program Quality Review. Following its policy, Fontanel's Program Quality Review (PQR) is normally conducted every five years for all programs of study as one of three elements of program quality assurance at Fontanel that has been designed to align with various province-wide quality assurance and assessment initiatives. This review of the Gen Ed courses by the committee is informally known as the PQR blitz. I participated in this blitz several times over the years, although I ceased to be a member of the committee a year prior to beginning this research.

More than once, I recognized a sense that something chafed (Campbell & Gregor, 2008) while completing the review of the courses as a committee member. I was taking part in a blitz: "an intensive or sudden military attack", "a sudden, intensive, and concerted effort, typically on a particular task" (Blitz, 2016). The apparent need for suddenness and intensity was puzzling. The course outlines that were being reviewed were already being used to guide the curriculum of courses within the program undergoing PQR, having been approved at least six months before the academic year began. Furthermore, the course outlines performed as institution-level front-facing documents across all sections of a course, functioning as a contract between the learner and the college. The alignment between the course outlines and the documents used in the sections, not to mention the alignment between those documents and the online course management system that represented the curriculum as actually realized, was left unexamined, given that it was outside of the committee's scope.

While I began to question the necessity and the value of the biannual blitz, which in truth comprised a large part of the committee's workload, the definition, nature, and curriculum of a Gen Ed course also became less clear to me. The very label of general education pointed to these courses being a valuable category of learning for college students in pursuit of their education. The descriptor of 'general' would mean that these courses would cover material of wider interest and applicability beyond narrow program demands, and most would certainly agree – or at least refrain from denying – that Fontanel's students could only benefit from this sort of learning. From an ideological perspective at least, education is undeniably the mandate of every postsecondary educational institution. But I sensed some inconsistencies in my own beliefs as I fulfilled my various Gen Ed roles, for Fontanel was a college of applied arts and technology, and I reported to the chair of applied science and environmental technology, who in turn reported

to the dean of technology and trades. The faculty in which these Gen Ed courses were situated had a diverse portfolio dominated by programs traditionally perceived as the realm of a vocational college.

As the time passed and I participated in the blitzes, I saw course outlines that were being reviewed as part of their program's PQR looking much the same as they had five years prior when they last came up for review. Very little appeared to have changed as a result of the committee's recommendations to bring the courses more in line with the Gen Ed policy. I rarely ended up providing curriculum support to coordinators in my department to act on recommendations on the basis of the blitz's review, an expectation of committee members. In my various Gen Ed roles, I experienced and sometimes shared feelings of frustration and antagonism towards the policy with colleagues, administration, and students. I found the policy difficult to defend, the courses denigrated, the students resistant, and the faculty cynical to the point of being dismissive of the Gen Ed requirements, and I ended up suffering from what I labelled as 'split discourse personality disorder' (Surman, Notes from workshop, 2015) as I simultaneously saw the merits and the pitfalls in the activities that were considered the responsibility of the Gen Ed committee.

I hypothesized that the unease of this discourse disorder stemmed from my participation in the mixed messaging of conflicting discourses surrounding the Gen Ed policy. My discomfort ebbed and flowed depending on whom I was reporting to and whether we shared the same ideas about Gen Ed as an ideal or concept, and, more broadly and indeterminately, the goals of education. Despite my ability to nimbly navigate the Gen Ed landscape (e.g. if a course outline contained the words "issues" and "values", it was good enough to meet the policy's requirements

from a checklist perspective), I sought an opportunity to examine my discomfort through a more ordered analysis of the discourses through this research.

As I situate myself in relation to this topic, I recognize that while I participated in the social relations of the blitz, I perceived the wider relations of Gen Ed from several institutional locations. My standpoint is a blended one that has developed over time. My standpoint does not necessarily coincide with that of others: I am responsible for describing the discourses that represent other standpoints in an exploration of the social relations. I attempt to transcend my standpoint while acknowledging that where I stand determines what I can see. Reflecting critically on what I know from this embodied place in the institution illuminates my competence as a knower and as a one-time un-knowing constructor of the relations. As an institutional ethnographer, I trace beyond the boundaries of the local experiences at Fontanel to sites outside of the particular college setting to provide a wider institutional perspective. In this way, I build back into my analysis what I learn about the extra-local practices and their impact on local practices.

Theoretical Background to My Exploration of General Education

Drawing upon Stinson's (2009) exemplar of a deliberate theoretical eclecticism, I outline the three lenses that inform my approach and the ways that these theories bear on my conceptualizations. In the same way that the selection of the traditions is deliberate to ensure a robustness of scaffolding, the order of these lenses is purposeful: firstly as an interpretivist, then a criticalist, and then as a poststructuralist. This recursive cycling through of rationale (why do I think it so?) and theory (according to what lens?) permits an ongoing verification of congruencies – a fundamental and continuous process, given the impact on my methodology, my methods, and, ultimately, my findings. What I *can* and what I *will* find is premised upon these

decisions, and the ordering of these decisions, to conduct research as an interpretive critical poststructuralist (rather than as a poststructural criticalist, for example).

However, not only is there a political dimension to the theoretical identification, given that "theories frame our vision of the world as it was, is, and might be" (Sears & Cairns, 2015, p. 7), the politics continue into the particular features that I selected for the purposes of my research. I emphasize certain characteristics from each tradition while downplaying or ignoring others to further commensurability. Although the precise ingredients and their proportions shifted during the cycle of inquiry, I endeavored to remain conscious of the reasons for and the consequences of these selections, a reckoning that is encouraged through the identification of my research posture in Chapter 2.

My posture as researcher that results from these intersections provides the defense for my methodology and methods in Chapter 3. This interpretive stance is characterized as a "co-constructor of knowledge, of understanding and interpretation of the meaning of lived experiences" (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 196). My attention is focused on how the enactors of the policy understand and interpret the policy and their experiences with the policy. My criticalist stance is also that of a transformative intellectual (Guba & Lincoln, 2005), as I explore the ideological superstructures (Burrell & Morgan, 1979) with which we interact in the form of social relations. And finally, my poststructuralist stance is that of a guide to the choices available to participants in terms of veracity, accuracy, and adequacy of representation (Smith D. E., 1999). The language comprising the discourses of Gen Ed is unstable; as a researcher, I aim to illuminate some of that instability, and the reasons for it.

Context of the Exploration on General Education

The committee's review in the winter semester at Fontanel of one particular program's Gen Ed course outlines comprises the observable process for this research. Specifically, I focus on the checklist that is completed by the committee members as they complete the review of a program's Gen Ed courses: the checklist's materiality compels action, and therefore directs how and where I begin (Turner, 2015) when gathering data. The checklist can be seen to function as a pivotal text of institutionally organized work that occurs before, during, and after its completion. This perspective is premised on an ontology of the social (Smith D. E., 1987) arising from an ongoing organization of actual practices of real individuals – a social construction of reality. This everyday world is organized by social relations that are not fully apparent in it, nor contained within it (Smith D. E., 1987). I explore both the apparent and the less apparent social relations, some of which are local and others extra-local, as I focus on this pivotal text and the process in which it is situated.

While I do not seek to *explain* these relations, I aim to *explicate* them and make them more visible to those who, at times and through certain actions, unwittingly construct these relations as participants. While I am a knower located in this corner of this everyday world, I became increasingly aware through this research of what I did not know while I was a participant in the blitz – and of what can become known, and by whom, and to what end. I admit to an agenda for change in the practice at Fontanel that revolves around this process; quietly emancipatory as this function of knowledge may be, this agenda for conscientization stems from a criticalist position: 'conscientization' refers to learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take aim against the oppressive elements of reality" (Freire, 1972, p. 17).

While the committee's review of the Gen Ed course outlines is premised upon Fontanel's interpretation of Appendix C, the Appendix itself may be perceived as the ruling or 'boss' text (Turner & Smith, 2015) of this research. Haggerty's (1998) dissertation traces the development and direction of general education up to 1998; his research covers the policy in this area prior to the 2005 revision. In Chapter 2, I describe the development and direction of general education policy in the Ontario college system from where Haggerty concludes. The context for and intent of the 2005 policy has received little study, and the methods and effects of its implementation at the college level have not been researched.

While I am not *evaluating* the policy or its implementation, I investigate the forces and pressures leading to this policy, such as the principles that the policymakers relied upon while developing it as reflected in its language. I describe the history of general education, and the understandings of its definition and value as they have changed over time. My investigation on this conception of breadth and the perceived intent of the policy are informed by Hyslop-Margison's (2001) reflections on the often-assumed incompatibility between vocational and liberal education: "The trained technician can be a morally articulate autonomous citizen activity promoting democratic social ideals" (p. 6).

My curiosity regarding the policymakers' intentions regarding general education further leads me to frame my research by Reid, Gill, and Sears' (2010) conception: "CCE (civics and citizenship education) is not only education about politics: it is itself a political enterprise" (p. 9). Given the directive's stated purpose, it seems appropriate to analyze it as an extension of political enterprise, in a similar fashion to Haggerty (1998) in his exploration of liberal and moral education in the career-oriented curriculum of college programs. The policymakers' intentions are subsequently reframed by Fontanel's interpretation of the Gen Ed policy.

So, while the policymakers' intentions and assumptions are of interest, the language of representation that they chose becomes a focal point, for this language affects the implementation. This language is shaped by certain philosophical understandings of education on the part of policymakers, and encourages (or discourages) certain meaning-making by academic administration and faculty at the college level. These unacknowledged problems of meaning inherent in the policy language exemplify larger questions about the aims of education and its place and function in society (Pring, 2007), placing this research in the wider field of educational sustainability.

My Research Question of General Education and its Reflection in Discourses

My training and experience as a technical communicator following an education in the liberal arts, specifically, the English language, coupled with a graduate education and experience in industrial relations, contributes to my interest in the rhetorical considerations of discourses, particularly the language used to mediate and make meaning of social and organizational relations. According to Smith (2015), the language coordinates the researcher's subjectivity with other(s') subjectivities in a linkage of the known and unknown; it functions within texts in action, in the very way that this checklist is in action in the review process. Thus, the checklist's materiality as text and the way it comes into play allows me to describe more richly and deeply the knowledge that it creates (Smith D. E., 2015) and the social relations that it and the other texts mediate. This knowledge creation and mediation through discourses leads me to the main question to be explored by the research.

I examine the context of the Gen Ed policy and its history, conceptions of citizenship education, and considerations of language from an interpretive critical poststructuralist

theoretical stance. My profound interest in the policy's context, assumptions, and language as it is interpreted at Fontanel produces the question:

In what ways might the policy of General Education be reflected in discourses at an Ontario College of Applied Arts and Technology?

A critical analysis of the discourses of general education at an Ontario college of applied arts and technology has the capacity to explicate the social relations underlying the actual activities of academic life so that the participants in those actualities better understand their contributions to those relations and their co-constructed reality.

Moving into the Research that Stems from this Question

In this chapter, I outlined the placement of general education in Appendix C of the *Binding Policy Directive Framework for Programs of Instruction for Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology in Ontario* as it applies to the Ontario colleges' delivery of postsecondary credentials. I went on to describe my standpoint in relation to general education as it is delivered and as I am situated at Fontanel. I described the context for the research as premised on my interpretive critical poststructuralist stance before presenting my research question.

In order to explore this question, the history, context, and intent of the policy and the assumptions embedded in the policy are discussed in Chapter 2, together with a more detailed application of my theoretical lenses and their intersections in Chapter 3. In Chapter 4, I describe the methodology of institutional ethnography and the method of textual data and analysis that flow from my ontological and epistemological beliefs. My analysis of the discourses of general education appears in Chapter 5, followed by a discussion in Chapter 6 of this analysis in the broader context of postsecondary education considerations and educational philosophies and

practices. Chapter 7 concludes with a revisiting of my standpoint before positioning the research as text to build on the constructive moment of the critical analysis.

Chapter 2: The Context in Literature for the Research

In this chapter, I provide context for my research in terms of the history of the Ontario college system and of Fontanel College before outlining the history of the provincial policy on general education (Gen Ed) and Fontanel's response to that policy. I then provide definitions, understandings, and perspectives on general education.

The Ontario College System: Its Roots, Formation, and Nature

In this section, I discuss the contribution of Canadian vocational education to the formation of the Ontario college system before characterizing the Ontario college model and describing the history of Fontanel College.

Vocational Education in Canada. Two major events of the late 1950s precipitated the Canadian government's awakening from educational complacency: international economic decline and domestic concern over the Soviet success in space (Hyslop-Margison, 2004). This awakening took the form in 1960 of the federal Technical and Vocational Training Assistance Act that was directed at three groups: high school students, those seeking upgrading of technical skills, and those wishing to retrain for technology-based positions (Hyslop-Margison, 2004). The Act reflected a wider North American trend towards the establishment of vocational education, stemming from fears caused by international events and by a widespread postwar economic downturn. Community college systems were established across North America from the early 1960s through the early 1970s as a result of this trend.

Vocational Education in Ontario. Within this system and under the exclusive authority granted to the provinces over education by the Constitution Act, Ontario opted for a model that, instead of combining lower-division, university-level general education with technical education programs, was intended to concentrate on technical education (Skolnik, 2010). The province's

education system needed to expand to give more young people who comprised part of the "population explosion" (Ontario Department of Education, 1967, p. 8) an opportunity for more education because of the growing complexity of the economy. Furthermore, a perceived shortage of individuals lacking the knowledge and skills for the economy's new technology threatened to delay the province's economic development (Fleming, 1971). The technical-education model was selected to meet what was presented by William Davis, the Minister of Education, as a "knowledge explosion" and a "technological revolution … which has seen the disappearance of most of the unskilled, and a high proportion of the semi-skilled jobs" (Ontario Department of Education, 1967, pp. 8-9).

Ontario had several options to expand its post-secondary education system: an expansion of its universities, an increase in the number of institutes of technology, or the introduction of American-style junior colleges. Skolnik (2010) presents three arguments that were put forth in that era against expanding the university system to address the need for additional post-secondary education: (1) the increasing recognition of Ontario's industry's need for workers with different skills than those produced by a university education; (2) the belief that many individuals were more suited for some form of technical or applied education, as they lacked the capacity for a university education; and (3) the reality of an increasingly costly university system. Because a university system was judged suitable for only a limited portion of the population and the costs of investment in such a system exceeded the estimated value, the technical-education college model was deemed more beneficial by the Ontario government (Skolnik, 2010).

When the technical-education model was selected, the Ontario government outlined its expectations of the colleges to provide general education courses to support their occupational

programs, although these were not thought of as university-level courses (Ontario Department of Education, 1967). When the decision was made that the predominant emphasis in the Ontario colleges should be occupational education, the opportunity for a transfer function, "defined as it was in those days as university-level general education courses" (Skolnik, 2010, p. 7), was not operationalized in practice, although included in the legislation. The Ontario government wanted the colleges to have a strong focus on vocational education without the potential weakening effect of a transfer function. Davis asserted that Ontario had suffered from a long-standing deficiency in "the training of technical personnel beyond the high school but short of the university level" and referred to the importance of recommendations of the Select Committee on Manpower Training for the expansion of technical education (Ontario Department of Education, 1967, pp. 5-6).

As a result, the Ontario colleges were designed as a parallel system to the universities rather than as junior colleges (Haggerty, 1998). Skolnik (2010) also points to the rapid expansion of technical education in the secondary schools as contributing to the perceived need for college delivery of technical education, an expansion that resulted from a vocational streaming curriculum at the secondary level and the federal funding of vocational education facilities. Ontario's selection of a postsecondary technical-education model completed a system of vocational education in the province. The binary nature of this education system was influenced by various stakeholders who sought to defend their own interests, including the presidents of Ontario's universities (Dennison & Gallagher, 1986).

Establishment of the Ontario Colleges. The Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (CAATs) were established in Ontario with a mandate to provide "a new level and type of education" to serve those parts of the population whose needs were not met by the existing

education system. Focused mainly on career-oriented education, colleges would create a system which would be "a coherent whole" (Ontario Department of Education, 1967, pp. 5-8). The naming of the Ontario college system to that of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (CAATs) flowed from the selection of the technical-education model. The word 'college' suggested an educational focus that was broader than that of the institutes of technology, while the addition of the term 'applied arts' indicated a greater breadth of occupations for which training would be offered (Skolnik, 2010). The wording of 'community colleges' was rejected by the province, however, because that term connoted institutions that offered both university-level liberal arts and career education. That being said, the term 'community college' came to be used informally in Ontario to describe post-secondary educational institutions that did not have university status (Skolnik, 2010).

The caution exhibited in the naming of the Ontario college system exemplified the wider concern exhibited by the province in its decision to exclude the transfer function between colleges and universities. This decision was premised on "the prevailing limited view of human potential that implied that almost all those who would attend the new colleges did not have the capacity for university study" (Skolnik, 2010, p. 10), a difference in prevailing attitudes from the US about the value attached to creating opportunities for social mobility: "educators and opinion leaders in Ontario were less optimistic about human potential and more complacent about existing patterns of social stratification than their U.S. counterparts" (Skolnik, 2010, p. 11). The streaming of students that occurred in high schools was supported by and reflected in the development of this binary postsecondary system.

Establishment of Fontanel College. As one of the CAATs established in the province, Fontanel College was created in the 1960s as an enhanced and broadened version of an institute

of technology, similar to many other Ontario colleges (Skolnik, 2010). According to its history published on its website, Fontanel was formed through the merging of a provincial institute of technology that was established in the 1950s with a provincial vocational centre. Fontanel continued to grow through the acquisition of post-secondary educational institutions in the vicinity and through the establishment of satellite campuses in the late 1960 and 1970s to accommodate retraining and academic upgrading needs in surrounding communities for employment programs and growing needs for career-oriented education to support the local economies. The college expanded through the addition of various vocational schools to an enrolment of more than 10,000 daytime students, including apprentices, in the early 1980s. As one of the province's largest colleges, Fontanel, according to its website, now stands at an enrolment of approximately 20,000 students.

Ontario's General Education Policy: History, Development, and Policy

In this section, I discuss the history of general education policy in the Ontario college system as it relates to the general education policies at Fontanel College.

Policy from 1965. As discussed earlier, the naming of the college system that was created in 1965 appeared to be purposeful: "applied arts" indicated a greater breadth of occupations than those included in the existing institutes of technology, while "college" suggested an educational focus that included general education. However, "community college" was rejected because of its connotation of liberal arts (Skolnik, 2010): the primary mandate of the new CAATs was the provision of occupational education, according to the Minister of Education, the Ministry of Education, the Council of Regents, Boards of Governors, and most college presidents (Dennison & Gallagher, 1986).

Haggerty (1998) emphasized the Ministry's ongoing concern that general education courses at the colleges not converge with university liberal arts courses as part of its broader concern that the colleges avoid becoming too academically oriented (Stokes, 1990). He linked this concern to a traditional view that abstract thinking was the purview of a small academic elite (Holland & Quazi, 1988). In contrast to these perceived concerns, Murphy (1983) discussed the criticism by those opposed to an exclusive technological education as instrumental in the Minister's decision to include a mix of general education and technical studies in the CAATs. The Ontario government's *Basic Documents* (1967) affirmed that the CAATs:

(1) must embrace total education, vocational and avocational, regardless of formal entrance qualifications, with provision for complete vertical and horizontal mobility;

(2) must develop curricula that meet the combined cultural aspirations and occupational needs of the student (p. 32).

A subsequent document confirmed this position, while contributing to a conflation between general education and what were at that time termed generic skills:

> Recognizing the career aspirations of most full-time post-secondary students, boards of governors through their advisory committees should ensure that the performance objectives for programs of instruction maximize the employment opportunities for the graduates. Recognizing the primary responsibility of colleges of applied arts and technology to meet the educational needs of the learners, programs of instruction should not become overly specialized in order to meet the needs of specific employers … Since Ontario universities admit, with appropriate credit, college of applied arts and technology graduates who demonstrate an ability to benefit from higher education, colleges of applied arts and technology are not allowed to offer 'transfer' programs. All full-time

> post-secondary programs in the colleges should contain 70% vocationally-oriented courses. On the other hand, full-time programs should not be so narrow in their vocational content that students will have to back-track to continue their education. Hence, full-time post-secondary programs should include 30% 'general education courses – including mathematics and science as well as humanities and social sciences. Physical fitness may be included if desired (Ministry of Education and Training, 1976, p. 2).

Postsecondary funding restraints in the late 1970s and early 1980s, coupled with rapid growth in enrolment, led to increases in class sizes and reductions in program hours; general education bore the brunt of these cuts (Ontario Council of Regents for Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology, 1990). In the aftermath of a strike over the issue of faculty workload and the related issues of quality education and college governance, the Minister of Colleges and Universities appointed an Instructional Assignment Review Committee (Haggerty, 1998). Subsequently, a workload formula was developed, governance issues were reviewed (Pitman, 1986), and the province simultaneously committed to a review of the college system's mandate and increased spending (Haggerty, 1998).

The Vision 2000 Report. This comprehensive review of the future role of Ontario's college system was completed by the Council of Regents as documented in the final report of Vision 2000 (1990). Vision 2000 was influenced by comments from a variety of external and internal stakeholders, including members of the Legislature, senior provincial politicians, the Ontario Federation of Students, and senior officers of large corporations (Haggerty, 1998). According to this report, the central aim of general education in Ontario's colleges was preparation for citizenship:

> The communications revolution has expanded the horizons of citizenship so that people can and should feel part of local, national, and international debates on issues that affect them, their families and their futures – issues such as poverty, the environment, the Canadian constitution or political change in other parts of the world. To participate actively, they should be aware of the background and context of current events and issues. Helping people to be good citizens, as well as productive workers, should be part of the educational experience at a college (Ontario Council of Regents for Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology, 1990, p. 36)

The report concluded that a college credential should guarantee that all graduates be exposed to sufficient general education content to provide the foundations for lifelong learning (1990, pp. 38-9). It went so far as to recommend a significant increase in the proportion of generic skills and general education: "There should be an equivalence of learning outcomes between these components and specific occupational skills" (Ontario Council of Regents for Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology, 1990, p. 38). The establishment of a College Standards and Accreditation Council (CSAC) was also recommended, with the executive authority to set system-wide standards and to accredit college programs meeting those standards (Ontario Council of Regents for Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology, 1990).

Vision 2000 distinguished between the skill and content components of the college curriculum when it made the distinction between generic skills and general education:

> Generic skills are practical life skills essential for personal and career success. They include language and communications skills, math skills, learning and thinking skills, interpersonal skills, and technological literacy. They are not job-specific, but are critical to mastering changing technologies, changing environments, and changing jobs …

> Facility in some generic skills – reading, listening, writing, learning – is a prerequisite for success in most college-level courses … General education is the broad study of subjects and issues which are central to education for life in our culture. Centred in, but not restricted to, the arts, sciences, literature and humanities, general education encourages students to know and understand themselves, their society and institutions, and their roles and responsibilities as citizens (Ontario Council of Regents for Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology, 1990, p. 35)

Haggerty posited that generic skills were considered the link between general and vocational education, and deliverable as discrete courses or infused into general or vocational courses: "General education courses had the further benefit of enhancing transfer and retraining options" (Haggerty, 1998, p. 88). The CSAC Establishment Board stated "General education may enhance 'citizenship' … ; it provides an important context for the development of generic skills, and … it may assist students in pursuing options for lifelong learning" (College Standards and Accreditation Council, 1992, p. 17).

After province-wide consultations, the CSAC Establishment Board modified its proposal that general education courses were to be based on broad subject fields in the liberal arts. Instead, these courses were "described in terms of benefits to learners' personal growth and enrichment, informed citizenship, and working life" (1992, p. 21). The College Standards and Accreditation Council was formed in 1993, and published several documents related to general education, generic skills, and program standards: one survey conducted for the Ministry in 1992 revealed that general education had dwindled to between 7-13% in total program hours in seven programs at eight colleges (Haggerty, 1998). As a result, the Minister of Education and Training

established a policy that general education should constitute approximately 13% of program hours, without additional funding (Haggerty, 1998).

In an open letter to the colleges, the Minister said:

> The government has accepted the recommendations of the CSAC Establishment Board concerning general education. General education together with generic skills, are critical to ensuring the ability of everyone in Ontario to achieve his or her best and to contribute to society. Effective September 1994, each college postsecondary program must include a minimum of approximately 45 instructional hours per semester (quoted in College Standards and Accreditation Council, January, 1994, p. 1).

Policy in 1994. CSAC's 1993 proposal for the implementation of general education in Ontario's colleges was approved as policy in 1994:

> General education appropriate for Ontario's colleges … as those post secondary learning experiences that enable learners to meet more effectively the societal challenges which they face in their community, family and working life. General education in the colleges provides learners with insight into the enduring nature of the issues being addressed, and their particular relevance to today and the future. It is intended to encourage and support continuous learning (p. 4).

This learning was to be delivered as discrete general education courses, in contrast to that of generic skills, which were embedded in vocational courses, outlined in a separate 1995 document. CSAC's goals for the general education learning were aimed at personal development and responsibility; access to these eight goal areas would provide students with an opportunity to raise awareness, understanding, and appreciation of the breadth and diversity of what people in our culture do (Haggerty, 1998). The eight goal areas in the 1994 policy were:

Aesthetic Appreciation: understand beauty, form, taste, and the role of arts in society.

Civic Life: understand the meaning of freedoms, rights, and participation in community and public life.

Cultural Understanding: understand the cultural, social, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of Canada and the world.

Personal Development: gain greater self awareness, intellectual growth, well-being, understanding of others.

Social Understanding: understand relationships among individuals and society.

Understanding Science: appreciate the contribution of science to the development of civilization, human understanding and potential.

Understanding Technology: understand the inter-relationship between the use of technology, and science and the ecosystem.

Work and the Economy: understand the meaning, history, and organization of work, and working life challenges to the individual and society (pp. 5-12).

Haggerty (1998) also commented on the issue of choice in terms of general education courses: "CSAC policy allowed colleges to designate up to half of the general education courses in a program as mandatory requirements, but eventually CSAC's objective was to increase opportunities for breadth and choice across all eight goal areas" (p. 100).

The colleges began to implement CSAC's general education policies in 1994 at the same time that they were expected to implement CSAC's generic skills and vocational learning outcomes (Haggerty, 1998). However, the pace of funding cuts had also accelerated, and efforts to rationalize the number of programs, program content and hours affected all components of the college curriculum. CSAC reported that implementation of general education was delayed or

partially implemented, with little consistency from college to college. Until alternative means of delivery were developed, many colleges indicated that it was less costly to offer mandatory general education courses or to delay implementation (Haggerty, 1998):

> The importance of including general education courses in diploma programs has always been official Ministry policy, but many colleges have reduced or eliminated a separate general education program when other competing priorities, such as the vocational component, were threatened by financial cutbacks (p. 103).

The College Standards and Accreditation Council was eliminated in 1996, its program standards and accreditation functions absorbed by the Colleges Branch of the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) was established in 1999 as a new and separate ministry responsible for postsecondary education and apprenticeship training to operate in parallel with the Ministry of Education.

The *Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Act* was subsequently passed in 2002, giving the colleges the responsibility for autonomous program approval and development, with the requirement that quality assurance processes be in place to ensure that they consistently meet quality standards.

Arvast (2008) describes how this Act was shaped through arguments presented by reports such as that written by the Ontario Jobs and Investment Board and that written by the advocacy body of Ontario colleges, the Association of Colleges of Arts and Technology of Ontario (ACAATO, name changed to Colleges Ontario as of 2008). These reports argued that the CAATs needed to be more market-driven and more flexible to continue their transformation to market-driven career education and training providers (Association of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology of Ontario, 1999).

Policy in 2005. A policy framework, consisting of a number of documents, set out the roles and responsibilities of the colleges in more detail to support the *Colleges Act* of 2002. One component of this framework that defined the ministry's expectations for the college system to comply with the Act and regulations of the Act (Legislative Assembly of Ontario, 2002) was the *Binding Policy Directive Framework for Programs of Instruction for Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology*, released by the MTCU in 2003. This directive defined the expectations for all credentials offered by Ontario colleges, regardless of funding source.

On the advice of the college system that time and resources were needed to establish and implement effective structures to support this framework, the policy was revised and became effective in 2005. Appendix A of the policy outlines the credentials framework for programs of instruction, Appendix B outlines the Essential Employability Skills requirements for college credentials, and Appendix C outlines the General Education requirements. Appendix C states that the purpose of General Education in the Ontario college system

> Is to contribute to the development of citizens who are conscious of the diversity, complexity, and richness of the human experience; who are able to establish meaning through this consciousness; and, who, as a result, are able to contribute thoughtfully, creatively, and positively to the society in which they live and work. General Education strengthens student's (sic) generic skills, such as critical analysis, problem solving, and communication, in the context of an exploration of topics with broad-based personal and/or societal importance (Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, 2005, p. 19).

There were two main differences between the 1994 and the 2005 policies: a reduction and a redefinition in the themes and nature of general education courses, and an identification of the

range of general education courses that needed to be offered in a diploma or an advanced diploma program:

> it is required that graduates have been engaged in learning that exposes them to at least one discipline outside their main field of study, and increases their awareness of the society in which they live and work. This will typically be accomplished by students taking 3-5 courses offered and designed discretely and separately from vocational learning opportunities (courses). These learning opportunities would normally be delivered using a combination of required and elective processes (Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, 2005, p. 20).

The five themes – now no longer the eight broad goal areas – that were used to provide direction to the colleges in the development and identification of courses designed to fulfil the General Education requirement for programs of instruction were: Arts in Society, Civic Life, Social and Cultural Understanding, Personal Understanding, and Science and Technology (Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, 2005, p. 19).

The requirement for one 45-hour course per semester was also removed; instead, there was now a minimum number of courses required for the diploma and advanced diploma credentials. The requirement was that students had to be engaged in learning that exposed them to at least one discipline outside their main field of study

> so as to increase their awareness of the society and culture in which they live and work. Although students are encouraged to develop life-long learning habits and pursue areas of interest, of equal importance is the need to expand those areas. In order to achieve an appropriate level of breadth, students are encouraged to select courses in more than one theme (Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, 2005, p. 26).

This minimum requirement may have been an effort on the part of the MTCU to reflect what had been a reality in terms of the colleges' offerings since the 1994 policy was instituted. In the one-year certificate programs, there was an "expression of the desirability that students have exposure to general education that incorporates some breadth beyond the vocational field of study" (Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, 2005, p. 24).

Part of the Colleges Ontario Mandate. The Credential Validation Service (CVS) was established by the MTCU to meet the requirements of the *Colleges Act*; one of its goals was to monitor the implementation of the *Framework for Programs of Instruction*, as mandated by the MTCU, to run at arms-length from both the CAATs and the MTCU. The CVS became one service of the Ontario College Quality Assurance Service (OCQAS), which was established one year later.

Although mandated into existence by the MTCU, OCQAS is owned, operated and funded by the CAATs through the structure of Colleges Ontario. The OCQAS is responsible for ensuring quality and consistency of standards at the program level through the Credential Validation Service (CVS) and at the institutional level through the College Quality Assurance Audit Process (CQAAP). It has its own management board and operates independently of government, any individual college, or the MTCU. The CQAAP was put in place to manage the review of CAATs in meeting quality program development, renewal and review procedures, and ultimately, results (Arvast, 2008). Therefore, as a result of the autonomous program development instituted by the *Colleges Act*, the establishment of Colleges Ontario (formerly ACAATO), and the inclusion of CVS in OCQAS, the review a College's compliance with the general education requirements of the *Framework for Programs of Instruction* courses falls within the CQAAP.

Policy at Fontanel College. While the province's policy outlined the requirements for the numbers of courses to be completed by category of credential and the themes to be covered by the courses, it provided flexibility to the colleges in the course composition, the degree of choice, and the mode of delivery. Over time, the implementation of Appendix C resulted in diverse models and efforts across the 24 CAATs. Fontanel's efforts, like those of the other colleges, were affected by funding cuts. This effect translated into what may be perceived as somewhat compromised offerings at the time in terms of in-class offerings of general education courses, forecasted in part by the final passage of Appendix C2: "The achievement of breadth is dependent on colleges having sufficient offerings and the students being able and required to take advantage of them" (Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, 2005, p. 28).

Fontanel, like the other colleges, had to balance what may have been perceived as conflicting objectives in terms of its curriculum as mandated by the *Framework for Programs of Instruction* of 2005. This perceived difficulty, however, was nothing new. Fontanel's 1994 response to CSAC's initial 1993 proposal for implementation of dedicated general education courses, more than ten years prior, was less than enthusiastic:

> The single issues about which there was the greatest response from the college and on which there was consensus is the timing. At a time when other initiatives and financial difficulties are forcing us to re-examine our curriculum, we wish to do so in a considered and rational way. We need time to determine how we can accommodate general education and still maintain a rational curriculum (p. 1).

Fontanel felt that "the content areas … all (had) a "soft" liberal arts approach … the courses implied by the Proposal seem to be modelled on university-style courses rather than college

courses … there was also a suspicion that the goals and objectives identified were designed to teach a "correct way of thinking" rather than to encourage individual learning and growth" (p. 2).

The college warned that, because general education courses could not be added onto existing program hours but had to replace current program hours, "further cuts to program hours will result in graduates with fewer vocational skills" (p. 3). Essentially, it initially rejected the implementation deadline of Fall 1994 as being unmanageable. However, once the province enacted its 1994 policy, Fontanel responded by identifying existing courses which had the potential to become general education courses:

> Program faculty will also have to make decisions about which of these courses should be identified as compulsory general education courses for their students, which ones will be placed into a set of electives, and which ones will remain core vocational courses. Remember that students must be exposed to breadth in their general education courses and that they must exercise choice – that means that all of the mandated courses should not be in one subject area (Fontanel, Sept. 22 1994 memo).

CSAC's General Education Council report (November 15, 1993) stated that Fontanel was on track with most other colleges who were developing a structure to accommodate general education and emphasizing the spirit of general education in subsequent years. However, Fontanel declared a lower percentage of its programs to be meeting the requirements; it was proceeding more slowly to coordinate implementation of the numerous initiatives required by the colleges at that time (General Education Council, College Standards and Accreditation Council, November 15, 1993).

By 1995, Fontanel had prepared numerous resources for its faculty to comply with CSAC's guidelines, including a 4-page guidelines document and an interactive computer module

entitled “How to Gen. Ed. Your Course” (p. 2). The guidelines indicated that “all general education courses will develop generic skills, as will vocational and generic skills courses” (p. 1). Furthermore, the guidelines specified that “by offering opportunities for our learners to experience personal growth, general education course help learners define their roles as workers, citizens and family members. They help learners relate their studies to a broader context and to refine their generic skills” (p. 4).

While curriculum specialists were involved in aligning and building curriculum through cross-college initiatives in an effort to meet the various requirements of the credentials, evidence of Fontanel’s efforts in the area of general education from 1995 to 2001 is hard to locate. In 2001, the college put in place a policy regarding its general education courses, a policy that was revised several times over the next decade, with its last revision in 2006. A working committee, the General Education Committee, was instituted as a sub-committee of the Curriculum Review Committee. The mandate of the General Education Committee was to review new general education courses against a list of criteria to validate general education designation and theme identification and to make recommendations regarding the ability of programs of study to meet general education requirements (See Appendix C). The most current version of Fontanel’s policy can be found in Appendix C.

The 4-page guidelines document originally published in 1995 was revised and republished in 2007 to reflect the changes to the *Framework for Programs of Instruction*. A complete version of this document is available in Appendix D. It included an initial preamble to guide design, development, and delivery of general education courses:

> General Education is included in the Ontario college curriculum to help graduates gain insight in the diversity, complexity, and richness of human experience. By expanding

> their aesthetic, cultural, historical, scientific, and philosophical awareness, graduates are equipped to participate fully and activity in society and to recognize the values of social responsibility and good citizenship (p. 1).

It is at this point of policy evolution that I conduct my research into the discourses of general education at Fontanel College. The general education component of the province's *Binding Policy Directive Framework for Programs of Instruction* has not been significantly revised since 2005, although the *Framework* was revised in 2009 to reflect the addition of Appendix D College Advertising and Marketing Guidelines. The MTCU was renamed in 2016 to be the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development. With the exception of updated guidelines, checklists, and forms, the General Education Committee operates in much the same way as it did when it was formed in 2001.

General Education as a Topic of Discourses: Definition, Purposes, and Goals

In this section, I discuss the definition of general education, including its differences from vocational education and generic skills. I also explore its purposes and goals within Ontario's technical-education college model, an exploration that is framed by my theoretical lenses.

The Definition of General Education. Failure to clarify what is meant by general education has been a long-standing criticism of policymakers and curriculum designers (Dennison & Gallagher, 1986). In the American literature, the term *general education* usually referred to the common curriculum of the American colonial college (Haggerty, 1998), but Dennison and Gallagher (1986) trace the concept's root to Athenian society, where a liberal arts curriculum was developed to prepare free citizens for the "good" life and as a basis for a variety of vocations. Their tracings correspond to the assertions made by a Harvard Committee in 1945 in a report entitled *General Education in a Free Society* as quoted by Haggerty (1998):

> The term general education is somewhat vague and colorless; it does not mean some airy education in knowledge in general (if there can be such knowledge), nor does it mean education for all in the sense of universal education. It is used to indicate that part of a student's whole education which looks first of all to his life as a responsible human being and citizen; while the term special education indicates that part which looks to a student's competence in some occupation … Clearly, general education has somewhat the meaning of liberal education, except that, by applying to high school as well as college, it envisages immensely greater numbers of students ... But if one clings to the root meaning of liberal arts as that which befits or helps to make free men, then general and liberal education have identical goals (Harvard Committee, 1978).

From this perspective, then, general education is considered to be synonymous with liberal education in that it is designed for the development of all human beings, ostensibly free to think and act, in their roles as responsible persons and citizens in a democratic society.

Haggerty (1998) proceeds to discuss the relation of general education and moral education, referring to interpretations from Brubacher (1982) on the education of the whole person and from Fukuyama (1992) on the foundation of liberal democratic institutions on moral principles that are a natural part of the human struggle for recognition. Fukuyama (1992) hearkens back to Plato's assertion that the human soul is comprised of a desiring part, a reasoning part, and a spiritness; the education of the whole person refers to the integration of these qualities. Haggerty (1998) builds on this foundation to assert that a general or liberal education challenges students to develop their intellectual or reasoning power to nurture and cultivate the mind and to attain personal or community goals in a linkage of an essentialist, realistic, pragmatic worldview with one more altruistic:

> In addition to calculating the best way of satisfying desires, an educated person should understand and appreciate the consequences of human activity … A general education should raise the consciousness of students to the impact of human activities on other persons and on other species (p. 43).

This more overarching conception of general education as consciousness-raising appears to have more transcendent goals and purposes than the support of the acquisition of generic skills.

Differentiation from Vocational Education and Generic Skills. In a more simplistic rendering, general education is often defined by what it is not, particularly in the province's technical education model: general education is that which is not vocational and unrelated to a specific occupation. Haggerty (1998) notes that

> Career, vocational, technical, and occupational education are terms that have been used to describe various forms of education and training intended to prepare students for employment … It is sometimes referred to as vocational education when it refers to specific skills training for specific jobs or career education when the orientation is to progressive positions and a career ladder or when further formal education or on-the-job training is implied (pp. 66-7).

The difficulties inherent in a dichotomous framing of vocational versus non-vocational curriculum are many, extending to the initial mandate of the colleges, the wider duality between the university and the college system, and the potential for devaluation of that which was not perceived as fitting within the character of the college system, as alluded to by Stokes (1990). These difficulties are explored further in Chapter 5.

However, the matter of differentiation becomes further complicated by the confusion regarding general education and generic skills. Generic skills are frequently equated to

employability skills, a descriptor that enhances their widespread appeal to employers and policymakers (Hyslop-Margison & Sears, 2006). These *essential* employability skills (emphasis mine) are described in Appendix B of the *Framework for Programs of Instruction* (Ontario Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities, 2009, pp. 17-21) and promoted through the Conference Board of Canada's Employability Skills 2000+ report (Conference Board of Canada).

These essential employability skills as delineated in Appendix B include cross-curricular competencies such as critical thinking and problem solving. They are designed to prepare students to function effectively in the workplace, as well as for challenges that might face them as graduates, such as employment instability and occupational transition: "the promise of transferable employability skills, assuming such skills actually exist, entails obvious practical benefits for both workers and employers" (Hyslop-Margison & Sears, 2006, p. 126).

However, this tidy bundling, while thought to offer a significant training and vocational advantage, represents "a largely confused attempt to conflate different categories of academic and workplace competencies under a single heading" (Hyslop-Margison & Sears, 2006). An extension of this confusing conflation occurs when general education and generic skills, oft-times combined by virtue of their linguistic similarity, are further rolled up into one single non-vocational category. The general and the generic (and unfortunately, the education and the skills, then) sound sufficiently similar as to be virtually indistinguishable in their universal attractiveness in terms of employment-focused curriculum.

This lack of clarity is further confounded by the confusion in the literature regarding general education and critical thinking: while critical thinking is categorized as a generic skill, *seemingly* essential to employability, it is also often used to define the purposes and goals of

general education in terms of thinking critically on matters of informed citizenship and working life. Such confusion pervades many scholarly examinations – even Haggerty's (1998) dissertation – where the researcher points out in a somewhat misguided summary fashion that "Many general education programs aim to provide a common core of generic skills, a foundation for breadth, and a smorgasbord of choice through distribution requirements … (such) programs have been motivated by a belief (in) the development of communications and intellectual skills" (1998, p. 76).

Hyslop-Margison & Sears (2006) discuss the conceptual and epistemological difficulties inherent in the generic employability skills approach to critical thinking and the impact of these difficulties on practical effectiveness and democratic appropriateness. There appears to be an element of critical thinking upon which the effectiveness of general education depends. That being said, in my analysis of the discourses of general education at Fontanel, I explore these definitions, purposes, and goals as reflected in the words of the informants in the general education process.

Purpose and Goals of General Education in Ontario's College Model. The purpose of general education in the technical-education model could be interpreted as a need for graduates to have more than *just* technical skills as they entered the workforce; the wording prescribes the inclusion of breadth in what are often narrowly focused, vocationally-oriented programs of study. Critics of the model point to its narrowness as a weakness. From this perspective, general education as a breadth component is either seen as the opposite of or complementary to vocational courses in the technical-education model.

The very definition of breadth remains vague when it comes to the matter of purpose in the 2009 policy: whether this general education is intended to be of a liberal arts, moral

instruction, or citizenship nature is unclear – if these terms and categories can even be considered synonymous. In their original 1967 formulation, the colleges were designed in a way so as not to impinge on the liberal education territory of the universities, although the potential for a transfer function was not excluded. The applied arts offered by the colleges, then, were initially and purposefully designed so as not to be equivalent to the liberal arts offered by the universities; to follow this line of argument, the revisions to the required programs of study offered by the CAATs were somewhat misaligned with the original purpose.

General education is sometimes equated to citizenship education, "ostensibly an area of education designed to foster critical engagement in civic life at all levels" (Hyslop-Margison & Sears, 2006). Hyslop-Margison and Sears (2006) discuss the narrowing and taming of the idea of citizenship:

> It is narrowing in the sense that the scope of appropriate citizen involvement is limited to participating in current political and social structures and taming in the sense that proper civic engagement is seen as enhancing rather than critiquing and challenging social and political institutions (p. 19).

They go on to reference Osborne's (2004) argument regarding the depoliticization of citizenship by secondary schools that have equated "the good citizen with the good person, the man or woman who helps others, respects other people's rights, obeys the law, is suitably patriotic and the like" (p. 13). Hyslop-Margison and Sears (2006) probe the problematic consequences of the widespread connections that become drawn between democratic citizenship education, a depoliticized democratic model of lifelong learning, and labour market adjustment: "the implication that education is only valuable when directly related to career preparation" (p. 75).

In many ways, the perspective on a characterization of general education as breadth in a technical-education model depends on one's perspective on vocational education: that of social efficiency, social inclusion, or revisionist (Hyslop-Margison, 2004). The functionalist or social efficiency perspective on vocational education relies on the objective of fulfilling national economic potential; the more liberal or social inclusion perspective relies on the objective of integrating economically disadvantaged students. The revisionist or radical perspective, however, is explicitly critical of the assumptions supporting both of those perspectives: "Revisionists challenge traditional vocational education on the grounds that it represents a calculated strategy … to reproduce social divisions and consolidate ideological control over working class students" (Hyslop-Margison, 2004, p. 12).

This interpretation of the policy goals as dependent upon one's perspective on vocational education and as framed by Reid, Gill, and Sears' (2010) conceptions of citizenship formation contains possibilities for my research in terms of analysis of the discourses: "CCE (civics and citizenship education) is not only education about politics; it is itself a political enterprise" (p. 9). Since the stated purpose in 2009 of general education in the Ontario college system "is to contribute to the development of citizens who … are able to contribute thoughtfully, creatively, and positively to the society in which they live and work" (Ontario Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities, 2009, p. 19), it is appropriate to explore the policy's intent with explicit recognition of these perspectives on vocational education.

The purpose and goals of general education in Ontario's technical-education model did not appear to remain constant in its provincial policy-driven incarnations. One could surmise that this inconstancy is linked to the shifting policies affecting the entire provincial college system, a necessary reflection of changes in the wider environment.

The purpose, goals, and implementation of general education in Ontario could be placed in a broader context of curriculum implementation. Although there is a lack of research on curriculum implementation in Ontario's college system, findings on public accountability in terms of education policy development and implementation in Ontario elementary music programs (Horsley, 2009) and literary text selection practices and educational policies in Ontario elementary and secondary English programs (Greig & Holloway, 2016) may provide some perspective. Pinto's (2014) analysis of policy actor participation in secondary school curriculum policy production reveals some potential for the process to be characterized as 'radicalizing' enlightenment, and Bascia, Carr-Harris, Fine-Meyer, and Zurzolo (2014) summarize the historical bases for curriculum policy common across education levels, including nation-building, social cohesion, and economic development. Arvast (2006), as one of the few researchers with findings on the Ontario college system, focuses on the shifting accountability for curriculum development from the provincial to the college level as a result of the 2002 Colleges Act.

Looking more broadly, it is possible to place the purposes and goals of general education in Ontario in a fundamental context of policy as text and discourse (Ball S. , What is policy?, 1994) and in international context of education policy enactment (Ball S. , 1998). In much of the contemporary enactment research stemming from these perspectives, the policy-driven activities are portrayed as fashioning and constraining interpretation and social constructions in English secondary schools (Maguire, Braun, & Ball, 2015). There are also several efforts to identify types of policy actors with roles, actions, and engagements visible in the work of policy interpretation and translation (Ball, Maguire, Braun, & Hoskins, 2011).

The fragile and unstable nature of policy enactment as characterized by Maguire, Braun, and Ball (2015) relies upon Spillane's (2004) notion of policy work as a 'sense-making' process, whereby a tension exists between the external representations and the local policymakers' and teachers' internal representations. This sense-making and extra-local/local tension applies to my research; the purpose of general education as provincially stipulated was then interpreted by the colleges themselves and enacted in various college-level policies. Given my perspective on these intents and assumptions of general education as embedded in its discourses, I conduct my explorations from an interpretive critical poststructural perspective that I put forward in the next chapter.

Chapter Summary

The history of the Ontario college system and Fontanel College provides the foundation for an outline of the history of the provincial policy on general education and Fontanel's response to that policy. From this historical foundation, I discuss the definition, purposes, and goals of general education within the Ontario college system that lead to a description of my theoretical lenses in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Underpinnings for the Research on the Discourses of General Education

The discussions of history, purposes, and goals of general education (Gen Ed) within the Ontario college system that comprised Chapter 2 lead here to a discussion of the theory that underpins my research question, methodology, and methods. This discussion expands upon my comprehensive examination response (Surman, Comprehensive examination for PhD in Education, 2015).

Ravitch and Riggan (2012) outline four domains of theory: descriptions of perspectives on concepts as they are thought to exist; relationships between the perceiver and the perceived; relationships as dependent upon cognitive or symbolic extension of oneself; and the effects and implications of social or institutional location). In this section, I describe the theoretical underpinnings to my research from three of these four domains while drawing upon Stinson's (2009) exemplar of a deliberate theoretical eclecticism. I outline the three lenses that inform my approach, and the specific ways that these theories bear on my conceptualizations to provide a foundation for discussions of methodology and method in Chapter 4.

I do not believe in a single identifiable reality or even in the approximation of one composite reality, in the value of distance from the research to gain objectivity, in common units of analysis, or the dominance of the researcher's voice (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011); therefore, I reject the ontological, epistemological, and methodological implications of positivism and postpositivism and the quantitative methodologies that are frequently premised on these paradigmatic foundations (Yilmaz, 2013). Consequently, I omit the theoretical constructs of Ravitch and Riggan's (2012) first domain. In an effort to ensure a comprehensive and robust scaffolding, I proceed to define interpretivism as representative of the second domain; critical

theory, of the third; and poststructuralism, of the fourth. This scaffolding appears in Table 1 in a summation derived from Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba (2011) and Stinson (2009). In this chapter, I elaborate on the ontology, epistemology, and the research products of the scaffolding before discussion of my researcher posture and the commensurability of the theories.

Table 1

Theoretical Scaffolding

	Interpretivism	**Critical Theory**	**Poststructuralism**
Ontology			
What constitutes reality (Scotland, 2012)	Relativistic (Scotland, 2012)	Historical realism (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011)	Decentred and questionable reality (Smith D. E., 1999)
Epistemology			
How I construct knowledge (Ravitch & Riggan, 2012)	Constructed in and out of interaction between humans and their world (Crotty, 1998)	Social structures form and shape understanding (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011)	Knowledge discursively formed (Stinson, 2009)

	Interpretivism	Critical Theory	Poststructuralism
Values			
What I seek as important products of research (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011)	Insight and understandings of behavior and explanations from participants' perspectives (Scotland, 2012)	Agenda for change or reform (Scotland, 2012)	Deconstructive exposure of gaps between language and perceived truth and rationality (Smith D. E., 1999)
Posture			
How I approach the inquiry (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011)	"Co-constructor of knowledge, of understanding and interpretation of the meaning of lived experiences" (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 196)	Transformative intellectual (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011)	Function as a guide to choices available to subjects of inquiry in terms of veracity, accuracy and adequacy of representation (Smith D. E., 1999)

	Interpretivism	Critical Theory	Poststructuralism
Commensurability			
If other theories and paradigms can be accommodated (Kuhn, 2012)	Accommodation of critical approach to understanding of culture (Geertz, 1973)	Priority of data because of transformative aims (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011)	Some commensurability with interpretivist and criticalist approaches (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011)

Interpretivism

Interpretivism is more often characterized as a sociological paradigm than a theory: I include it in my scaffolding to ensure that I unpack its assumptions and make explicit its linkages to my methodology and methods. Furthermore, I adjust this lens to be more interpretivist than constructivist because that is the term that I first associated with the lens in reference to organizational theory twenty years ago: "It sees the social world as an emergent social process which is created by the individuals concerned" (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 28). This term is a better fit for the institutional focus of my research, given Burrell and Morgan's (1979) depiction of social reality from this paradigm as "being little more than a network of assumptions and intersubjectively shared meanings" (pp. 28-30) – in terms of organizational theory, then, a belief that the institution is, subjectively, nothing more than a network. It is these assumptions and shared meanings on which my research centres: "The premises of the interpretive paradigm question whether organizations exist in anything but a conceptual sense" (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 32).

In the process, I seek to understand the fundamental nature of the social world as it is constructed through a pastiche of participants' realities at the level of subjective experience. Ontologically, I support Scotland's (2012) assertion regarding interpretivism: "Reality is individually constructed; there are as many realities as individuals" (p. 11). Epistemologically, I seek evidence of these multiple realities as they represent perceptions and constructions of meaning resulting from the participants' frames of reference: "Social reality is a construction based upon the actor's frame of reference within the setting" (Guba & Lincoln, 1985, p. 80).

My concern with individual consciousness and subjectivity from the frame of reference of the informants is exhibited by my previous ethnographic case study research into employees' experiences with human resources information systems: I cared less about the function of the systems than about the knowledge and meaningful reality that was constructed in and out of interaction between the humans and their world (Scotland, 2012). This evidence of my ideological commitment stemming from my life experience is predictive of my research interests and questions regarding the discourses that emerge from the general education policy and the realities that are reflected in these discourses.

As an interpretivist, I consider insights and understandings of the participants' behaviours to be valuable products, given that this knowledge is personally relative (Guba & Lincoln, 1985), culturally derived, historically situated (Scotland, 2012), and understood through interaction with participants. The discourses of general education reflect the behaviours and understandings of the informants as they interact with the policy, and reveal recurrent themes representing insights on beliefs and understandings of general education, education, training, and philosophies of education held by the policymakers and academic administrators. A critical analysis of the discourses explores these beliefs and understandings.

Critical Theory

By virtue of Kincheloe, McLaren, and Steinberg's (2011) definition, I also pursue this research as a criticalist who accepts assumptions such as the fundamental mediation of thought by socially and historically constituted power relations, the centrality of language to the formation of subjectivity and awareness, and the reproduction of oppression and its supporting systems through the acceptance of social status and the implications of mainstream research practices. Ontologically, this stance implies that because human nature operates in a world that is based on a struggle for power (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011), then my research needs to not only document that struggle, but also to make explicit the grounds of, basis for, and stakes resulting from the power. Burrell and Morgan (1979) characterize this stance of radical change to be concerned with finding explanations for social and structural contradictions and modes of domination; critical theory is subjectively aligned with interpretivism, but in disagreement with its belief in the natural regulation in human affairs.

As a criticalist, I perceive power as endemic to all policy: those purportedly in power make the policy, those employed must supposedly enact it, and those subjugated by it must appear to follow it. However, who wears which vest in this (or any, for that matter) game of power relations is not always immediately apparent, nor necessarily subjugative. My position as a criticalist stems from my labour relations and human resources education and experience: I hold certain theories of action influenced by my social location. Therefore, my ontological framing from a critical theory perspective is based on historical realism shaped by social, political, cultural, and economic values (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). This framing affects the methodology and methods by which I approach my research in terms of identifying factors

that had an impact on the provincial policy's development, questions that were asked during its development, and conceptions and understandings that premised those questions.

Epistemologically, the major implication of an assumption of a complex of power relations is the requirement of a criticalist to discern and explain these relations and the complex in which they operate. This stance is premised on the following assumption: "The relationship between concept and object and between signifier and signified is never stable or fixed and is often mediated by the social relations of capitalist production and consumption" (Kincheloe, McLaren, & Steinberg, 2011, p. 14). Analysis of the policy discourses depends upon exploration of the relationships between the signifier and the signified as they reflect power relations within the institution as evidenced at one college.

In this exploration, I admit to an agenda for change in the practice at Fontenal that results from the policy. As an implicated advocate, I wish to illuminate relations of ruling and hegemonic assumptions that may drive the discourses. After all, it was my discomfort from my participation in and the possible perpetuation of these elements that motivated this research. I seek structural and historical insights of a variety that Freire (1972) might term *demythologization* to better understand what lies behind this policy.

Poststructuralism

The demythologization of criticalism links to the deconstructionism of poststructuralism, which comprises my third theoretical lens. Ontologically, I defend its anti-realism on the instability that I see in the language of the policy at the provincial level and, ultimately, in the language used to produce the accounts and explanations of the policy: "There can be, therefore, no reality posited beyond the text with reference to which meaning can be stabilized among different subjects" (Smith D. E., 1999, p. 100). Those who conceive of the policy use one

language, those who write the provincial policy another, academic administrators and authors of the college policy another, and curriculum designers yet another. These different languages may sound the same, may even use the same words and so may appear to represent the same reality, but there is no reality from a poststructural perspective.

Epistemologically, my goal as a poststructuralist is to make explicit the discourses that form the knowledge, "a formation subjected to and limited by historical and sociocultural assumptions, conditions, and power relations" (Stinson, 2009, p. 511). However, in a more cynical turn from criticalism, there is no ultimate explanation to be provided in "perfect maps" (Smith R. , 2010): "Meaning is always postponed … It can never be finalized: there is no 'closure', no point at which meaning is established once and for all" (Smith R. , 2010, p. 146). Furthermore, not only is the knowledge discursively formed, so is the participant: "the discursively constituted subject redefines the person as a subject rather than as an individual" (Stinson, 2009, p. 501).

Poststructurally, I perceive value in my explication of the formations and the subjects as represented in their discourses and the language that comprises them so that I might understand "how knowledge, truth, and subjects are produced in language and cultural practice as well as *how they might be reconfigured*" (St Pierre, 2000, p. 486, emphasis mine). But through these reconfigurations, from a theoretical perspective, the reality grows more and more decentred and in greater question because of the destabilized referent of language (Smith D. E., 1999). The research will explore the bases for these destabilized referents in the texts comprising the discourses: "All signifiers … are derivative with regard to what would wed the voice indissolubly to the mind or to the thought of the signified sense, indeed to the thing itself" (Derrida, 1978, p. 11)

In the same way that the selection of the traditions is deliberate to ensure a robustness of scaffolding, the order of these lenses in the table is purposeful, both from a columnar and row perspective: the framing occurs in an iterative sequence premised on the characteristics outlined by Ravitch and Riggan (2012), i.e., my social location, institutional location, and life experience influence my ideological commitments, theories of action, and epistemological assumptions – moving down the vertical column – and firstly as an interpretivist, then a criticalist, and then as a poststructuralist. This recursive cycling through of rationale (why do I think it so?) and theory (according to what lens?) permits an iterative verification of congruencies – a fundamental and continuous process, given the impact that these considerations have on my methodology, methods, and, ultimately, findings.

What I *can* and *will* find is premised upon these decisions, and the ordering of these decisions, to conduct research as an interpretive critical poststructuralist (rather than as a poststructural criticalist, for example). However, not only is there a political dimension to the theoretical identification, given that "theories frame our vision of the world as it was, is, and might be" (Sears & Cairns, 2015, p. 7), the politics continue into the particular features that I select for the purposes of my research. I emphasize certain characteristics from each tradition while downplaying or ignoring others to further commensurability. I endeavor to remain conscious of the reasons for and the consequences of these selections, a reckoning that is encouraged through the identification of my posture as researcher as identified in Table 1.

My posture as researcher that results from the intersections of this scaffolding provides the defense for my methodology and methods in Chapter 4. This interpretive stance is characterized as a "co-constructor of knowledge, of understanding and interpretation of the meaning of lived experiences" (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 196). My attention is focused on how

the enactors of the policy understand and interpret the policy and their experience with the policy. My criticalist stance is also that of a "transformative intellectual" (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011), as I explore the "ideological superstructures" (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 32) with which we interact in the form of social relations. And finally, my poststructuralist stance is that of a guide to the choices available to participants in terms of veracity, accuracy, and adequacy of representation (Smith D. E., 1999). I will explore these choices through the language comprising the discourses.

Given the theoretical features outlined there, the three traditions are commensurable in terms of the goal of cultural understanding from the perspective of the participants. However, one challenge to commensurability lies in interpretivism's avoidance of effecting a change (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011); this transformative objective of social emancipation is pivotal to the critical theorist. My response to this challenge springs from the defense of my ordering of the traditions as applied to my research: first, I familiarize myself with the discourses as an interpretivist, then, I defamiliarize as a criticalist.

An interpretive critical poststructuralist stance permits me to explore broader matters of educational philosophy while undertaking my research. Ontologically, my theoretical framework leads to an analysis of *the social* as comprised of multiple realities and various orchestrations of people's activities (Smith D. E., 1999; Law & Urry, 2004). Epistemologically, I perceive these realities and orchestrations to be reflected in the language of the general education discourses. Within these discourses, I seek to situate and categorize the language of the provincial policy and its institutional processes "in the larger social contexts in which they occur, in which they operate and are operated upon" (Anyon, 2009, p. 3)

Chapter Summary

The history of the Ontario college system and Fontanel College in Chapter 2 provided the foundation for an outline of the provincial policy on general education and Fontanel's response to that policy. A discussion of the definition, purposes, and goals of general education within the Ontario college system led to this chapter's description of my theoretical lenses. The research question, methodology, and methods in Chapter 4 are subsequently built upon the interpretive critical poststructural scaffolding.

Chapter 4: Concerns of Methodology and Method

In this chapter, I outline the methodological considerations of my theoretical scaffolding in defense of my selection of institutional ethnography (IE). I proceed with a description of the IE methodology, detailing the problematic of my research and the discourses as identified in the research situation. I then describe the methods used for the research, including the starting point, the definition of the institution and its informants, and the data-gathering and analysis processes. Material in this chapter has been refined from my comprehensive examination (Surman, 2015) and research proposal (Surman, 2016).

Methodological Considerations of My Theoretical Intersections

In Table 1 of Chapter 3, I outlined the ontology, epistemology, and research products of my interpretive critical poststructuralist scaffolding, and I defended my approach and the commensurability of these theoretical lenses. In Table 2, I outline the methodological considerations of the three theoretical traditions that support my selection of institutional ethnography (IE) before describing the methodology and its application to my methods of data gathering and analysis.

Table 2

Methodological Considerations

	Interpretivism	**Critical Theory**	**Poststructuralism**
Methods for seeking out new knowledge	Naturalistic (Burrell & Morgan, 1979)	Dialogic/dialectical (Guba & Lincoln, 2005)	Deconstruction Use of language grounded in shared experiential context (Guba & Lincoln, 2005)
Inquiry aim (Guba & Lincoln, 2005)	Reconstruction of meaning of lived experience (Guba & Lincoln, 2005)	Find social power structure (Crotty, 1998)	Form and nature of reality and intrinsic value (Guba & Lincoln, 2005)
Nature of knowledge	Multiple mental constructions from interaction with others (Guba, 1990)	Structural and historical insights (Guba & Lincoln, 2005)	Critical subjectivity (Guba & Lincoln, 2005)
Quality criteria	Credibility, transferability (Guba & Lincoln, 2005)	Ability to impart action (Guba & Lincoln, 2005)	Catalyst for action Authenticity and trustworthiness (Guba & Lincoln, 2005)

Institutional ethnography functions as a methodology at the intersection of interpretivism, criticalism, and poststructuralism in the aims of its inquiry: “The aim is to map the translocal process of administration and governance that shape lives and circumstances by way of the linkages of ruling relations” (Holstein & Gubrium, 2011, p. 351). My goals for this research may be considered as a progression: as an interpretivist, to elicit and understand individual constructs as representative of lived experience; as a criticalist, to interrogate values and assumptions to challenge social structures; and as a poststructuralist, to rethink concepts of agency and power in the construction and deconstruction of the marginalized subject in these relations (Stinson, 2009). Since my aims for this inquiry are to critically analyze the discourses reflecting the General Education (Gen Ed) policy, IE will yield the data for this analysis.

Furthermore, the IE methodology has the capacity to yield knowledge in alignment with my theoretical scaffolding in terms of structural and historical insights (Guba & Lincoln, 2005) regarding the context and intent of the policy. The potential for emancipatory expressions of unseen forces and constrained freedoms, whereby individuals are tied into institutional actions arising outside their knowing (Smith D. E., 1999), result from this criticalist perspective. These unseen forces and constrained freedoms may be perceived to comprise Smith’s conception of a complex of ruling relations, connecting participants in the social and organizing institutional work (Smith D. E., 2005). A further expression of this viewpoint on knowledge from a poststructuralist stance takes me to the perspective that “all realities are socially and experientially based, local and specific, and dependent for their form and content on the persons who hold them” (Guba, 1990, p. 27). By extension, these constructed realities are dependent for their form and content on the discourses built by those participants, and are therefore equally constructible and destructible. With an acknowledgement of a world constructed through

language and cultural practices comes an understanding that it can be deconstructed and reconstructed again and again (St Pierre, 2000).

From my theoretical perspective, the quality of the inquiry conducted using IE can be judged on its credibility, transferability, and ability to impact action (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). While my research at one college is not generalizable to all Ontario colleges, an IE approach to this research problem permits data gathering and analysis that is confirmed and judged credible by my informants, and as a result, deemed transferable and applicable to other Ontario colleges. The quality of the inquiry can be judged against my goals: "The IE researcher's goal is not to generalize about the people under study, but to identify and explain social processes that have generalizing effects" (Holstein & Gubrium, 2011, p. 351).

These considerations, largely derived from Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba's (2011) schematic, permit me to defend my methodological choice and the effect of that choice: "Social inquiry and its methods are productive: they (help to) make social realities and social worlds. They do not simply describe the world as it is, but also enact it" (Law & Urry, 2004, p. 390). This enactment *and amplification* of the social (Law & Urry, 2004) is an effect that factored into not only my methodological selection and implementation, but also my stated aims so that the inquiry may fulfill the criteria of quality, value, and goodness. Enactment and amplification of the social subsequently occurs through the participation in and inquiry into its relations.

The Methodology of Institutional Ethnography

The IE methodology is primarily characterized by two features: its conceptual framing of everyday experiences heard, read about, or observed; and its political nature, in that it explores "how people's lives are bound up in ruling relations that tie individuals into institutional actions *arising outside their knowing*" (Campbell, 2006, p. 92; emphasis mine). The first feature

accounts for my interpretive lens; the second, my criticalist lens. Like other forms of ethnography dependent upon naturalistic data, IE relies on interviews, observations, and documents, but goes further to use these data as entry points into the social relations of the setting (Campbell, 2006). Campbell and Gregor (2008) describe the orientation of IE researchers thus: "Institutional ethnographers believe that people and events are *actually* tied together in ways that make sense of such abstractions as power, knowledge, capitalism, patriarchy, race, the economy, the state, policy, culture, and so on" (p. 17). Consequently, a dialogical relationship is required between an institutional ethnographer and her informants in a criticalist sense to gain an understanding of these interrelated social constructions and the discourses of these constructions.

While other forms of ethnography may aim to develop a portrait of a cultural group, IE keeps the institution as its focus: "The analytic goal is to make visible the ways the institutional order creates the conditions of individual experience" (McCoy, 2006, p. 109). Therefore, while IE generates descriptions of the *informants'* meanings, the institution remains central to the analysis: its order and the available understandings of its order as reflected in the informants' discourses are the essence of an IE approach. The institutional relations and the social organization of experience remain foremost; the IE researcher needs to avoid getting caught up in the informants' narratives or in the dominance of the institutional discourse in what Smith (2005) terms *institutional capture*.

Institutional ethnography's focus on ruling relations and the abstractions that underlie these relations aligns with the deconstructionist aspects of poststructuralism, as does Smith's (2005) caveat. The exploration of the context, intent, and assumptions of the Gen Ed policy requires me to delve into and scrutinize the language that is used by the informants to talk about their experiences and the language that is used in documents. Taken together, the language of

these texts forms the ways of knowing: “What institutional ethnographers refer to as an institutional discourse is … any widely shared or authoritative way of knowing (measuring, naming, describing) states of affairs that render them actionable within institutional relations of purpose and accountability” (McCoy, 2006, p. 108).

The institutional ethnographer functions as a located knower as she approaches the plurality of institutional discourses, unable to stand apart from her inquiry and her own way of knowing (Campbell & Gregor, 2008). She approaches, documents, and analyzes the discourses of the informants’ interactions that take place face-to-face and through texts. The texts may be documents or representations that have a relatively fixed and replicable character, “for it is that aspect of texts … that allows them to play a standardizing and mediating role” (DeVault & McCoy, 2006, p. 34).

Taken together, these textually-mediated social relations (Smith D. E., 1987) are represented by discourses that frame issues, establish terms and concepts, and in various ways serve as resources that people draw into and create during their everyday work processes. These documents, the actions in which they function, and the discourses in which they are embedded are both observable and occurring in interviews: “Whether the text or textual process, in institutional ethnography it is examined for the ways it mediates relations of ruling and organizes *what can be said and done*” (DeVault & McCoy, 2006, p. 34; emphasis mine).

Identifying the Problematic in IE. According to Smith’s (1987) ontology of the social, the meanings of the social world and its relations are constructed by the participants through their lived experiences. These meanings, which were affected by happenings outside of their experiences and outside of the local setting of Fontanel, comprised the *problematic* of my research, a term used in a specific way in IE “to direct attention to a possible set of questions that

may not have been posed … but are ‘latent’ in the actualities of the experienced world” (Smith D. E., 1987, p. 91).

In the review of Gen Ed course outlines at Fontanel College, the committee members constructed meanings of their experiences, while taking for granted the construction of this meaning and the effect of the local and extra-local happenings. I focused on the blitz as an actual process that represented the operationalization of a section of the Gen Ed policy. The completion of the checklist during the blitz by the committee members represented a specific and concrete example of the coordination of the actions of the participants. My attention was drawn to a set of unasked questions on which these coordinated actions were based. I became aware that the completion of the checklist in some way represented or exemplified a broader set of social relations represented by these actions.

I identified the problematic in terms of discovery of the relevant features of social organization underlying the blitz. This identification permitted me to investigate how things happened as they did in terms of Gen Ed at Fontanel. Furthermore, this notion of a problematic assisted me to more accurately identify my own stance in relation to the inquiry – as opposed to methodologically removing myself from it (Campbell & Gregor, 2008). As I noticed and named the relations in this research setting in which I was situated, I correspondingly noticed and named the features of my standpoint. My inquiry started from my standpoint, and the problematic was subsequently given shape by the experiences of my informants (Smith D. E., 2015). This inquiry and its problematic required the context of the history, assumptions, and intentions of general education, coupled with an examination of my worldview.

My theoretical perspective led me to explore two questions that emerged from the inquiry. These questions, which essentially comprised the problematic, underpinned the

coordinated actions of the participants in the blitz and reflected the intent and assumptions of the Gen Ed policy and its broader set of social relations. The first question, based on DeVault and McCoy's (2006) work, revolved around the participants' role in the policy's operationalization: what could be said and done by the participants in the blitz? In an effort to answer this question, I explored the participants' authority, responsibility, and contribution. The second question, based on Campbell's (2006) work, was premised upon the political influence on the blitz: how were the participants' actions bound up in ruling relations and institutional actions outside of their knowing?

Identifying the Discourses Using IE. In the highly textualized environment of an academic institution such as Fontanel, participants in a process such as the blitz interacted face-to-face, but also through texts such as the checklist. The checklist as text, the work that came before and after its completion in the blitz, the text of the Gen Ed policy that precipitated this activity, and the other documents that supported this review were comprised of and represented by discourses. These discourses were comprised of language. As a result, these discourses were, in part, comprised of these texts and the language of the texts, but also of the language that surrounded and supported the use of these texts. The informants took part in these discourses in ways that informed and enabled their participation in the institutional process of the Gen Ed course outline review.

As I built upon Foucault's (1972) characterization of discourse as a conversation organized through a variety of textual forms, I purposefully moved to a plurality of discourses in my inquiry, for I did not believe that there was one dominant or common discourse. To assume one discourse was to ascribe singular intention and perfectly coordinated action from an agreed-upon context – circumstances that I perceived were less likely to occur in institutionally

organized social relations. My rationale for this plurality was premised upon Griffith's (1995) study of three discursively linked, textually interdependent organizations of knowledge of mothering, schooling, and children's development; upon Nichols and Griffith's (2009) tracing of principals' and parents' descriptions of their work against provincial educational policy; and upon Gerrard and Farrell's (2013) foregrounding of the creation and dissemination of discourses supporting educational practice and governance.

These multiple discourses represented the social relations of the institution and the experiences of those people taking part in these relations, essentially reflecting the Gen Ed policy's operationalization and the progressive investment with institutional meanings (Gerrard & Farrell, 2013). Analysis of these discourses permitted an examination of the social relations represented by these texts. I subsequently explored the problematic of the social relations revealed and characterized by these discourses through an examination of these texts. The discourses constructed and were constructed by the social relations. The social relations comprised a reality and were constructed by the participants in these relations, leading to a social world perceived by these participants. These texts, then, represented the discourses that I analyzed; conversely, the discourses could be explored through an analysis of the texts.

That being said, according to the social organization of knowledge, "I do not stand apart from what I know and what I learn about the world: I enact the world that I inhabit and know about, in concert with other people" (Campbell & Gregor, 2008, p. 22). I paid attention to myself as a text in these discourses. I read the variety of texts that surround and are used in the blitz, and I critically analyzed the discourses of Gen Ed as comprised of and motivated by these texts. I intend the analysis that I produce in the form of a thesis text to explicate these discourses and thus to function differently from the ruling texts that I analyze (Campbell & Gregor, 2008). In

this way, *my* text may function to mediate the social relations of Gen Ed in a way of acting upon my responsibility as a criticalist researcher.

Method

In this section, I describe the starting point for the research. I then provide a definition of the institution and a rationale for the selection of the informants, before describing the data-gathering and analysis.

The Starting Point for the Data Gathering: The Checklist. I gathered data on a particular process that exemplifies the institutionalization of the Gen Ed policy at Fontanel. I commenced my investigation from the point of the checklist completion during the blitz, the review of the Gen Ed course outlines that is completed biannually by the committee members. This starting point was selected based on Turner's (2006) study of a municipal planning process and Vo-Quang's (1998) textual analysis of graduate student assessment reports. The completion of the checklist coordinated the actions of the informants and functioned as the pivot point of my research.

The discovery of the social relations underlying the blitz and the meanings constructed by the informants that are organized outside of the local setting comprised the problematic of my research. As a major Ontario college, Fontanel constituted a research site whose activities were representative of a local setting. The blitz was conducted using supporting documents in addition to the checklist, including guidelines, instructions, and exemplars. These texts coordinated the sequences of action of the Gen Ed committee members completing the review in an example of the textually-mediated social relations characteristic of those analyzed by IE methodology.

The informants constructed meanings of their experiences while engaged in these actions, while taking for granted the effect of the local and extra-local happenings on this construction

and the dynamic nature of their co- construction. These meanings were reflected in the discourses, characterized in the themes and in the language that constructed those themes as discussed in Chapter 5. Discussion of the impact of these local and extra-local actions appears in Chapter 6 as a critical analysis of the discourses of general education in an effort to respond to the two questions of the problematic. This analysis and these responses explicate the social relations underlying the actual activities of the blitz so that the participants in those actualities better understand their contributions to those relations and their co-constructed reality.

The Institution: Beyond Fontanel. My data-gathering extended to the work that occurs before and after the checklist completion. Because this sequence of actions extends the boundaries of the informants' experiences beyond the setting of Fontanel, I gathered data "into those elements of social organization that connect the local setting and local experiences to sites outside the experiential setting" (Campbell & Gregor, 2008, p. 90) to discover the workings of broader ruling practices.

I initially defined the boundaries of this research to include the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU), renamed in August 2016 to the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development; the institution was not equivalent to the college, but extended to the extra-local. Further rationale for linking the local to the extra-local was found in Heap's (1995) research in a primary-level classroom in relation to the Ministry of Education via curriculum guidelines. During the course of the data-gathering, I determined that the boundaries of the research extended not only to the Ministry, but also to the Ontario College Quality Assurance Service (OCQAS). The institution as a focus of this ethnography was not coterminous with the organization of Fontanel, but rather, as a larger site of study constituted around this particular area of endeavor (Teghtsoonian, 2015).

The Data-Gathering Process for this IE Research: Interviews and Documents. Data collected according to the IE methodology subsequently took two forms in this study: documents and semi-structured interviews. Research ethics approvals from the boards at Nipissing University and Fontanel College were received in January 2016. Following the approvals, I met with the chair of the Gen Ed committee to request access to the information regarding the blitz scheduled for the winter semester. The chair indicated willingness to provide access to the process and its participants and documents.

I interviewed fourteen informants on the basis of their involvement with and knowledge of the Gen Ed policy and its application to the Program Quality Review process at Fontanel and in the wider setting of MTCU and Colleges Ontario. These faculty, academic administrators, and individuals external to Fontanel were recruited via email through convenience sampling and snowball technique to initially assess interest in participation. Program information letters (PILs) to those agreeing to participate in the research, together with an electronic copy of the consent form, were sent by email. The consent forms were signed and returned to the researcher at the time of the interviews in either hard or scanned copy.

The Gen Ed committee held a course review blitz in early February, and I conducted interviews with the two committee members who conducted a review of the two mandated Gen Ed courses in a building construction diploma program immediately following their participation in the blitz. The interview guide appears in Appendix E. The same interview questions as they appear in this guide were asked of all fourteen informants. Those interview transcripts, in conjunction with a review of the checklist and other texts from the blitz, comprised the entry-level data. The interview schedule can be found in Appendix F.

In February and March, I conducted five process-oriented interviews with the academic chair of the program undergoing PQR review; the course outline writer for one of the courses; the curriculum specialist for the program, the Gen Ed committee member for the faculty in which the program was situated; and the longest-serving member of the Gen Ed committee who had the most experience with the Gen Ed course review process. I was not able to interview the program coordinator or the writer for the other Gen Ed course outline as they were absent due to illness.

In my interviews with extra-local informants (Bisaillon, 2012), I explored the work before and after the completion of the checklist and gathered data regarding the context and intent of the policy and the assumptions embedded in the policy as part of the wider institution and as representative of the ruling relations. I gathered level-two data through context-oriented interviews with five past and present academic administrators from Fontanel involved with the Gen Ed policy. I also conducted interviews with two informants who had been employed by MTCU in development and operationalization of the Gen Ed policy. An additional interview of clarification was conducted with one of these informants. Four individuals involved in academic administration who had been contacted were unable to participate because of the time constraints of the data-gathering period.

Interviews lasting between thirty and sixty minutes were conducted face-to-face or via Skype, with the researcher transcribing the interviews from digital voice recordings. The same semi-structured interview questions were asked of each informant, with follow-up questions for clarification and further explanation as appropriate to the informant. Interview transcripts were provided to the informants within one week of the interviews so that accuracy could be verified, and changes were accepted and made within one week. The audio recordings were subsequently erased.

I attempted to retain balance between providing proof of attribution of quotations to a variety of the informants and ensuring confidentiality and anonymity. I devised a coding system whereby the interviews conducted with informants holding administrative positions were identified by the letter A, those conducted with informants directly involved in the blitz were identified by the letter B, and those holding ministry positions by the letter M.

The transcripts were treated as confidential, with removal of identifiers and replacement with codes. While the codes could be used to re-identify the informants, they were not known to anyone other than myself as the researcher and my supervisor. No paper files existed; electronic files with the de-identified and coded information were stored on a password-protected personal laptop, with the codes stored on a password-protected laptop separate from the personal laptop. I committed to retaining these electronic files for a five-year period.

The Process of Analyzing the Data in this IE Research. I initially read through the two transcripts that comprised the entry-level data, highlighting key words and phrases that the transcripts had in common. These highlighted words and phrases formed the first draft of a list of emergent themes as recorded in the margins. I then read through the remaining twelve transcripts, highlighting key words and phrases to support and supplement the list of emergent themes. I refined the list of themes, adding subordinate themes to assess the entire group of transcripts, and setting aside themes when more useful themes emerged. From these master and subordinate themes, discourse threads were teased out. The process I followed resembled that of interpretative phenomenological analysis (Walby, 2013) in its interest in the construction and interpretation of meaning.

My analysis of the discourses in these texts as representative of the social relations was informed by five of Gee's (2005) seven building tasks of language: significance, activities,

identities, relationships, politics, and connections. I judged two of Gee's (2005) building tasks, those of relationships and of sign systems and knowledge, to be less applicable to my analysis, given their more specific application to the field of discourse analysis. Rather than engaging in critical discourse analysis, Critical Discourse Analysis (purposefully capitalized, given its differences as an analytical approach) or conversation analysis (Rogers, 2011), I conducted a critical analysis of the discourses from the foundation of an IE methodology. I needed to address my research question with the methodological commitments of IE without becoming unduly bogged down in micro matters of coding where I might miss the forest *and its clearings* – that is to say, the discourses and what was missing from the discourses -- for the trees.

Through a combination of the identification of themes, the application of the listening guide approach, and Gee's building tasks of language, I mapped the discourses embodied in the texts of the transcripts and the documents. These discourses permitted me to trace the institutional workings that were contained in the language as a cartographer of social inquiry. I produced a map of the Gen Ed blitz, adopting the conventions of Turner's (2006, p. 147) visual representation of a municipal planning process from an IE perspective. The map depicting the Gen Ed blitz is found in Appendix G. I conducted the fifteenth interview with one of my informants to clarify my understanding as I drafted this map.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I outlined the methodological considerations of my theoretical scaffolding in defense of my selection of institutional ethnography (IE). I described the IE methodology, including its particular use of the problematic and the potential for identification of multiple discourses. I concluded with a description of my research methods, including the starting point, the definition of the institution and its informants, and the data-gathering and analysis processes.

Chapter 5: An Ethnographic Exploration of Fontanel as Reflected in the Discourses

In this chapter, the discourses of general education at Fontanel College as found in the texts of transcripts and documents are described. I describe the committee's review of the general education course outlines, known as the blitz, while exploring the problematic of the process as reflected in these discourses. My delineation of the discourses' themes is supplemented by analysis of the themes' construction through language using Gee's (2005) framework. I subsequently characterize the dichotomous discourses that were embodied in the texts of the blitz.

The Social Organization Underlying the Blitz

The General Education (Gen Ed) committee held a blitz in early February. I held interviews with the two committee members who conducted a review of the two mandated Gen Ed courses in a traditionally vocational diploma program immediately following their participation in the blitz. A third committee member did not participate in the review. I also conducted interviews with the academic chair of the program undergoing program quality review (PQR), the course outline writer for one of the courses, the curriculum specialist for the program, the Gen Ed committee member for the faculty in which the program was situated, and a long-serving member of the Gen Ed committee. A description of the Gen Ed course review process appears here; a map of the process can be found in the Appendix G.

Although the committee also reviews general education elective courses that are offered to students in programs across Fontanel, I focused on the review of the mandated general education courses that reside within a specific program. The elective courses are offered online; the mandated courses, either in-class or in a hybrid (in-class and online) delivery. All students must pass the general education courses in their program of study to graduate with the credential.

A review of all the elective courses available to students, even in a specific program, was not feasible within the confines of this research.

I selected the blitz to represent the operationalization of the Gen Ed policy; the completion of the checklist during the blitz coordinated the actions of the participants and functioned as the pivot point of my research. These participants constructed meanings of their experiences while engaged in these actions; they took for granted the effect of the local and extra-local happenings on this construction and the dynamic nature of their co- construction. In addition to the checklist, the blitz was conducted using several other documents appearing in Appendices B (Fontanel policy), C (Fontanel supporting document), J (outline of the steps), and K (form for general education feedback). These texts coordinated the sequences of the action of the Gen Ed committee members completing the review in an example of the textually-mediated social relations characteristic of those analyzed by IE methodology. These meanings were reflected in the discourses, characterized in the themes and in the language that constructed those themes.

Discussion of the impact of these local and extra-local actions appears in Chapter 6 as a critical analysis of the discourses of general education in an effort to respond to the two questions of the problematic. This analysis and these responses explicate the social relations underlying the actual activities of the blitz so that the participants in those actualities better understand their contributions to those relations and their co-constructed reality. My theoretical perspective led me to focus on two questions that I perceived to be latent in the experienced actualities of the blitz (Smith D. E., 1987): these questions comprised the problematic of this institutional ethnography, as outlined in Chapter 4: what could be said and done by the

participants, and how the participants' actions were bound up in ruling relations and institutional actions outside of their knowing.

The Focus of the Research: The Blitz Process

The quality assurance administrator contacts the chair of the general education committee with a list of programs that are scheduled to undergo PQR in the academic year, based upon an institutionally established five-year cycle. In conjunction with the administrator, the chair determines the semester in which the general education courses within these programs will be reviewed by the committee in an effort to balance the review workload between the two semesters that the committee meets. The committee is notified of the scheduling of the blitz by the chair.

The committee is comprised of representatives from each school at Fontanel. These representatives are primarily full-time faculty who receive release time on their workload to act on the committee as stipulated by college policy.

In preparation for the review, the chair divides the members of the committee into teams. These teams are normally comprised of three individuals, none of whom are faculty within the school of the program under review. One of these individuals is customarily a member of the committee who has experience with the blitz. The chair assigns two to three programs for each team to review.

The team members then review the course outlines during a committee-wide blitz meeting or by collaborating online through the exchange of review documents. First, each reviewer confirms that, collectively, the program of study contains the general education courses that are required by the policy in terms of quantity and themes. Each reviewer also confirms that the general education course outlines in the program of study have previously been approved by

the committee. These details are recorded in the program's general education PQR feedback form.

Then, the reviewers examine the individual course outlines for these program-mandated Gen Ed courses before completing a checklist for each course. The team subsequently arrives at an agreement on all items on the program's overall Gen Ed PQR feedback form and on all items of the checklist for each general education course that the team is reviewing in each program of study. One team member then forwards the completed Gen Ed PQR feedback form, paired with the individual course review checklists for the program, to the committee chair. This review → form completion → consensus → forwarding cycle is repeated by the members of the team for each of the two to three programs that it has been assigned to review in the blitz.

The chair collates and summarizes the review team's comments for each program under review to produce a report that is sent to the program coordinator and copied to the academic chair of that program, the Gen Ed committee representative from the school in which the program resides, the curriculum services representative for that school, the program quality assurance administrator, the administrator's assistant, and the team leader of that program's PQR process.

Within two weeks of the report being emailed, the Gen Ed rep from the school in which the program resides emails the PQR team leader and the program coordinator to enquire if assistance is required to make the changes to the course outlines as recommended in the reports from the blitz.

The academic chair is asked to return a scan of the signed General Education PQR feedback form to the Chair of the General Education Committee within two weeks of receipt of

the report, indicating the semester or academic year by which the changes will be made for course delivery and, if applicable, reflected within the annual curriculum review process.

I have included a map of this process in Appendix G, a copy of the checklist in Appendix H, an outline of the steps in the Gen Ed PQR review process as used by the committee members in Appendix I, and the form for general education PQR feedback in Appendix J.

Identification of the Themes in the Data

I identified primary and secondary themes in the data through a reading of the fifteen entry-level and second-level interview transcripts and documents. The first two transcripts comprised entry-level data in IE terms; the other thirteen, second-level data. I have included a copy of the interview schedule in the Appendix F. I highlighted key words and phrases to support and supplement the list of emergent themes. The process I followed resembled that of interpretative phenomenological analysis (Walby, 2013) in its interest in the construction and interpretation of meaning.

I coded the interview transcripts of the first two committee members as B1 and B2. The transcripts of the five process-oriented interviews with local informants were coded as B3, B4, B5, B6, and B7; the transcripts of the five context-oriented interviews with past and present local informants were coded as A1, A2, A3, A4, and A5; and the transcripts of the three interviews with the two extra-local informants were coded as M1, M2, and M3. I used this coding method to balance the protection of anonymity that I promised to the informants with the attribution of quotations. This attribution was important for two reasons: to give primacy to the texts over my preconceptions, and to ensure that no one text dominated the analysis of the discourses.

Emergent Themes in the Entry-Level Data: The First Two Interviews. The interview transcripts of the two committee members who conducted a Gen Ed course review, in

conjunction with a review of the checklist and the other texts from the blitz, comprised the entry-level data. I observed two pairs of themes in these transcripts: a defensiveness of the value of general education by the informants in the face of the negative perception of general education from the students' perspective, and a sense of certainty in the review process, paired with a shaky sense of confidence in shared understandings on which the blitz depended.

The informants insisted that the general education courses "serve a very useful function… They help the students think in a more critical way than the other courses that they take" (B1) – courses for students "to think outside the box. Not learning how to do something. But learning how to think. Think critically. Perceive the environment around them" (B1). One informant said: "I think what they're looking at is broadening the students' civil life and looking at making sure that the students … have another chance to look at life in another way" (B2). One informant summed up the contribution of Gen Ed courses in this way: "I do see the value in it, regardless" (B1).

In terms of societal contribution, the informants felt that the courses permitted the students to "maybe know a little bit more about their place in society … I think that Gen Ed is at least attempting to open their eyes to that sort of thing" (B1). They felt "it's not trying to teach you all the time about how to write this proper document, but it's more your place in society as an individual, in the professional workforce" (B2). Furthermore, Gen Ed helps a student "to function in society and look at new endeavors that they could bring in for purposes of updating … with technologies changing so quickly … some of the courses can become redundant" (B2).

However, the informants emphasized the dislike of general education courses by Fontanel students: "I find that the students see the Gen Ed courses as primarily a waste of time" (B1). They spoke of the difficulty of selling the courses to students and of the efforts to make them

appealing: “So that’s part of our mandate, to ensure that we have courses that are interesting to students” (B1).

Even as they defended the value of general education in the face of student disinterest, these informants expressed confidence in the blitz:

> At which point we try to ensure that these courses try to reflect that sort of a mandate, that is, as it’s set forth to us. It isn’t much of a debate. It’s like, is this happening, is it not happening …, trying to ensure that a course is non-vocational. (B1)

Yet underlying this confidence in the process was a lack of clarity around the definition, purposes, and aims of general education:

> The definition of Gen Ed is not the same from person to person. I don’t even know if my understanding of Gen Ed is the appropriate understanding of it. I think it is, but I also know that another person might completely disagree with me … I find it’s extremely variant in terms of what a Gen Ed is, what the purpose of it is, positivity towards Gen Ed courses is extremely variant... Because if we can’t agree on what a GenEd is, then it’s sort of a nonstart. (B1)

Refinement of Themes Resulting from the Second-Level Data: The Next Thirteen Interviews. Second-level data collection consisted of interviews with twelve informants on the basis of their involvement with and knowledge of the Gen Ed policy and its application to the PQR process at Fontanel and in the wider setting of MTCU and the Ontario College Quality Assurance Service (OCQAS). Five of these informants were involved in some way in February’s blitz; five were involved in a past or present capacity with implementation of the policy on a local level; and two were involved in an extra-local capacity with policy implementation. I

conducted a second interview of clarification with one of these extra-local informants to promote the accuracy of my mapping of the process.

I initially read through these transcripts in the order that the interviews had been conducted. I then grouped the transcripts by similarity of relation rather than by chronology. I then highlighted key words and phrases to support and supplement the list of themes that had emerged in the entry-level data. I refined the list of themes, adding subordinate themes to assess the entire group of transcripts, and setting aside themes when more useful themes emerged. The five documents used in the blitz were also examined. From these master and subordinate themes, discourse threads were teased out.

Five Process-Oriented Interviews with Local Informants. In February and March, I conducted five process-oriented interviews with the academic chair of the program undergoing PQR review, the course outline writer for one of the courses, the curriculum specialist for the program, the Gen Ed committee member for the faculty in which the program was situated, and the longest-serving member of the Gen Ed committee who had the most experience with the Gen Ed course review process.

I began to refine the themes of perceived value, societal contribution, and mixed confidence as I reviewed the transcripts from these five informants who had been directly involved in or affected by the blitz process that had occurred in February. These informants expressed more variation in their perception of the value of general education, from one who bluntly stated “I don’t see the value. I really don’t” (B6) to another who mused:

> They’re supposed to provide the opportunity for a student to explore different things, reflect on how they feel about certain things. On one level, it sounds a little fluffier than a

> vocational course. On the other hand, learning about something different is not a bad thing, at least in my book. (B3)

The theme of societal contribution that I initially identified was carried through here, as it was felt that Gen Ed provided graduates an opportunity to gain breadth and depth of knowledge outside of their area of study: general education "address(es) the issue that we're doing more than just training people" (B3). One informant summarized the policy in this way: "the external stakeholders throughout the province have decided to make you a better person in the community – you need these courses" (B6). Another informant said they were "Something to broaden their horizons … They're supposed to provide the opportunity for a student to explore different things, reflect on how they feel about certain things" (B3).

Some confirmation regarding the graduates' contribution to society and a sense of their place within it appeared in this informant's response:

> … the idea of the students increasing their own awareness of self, society, and developing the ability to formulate intellectual opinions. To question things, to just … become a more whole, more productive citizen overall, is certainly tied in there with some of the goals with respect to that… I think ones where students are asked to reflect and think about how these types of things affect society, and how it can have profound influences in society as well. So, thinking about the bigger picture with respect to their learning, their place in society. (B7)

The theme of shaky assurance related to the process of reviewing the courses that I had initially perceived in the entry-level data became more dominant in these transcripts. The informants seemed to express less confidence in what one termed a "flawed" review process:

> After that, I find the process gets a little hazy, and I'm not actually exactly sure what is done, if anything is done at this point. I'm sure that those changes are made and those suggestions are followed up… Whether the committee then receives a modified outline. I hope we would. My understanding is that we don't. (B5)

Another informant felt frustration at what was perceived as a breakdown in the process:

> The Chair of the Committee has cc'ed me when he's emailed the chairs. I've contacted each and every one of them, and I've never been taken up on that offer. (B2)

Cynicism about the process was expressed more frankly by this informant:

> So there is a bit of a challenge there with respect to executing that and ensuring someone carries it out, because there's no system, really, that exists to track the changes that have been identified and are needed… We don't have that … that process in place where there's a requirement to respond back. (B7)

Five Context-Oriented Interviews with Past and Present Local Informants. As I moved into these interviews, I explored the work before and after the completion of the checklist and gathered data regarding the context and intent of the policy and the assumptions embedded in the policy as part of the wider institution and as representative of the ruling relations. I obtained this level-two data through context-oriented interviews with five past and present academic administrators from Fontanel involved with the general education policy. These informants were more familiar with the policy itself; several had been involved with Fontanel's operationalization of the 1994 policy, as well as with the operationalization of the 2005 policy currently in place.

The theme of the manufacture of employees and citizens by the college through general education was more marked in these transcripts, where one informant spoke of employers "need(ing) more from workers than just vocational knowledge" (A1); another said "… we've got

people who know their trade very well, but know very little about how society works, how they fit in. They don't know anything about how people think beyond themselves, so it's time to give them a bit of breadth" (A4) … "that's where the GenEd piece came in, trying to make the graduate a more well-rounded worker and citizen of Ontario" (A3).

A requirement for re-employability on graduates' parts was more apparent as a theme in these interviews. Informants spoke of students going to jobs "that will require more than just doing some sort of routine labour … And then you get the shift in the global workplace" (A1) where students need to be re-employable if that shift affects them: "but then your skills become outdated" (A3).

There also seemed to be more recognition in these discourses of the part that the language itself played in how the policy was activated:

> … writing the description so that it was a mirror of the theme descriptor. So that you caught the language from the policy in there. Which were very closely written with the sociocultural. So you picked up the language and carried it through. (A1)
>
> It's pretty simple. We've got a review checklist, which we've modified because we felt that the language was still a little bit obscure. Even members of the committee who were new didn't understand what the point was. So, we've modified them to be as transparent and crystal clear as we could. (A4)
>
> And the checklist that was originally developed and modified a couple of times would be used … we did the first couple as a group to get a sense of how people were interpreting the checklist, and then we had individuals, two or three depending on how many we had to work with, independently score the courses against the checklist, and then compared their findings. (A5)

The theme of cynicism and frustration with General Education courses revealed itself further, with subthemes of illusion and questions of honesty:

> So you'd look at a course, and see if it is was leaning more towards the humanities, the social sciences, it was probably a GenEd. If not, it was probably dressed up as a GenEd, but not really.(A1)
>
> You know, I used to be think passionately that it was good. Now I don't know that it makes that much of a difference. (A3)
>
> The stories about how this evolved are little fairy tales that people tell them in order to sell them this difficult concept. They still don't buy in. They don't think that the students need to be balanced or broadly based. (A4)
>
> A sense of hollow efficiency pervaded these discourses:
>
> It was more of a checklist … do you have these bits, rather than are these truly GenEd courses. (A1).
>
> And the GenEd curriculum committee is there to ensure that our GenEd courses are GenEd. .. To vet courses against their checkbox. I think one of my problems with the checkbox … is that it intends to be a checkbox more about structure and what it isn't, as opposed to … elaborating on what it's supposed to be. (A2)
>
> But by and large, it seemed to go into a black hole. I wasn't sure that great changes were made. (A3)
>
> Nobody's actually checking to make sure that what they're saying is done ...is actually visible. (A4)

The unease that informants felt regarding their role, extending to a sense of culpability, was reflected in the transcripts:

> And I didn't care about the context … the context was the faculty's responsibility. Not mine… there's a line there. And you just don't go over that. (A2)
>
> There was a question there of who should own general education. So, general education became everybody's job, but really nobody's job in terms of following up and … so the GenEd committee really became the advocate for general education. (A5)

In these transcripts, a theme of force and aggression was more evident as one informant described the imposition of general education courses within programs of study:

> And I described myself as having armor and going around, presenting at department meetings and offering to assist with the developing the course outlines, identifying which courses would be GenEd. (A3)
>
> A lot of people embraced the idea of general education, but were reluctant to give up precious program hours that were aligned with the vocational component. (A5)

This theme extended even further to concepts of ownership and questionable ethics "it's because we're trying to sneak (the courses) in to students" (B4). The imposition of general education was portrayed as a swindle, "a sort of sense of taking away from what people already valued" (A5), at times supplanting vocational education and core skills that students had enrolled at college to gain:

> Some faculty thought that it was a waste of time to teach a student that paid his or her good money to get a skill something outside of that. So when you then have to give up your precious time teaching a core skill to give them time to go and take someone's elective that was not very popular. (A3).
>
> They're just sort of over there, taking frivolous bird courses … who is this committee to come and talk to me about my course? (A3)

> That never really was a winning battle. There was a lot of pushback from students and from faculty around GenEd, why couldn't it be something that at least would support the career, if not be required for the career goals. (A5)

Three Context-Oriented Interviews with Extra-Local Informants. I also conducted interviews with two informants who had been employed by MTCU in development and operationalization of the Gen Ed policy. An additional interview of clarification was conducted with one of these informants.

The theme of production of (re-) employable citizens was also evident in these discourses:

> It provides enough information for … the government to be satisfied that it's meeting its requirements to employers and to students who will graduate. (M1)

> You know how to take information, you to know how to seek information, and apply it in a way that is either directly related to my job or will help me in another job. (M2)

The countervailing forces of the vocational supporters and the supporters of general education was supported by these transcripts:

> So there was a lot of pushback …They were actually having to do pretty substantial removal work within the program of study to make a place for Gen Ed, which creates hostility. (M1)

The theme of hollow efficiency carried through in these transcripts:

> And if that meant sort of those checkmarks, it kind of was understood that the colleges were supposed to be good at the curriculum side of it. What you're supposed to be doing, you've been told, and you're just doing it. And that was working out for better or for worse, in different ways, I guess. (M1)

> It was basically a paper exercise on the course outline, and that was it. There was always a dream, a fantasy maybe, that results would be looked at … but to the best of my knowledge, for the most part, it's probably developed levels of paper complexity over time. (M1)

The Themes of the Discourses as Constructed by the Building Tasks of Language

In addition to exploring the themes in the texts of the transcripts and the documents, I also paid attention to the language acts that constructed these themes. Gee (2005) characterizes these acts into seven building tasks, whereby the language creates a world of activities, identities, and even the institution itself; I identified five tasks that corresponded most closely to the considerations of institutional ethnography: significance, activities, identities, connections, and politics. I judged that two of Gee's (2005) building tasks, those of relationships and of sign systems and knowledge, were less applicable to my analysis, given their more specific application to the field of discourse analysis and their lack of methodological commensurability. During a second reading of the fifteen transcripts and the five documents used in the blitz, I noted these five groupings of constructive acts.

Significance. Language was used in the texts to give meaning or value and to build layers of significance (Gee, 2005). The informants at the local level were highly cognizant of the impact of the language on their activities; the strength of the language gave value to the checklist and to their efforts in the review:

> It's pretty simple. We've got a review checklist, which we've modified because we felt that the language was still a little bit obscure. Even members of the committee who were

> new didn't understand what the point was. So, we've modified them to be as transparent and crystal clear as we could. (A4)

One informant, who read through a form during the interview to determine the outcome of a review, was gratified to see a checkmark in a box beside a certain word:

> And everything looks good. And apparently … so far, so good … approved … oh! It was approved. (B4)

Informants recognized that they had to be cautious in the language they used to evaluate the courses during the review:

> And maybe softening the language a little bit, because I don't want to ruin any relationships with departments … I try and make them a little bit more standardized. (A4)

Participants in the blitz were encouraged to take the review seriously, as indicated by the instruction at the top of the multi-step guide prepared for the process: "Please follow these steps carefully to ensure that the Gen Ed Committee reports are accurate" (Appendix I). The value attached to the blitz was amplified by the language of the checklists and the instructions.

Activities. Language was used to promote the recognition of engaging in a certain sort of activity to make clear to others what it was the informants perceived themselves to be doing. In this task, the language was used to have others recognize what was going on (Gee, 2005):

> And everything they're doing gets examined, including their Gen Eds. Once a term, this is commonly referred to as the Gen Ed blitz, we look at all the programs that are going through PQR, and in our case, we look at the Gen Ed courses ... It was called a blitz for a reason. Because we went through a whole bunch of courses – all of us. (B3)

> And at the end of the checklist, it's whether we approve it with the changes or it's not approved. Now we send it to the Chair of the Committee. (B2)

> We did the first couple as a group to get a sense of how people were interpreting the checklist, and then we had individuals, two or three depending on how many we had to work with, independently score the courses against the checklist, and then compared their findings. (A5)

The language on the checklist itself was the most telling in this regard: each of the closed questions was worded so as to require a yes/no answer, accompanied by the symbols of a checkmark or an X (see Appendix H). Furthermore, at the bottom of the checklist, the academic chair was asked to "indicate the semester or academic year by which the changes will be actioned for course delivery" (Appendix H). The participants in the blitz needed to perceive themselves as making recommendations for action: the bureaucratic vagueness of the verb "actioned", repeated by one of the informants in a second-level interview, permitted the participants to complete the review with the idea that something would happen after the blitz ended.

Identities. Language was used to promote the recognition of a certain identity or role (Gee, 2005). In this task, the language was used to enact identities and to have others recognize these identities as operative. The discourses were carried through from the college policy:

> This specificity appears in (Fontanel's) general education policy, and it states who is responsible for what. Senior academic administrator ensures whatever, vice president, whatever. So it assigns roles to these components. (M1)

> The committee chair was responsible for dividing the committee members into teams:
>
> And so on blitz day, we get ahead of time spreadsheets of whose doing what, and what you're reviewing. And then when we get to our blitz day, we break into our teams. As a team, we then go through the checklist for each of the courses for each program. (B2)

Consensus among the team members was an important function associated with that identity:

> The committee members … try to come to an agreement on the course. (B7)
>
> So I make sure that they're all on board with what's happening. And then I ask the Gen Ed reps to get back to the people, the team leaders within two weeks to say, okay, you've had a chance to look at this, is there something that we can help you to do, to implement the correct changes. (A4)

Team members were highly aware of the boundaries on their responsibilities:

> We provide the recommendations, and at that point, it's back to the department to execute them, carry them out. (B7).

Connections. Language was used to render certain items or acts as connected or relevant to other things in the review process (Gee, 2005). Things were not inherently connected; these connections of relevance between the local and the extra-local were made through language, permitting me to map the process and to become aware of connections (and, for that matter, discourses) beyond it:

> The Ministry has decided that we, as colleges, have to teach students to not just be educated in vocational aspects. (B1)
>
> And then my understanding is, there are yearly reports that are sent to the program quality review office, identifying what action has been taken and what the status is. (A5)

The connection between participating in the review process and helping Fontanel to be compliant was emphasized by the PQR feedback form: one either selected the option, upon reviewing the mandated Gen Ed courses in the program of study, that the program was Compliant or Non-Compliant, with no option in between.

Politics. Language was used to convey a perspective on the distribution of social goods such as guilt or blame (Gee, 2005). The phrasing of the language had implications for elements such as perceived culpability on the part of the informants.

One informant, when queried, felt the need to emphasize sincerity:

> If I'm being honest? Nothing. I never had anyone follow up. Ever … I'll send the email out. I don't think I've ever even received a response … there are typically some of the people that do nothing. Because we do get the courses back, say in a year, and they're the same. (B1)

> What I don't know, and what I don't know that anybody knows or anybody's been able to tell me, because this has come up: is there a deadline for these changes to be made? … I don't know if anything says, anything that's got any teeth, anyway, is that you have to have these changes made … I don't know that there's anything in place, you need to have your Gen Ed courses fixed by, or you need to have something resubmitted …I don't know there's anything in there that does that. (B3)

Another informant made an effort to explain a lack of knowledge regarding the process on a lack of tenure on the committee:

> I don't know whether I've seen that part of the process or not. I may not have been here long enough to see that part of the process. (B5)

Through carefully veiled phrasing, one informant disclosed knowledge of the process while having been a participant:

> To the best of my knowledge? The PQR report is strictly internal. It (stays) within the organization. And now you're back in organizational will. Is the chair going to make a lot

> of changes? Is the chair not going to make a lot of changes? Is anyone going to get angry if the chair does or does not make a lot of changes? (M1)

Another informant acknowledged the lack of a mechanism to ensure that the process yielded the results that the policy had intended:

> I mean, there was monitoring, but there was no stick. No way of ensuring compliance. (M2)

These informants appeared to express some unease over the process; whether that unease stemmed from a sense of blameworthiness or an inability to answer or account for action or personal or institutional inaction is not fully understood.

A Language Act In Addition to the Building Tasks

One language act, however, defied classification into any single one of the building tasks: the way in which the informants turned the phrase of general education itself into a verb:

> So courses were GenEdified, not ever really created with the policy in mind, just kind of got a rubber stamp of GenEd. (A1)

In one exchange with an informant, I tried to unpack the understanding behind the use of this language:

> Informant: My question is: are our GenEd courses as GenEd-y as they should be? If you know what I mean.
>
> Interviewer: I have to probe more, because I can't rely on any of my assumptions about what you mean. So what do you mean?
>
> Informant: That they're not GenEd-y enough?
>
> Interviewer: Yes, that they're not GenEd-y enough. What is it to be GenEd-y enough? (A2)

The informant subsequently changed the direction of the interview, precluding my ability to probe further. At other times, the informants turned the phrase of general education into an adjective:

> Basically, the Ministry said, nope. Whoever was in charge of GenEd then, said, they're not GenEd. So then we had to make them more GenEd-y. (A1)
>
> Whereas, you know, initially it was, okay, we'll take this course, and let's just call it GenEd. Alright? The phrase was make it GenEd-able. (M2)

These constructions constituted an abbreviated understanding that the participants in the process shared; the language act denoted obedience, on the part of the local participants, to the policy:

> You had to have a GenEd policy. And let's see how compliant you are. And in cases where the policy didn't exist, or compliance was not 100%, those things got noted in the public report. And it affected how the ratings for the college were determined. And so, colleges who didn't … weren't compliant with their own policy around GenEd, and were deemed to be … it was noted. And they were given recommendations, you've got to change this, you've got to become compliant before we come back again. (M2)

A course was GenEd-able if language could be added to it to get the rubber stamp of approval. If you were GenEdifying a course, you were making it fit into the guidelines. If it was GenEd-y enough, it was approved and Fontanel was compliant. Perceived compliance was the greatest virtue of them all, as emphasized by these informants:

> So if you didn't have good GenEd policy, you weren't compliant with an area, you weren't going to get high ratings. You weren't going to meet that criteria. Subsequently, over the years, that has … those five quality criteria have changed to six what are now called quality standards. And so there are now six standards against which a college is

> evaluated. And then this was all in the lead-up to moving to an accreditation, an institutional accreditation system. And then we said, it's no longer just a characteristic. These are now standards you have to meet. (M2)
>
> Because last time (the audit) was done, (Fontanel) was the only school to get thumbs up on all five criteria, so we were literally the best, the most compliant of all the colleges, with the legislation, so they want to keep that. (A4)

It appeared that this language act comprised a building task that spanned all categories: significance, activities, identities, connections, and politics; I discuss its significance further in Chapter 6.

Dichotomous Discourses in the Texts of the Interviews and the Documents

After a third reading of the texts, I identified two broad continuums of dichotomous discourses based upon the themes and the language acts: a scholastic authoritarian-humanist spectrum, and a pragmatist-idealist spectrum. The discourses containing the scholastic authoritarian or utilitarian thread emphasized the college's implied contract with its students to train them for employment in a narrow perspective; general education was seen to, in many ways, contravene this contract: as one informant positioned the perspective: "I'm not taking vocational time away from my students so they can learn about Wine, Food, and Culture" (A3).

In contrast, the humanist thread focused on the value and agency of the individual student; general education was perceived to provide an opportunity for students to engage in critical or reflective thought while creating a citizenry capable of engaging in the life of their communities:

> The idea of general education … was to engage learners in the society around them and in their own growth and change. (A5)

> I think it makes you a more informed citizen. I really do believe that, so that you might think more critically about everything from, you know, political news, social news, valuing the world around you, making decisions about life. (A3)

In terms of the second continuum, the discourses containing the thread of pragmatism focused on the practical, accepting the reality of a world as it is, unquestioning of what may have been behind general education in terms of intent or assumptions. One informant, commenting from the perspective of the committee acting as an enforcement body of the Gen Ed policy – informally equating the Gen Ed committee with the 'Gen Ed police', a term used colloquially by A2, A3, A5, and M2 -- stated:

> So it's easy if you're going to be the police to simply have a checklist**.** Just what they have. Not to say that's a bad thing. If I may, in our neoliberal, postmodern society, checklists seem to be what everyone lives for. (A2)

The discourses containing the thread of idealism alluded to the necessity of educating students who were capable of questioning the issues, values, and morals behind commonly accepted practices and the basic assumptions upon which our society is built:

> Our students are going to go out there, and they're going to vote for politicians, and they're going to have an impact on public policy, and they're going to react when the city says, you need to recycle, and this is why you need to recycle … it's desirable for them to look at a situation and to be able to think about it. When they graduate from here, they're going to be getting into areas of life they've never had to explore on their own before. They're going to become spouses, and parents, and homeowners. (B3)

These dichotomous discourses reflected the ways in which the participants' actions were connected and bound up in ruling relations outside of their knowing. Things were not inherently

connected; these connections of relevance between the local and the extra-local were made through language, permitting me to map the process and to become aware of these connections as representative of agency and power. These forces are further discussed from a critical poststructural perspective in Chapter 6.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I described the discourses of general education at Fontanel College through data gathered from texts of transcripts and documents using the methodology of institutional ethnography. I explored the problematic of the process, and I depicted the review of the general education course outlines by the committee. My discovery of the themes in the texts was supplemented by an identification of the construction done by the language using Gee's (2005) framework. The characterization of the dichotomous discourses permitted me to trace the institutional workings and to produce a map of the particular general education course outline review process that I had identified as exemplifying these workings. The development of such a map reinforced my focus on the institution as the subject of the ethnography.

Chapter 6: From the Critical Moment to the Constructive Moment in the Critical Analysis of the Discourses

In this chapter, I review my theoretical perspective before critically and constructively analyzing the discourses of general education at Fontanel that were explored in Chapter 5. I address the problematic through discussion of the discourses' themes, language acts, and threads, relating my analysis to the context of the Ontario college system, the history of the general education policy, and understandings of the policy's definition and purpose. I close the chapter with a discussion of the ethical considerations of the research.

Reviewing my Theoretical Perspective

As discussed in Chapter 3, three lenses informed my approach to the research: the interpretive, the critical, and the poststructural. Through the lens of interpretivism, I sought to understand the fundamental nature of the social world as it was constructed through a pastiche of informants' realities at this level of subjective experience. These multiple realities were reflected in the multiplicity of discourses, representing perceptions and constructions of meaning that resulted from the informants' frames of reference.

By virtue of Kincheloe, McLaren, and Steinberg's (2011) definition, I also pursued this research as a criticalist who assumes the fundamental mediation of thought through socially and historically constituted power relations, the centrality of language to the formation of subjectivity and awareness, and the reproduction of oppression and its supporting systems through the acceptance of social status.

I came to understand that the participants in the blitz at Fontanel were not necessarily subjugated by these relations; if they were, they were implicated in their subjugation. The

question that then arose is whether the students who were governed by the general education policy are subjugated in some way.

Ontologically, I defended the poststructural lens' deconstructionist anti-realism on the instability that I saw in the language acts and the discourses of general education: "There can be, therefore, no reality posited beyond the text with reference to which meaning can be stabilized among different subjects" (Smith D. E., 1999, p. 100). Those who conceived of the policy may have engaged in one discourse, those who wrote the policy another, academic administrators another, and committee members yet another. This multiplicity of discourses and language acts represented more than one reality from a poststructural perspective in what was, ultimately, a "deceitful stasis" (Smith D. E., 1999, p. 75).

Epistemologically, my goal as a poststructuralist was to make explicit the discourses that formed that knowledge, "a formation subjected to and limited by historical and sociocultural assumptions, conditions, and power relations" (Stinson, 2009, p. 511). However, in a more cynical turn from criticalism, there was no ultimate explanation to be provided in "perfect maps" (Smith R. , 2010): "Meaning is always postponed … It can never be finalized: there is no 'closure', no point at which meaning is established once and for all" (Smith R. , 2010, p. 146). Furthermore, not only was the knowledge discursively formed, so were the informants: "the discursively constituted subject redefines the person as a subject rather than as an individual" (Stinson, 2009, p. 501).

The informants' participation in the discourses took the form of continuous construction and deconstruction. The checklist's materiality affected the knowledge creation by the discourses' participants in a dynamic, cross-fertilizing way (Luke, 1995). As discussed in Chapter 3, my goals for this research could be considered as a progression: as an interpretivist, to

elicit and understand the individual constructs as representative of lived experience; as a criticalist, to interrogate the values and assumptions to challenge social structures; and finally, as a poststructuralist, to rethink concepts of agency and power in the construction and deconstruction of the marginalized subject in these relations (Stinson, 2009). Institutional ethnography yielded the data for a critical analysis of the discourses and provided the opportunity to approach this analysis in two ways: critically and constructively (Luke, 1995).

The Critical Moment: Intervention in the Flow

In its critical moment, an analysis of the discourses functions as "an intervention in the apparently natural flow of talk and text in institutional life" (Luke, 1995, p. 12). I explored this critical function in terms of the disjuncture between different versions of reality, relating the discourses to the context of the literature that I outlined in Chapter 2 and to the two questions of the problematic that I outlined in Chapter 3.

Disjuncture. The first question of the problematic revolved around the participants' role in the policy's operationalization: what could they say and do? In an effort to address this question, I explored the participants' authority, responsibility, and contribution as bounded by the discourses. This line of exploration aligned with IE's concern with the aspect of disjuncture between different versions of reality: knowing something from a ruling versus an experiential perspective (Campbell & Gregor, 2008).

The discourses coordinated the actions of the blitz participants, all the while constraining what they could say and do. Language was used to give meaning or value and to build layers of significance, to promote the recognition of engaging in a certain sort of activity to make clear to others what it was the informants perceived themselves to be doing, and perhaps most importantly, *to have others recognize what was going on*. That being said, the participants were

as complicit in the creation of these discourses as they were in taking part in the blitz itself. From my examination of the transcripts, some of the informants seemed to be aware of their complicity in this construction; others, less so.

I identified elements of this disjuncture in the informants' transcripts as dichotomous discourse threads that appeared within a single text. For instance, it appeared that some of the informants knew, from a ruling perspective, that their reviews were designed to result in changes to the courses:

> So there is a bit of a challenge there with respect to executing that and ensuring someone carries it out, because there's no system, really, that exists to track the changes that have been identified and are needed… We don't have that … that process in place where there's a requirement to respond back. (B7)

It also seemed, though, that these same informants simultaneously knew, from an experiential perspective, that their reviews did not always result in changes to the courses:

> It could have been quite valuable, but mostly it was get the reports done, to get to the person in charge of PQR, to write the report to send to the Ministry to say, hey, we're doing great stuff here, and change nothing in the day-to-day courses, so you'd see the courses again five years later and they'd look exactly the same, with none of the feedback. (A1)

As the informants gave voice to this disjuncture, however, they appeared to be constrained, through their complicity in the blitz, in what they could actually *do* about the apparent mismatch between their ruling and the experiential perspectives. Their actions were bounded by the act-text-act sequence of the blitz; furthermore, they were implicated in this institutional sequence through their ongoing participation – they were, in effect, perpetuating the disjuncture.

Multidiscursivity. The discourses consisted of recurrent statements and wording across texts (Foucault, 1972); they marked out systems of meaning, knowledge, and belief that were tied to ways of knowing the world and determining modes of action (Gee, 2005). However, these discourses could not necessarily be characterized as exclusive or distinct from each other. Instead, the discourses of general education "operate with different degrees of unity and disunity and at different levels of specificity" (Luke, 1995).

Many of the informants engaged in more than one discourse within the same interview. For example, a humanist thread appeared early in one transcript, followed by a pragmatic thread:

> From my perspective, it's largely a holdover of that classic idea of postsecondary education is that we're not necessarily creating or training workers, but rather, we're creating citizens. We're creating thinkers, we're creating people who can participate in the civilized world and civilized discourse. (B5)
>
> Whether the committee then receives a modified outline. I hope we would. My understanding is that we don't. I think our part of the process is complete once we complete the blitz and submit those checklists. (B5)

Similarly incongruous threads could be perceived as present in other transcripts. One informant opened the interview in support of general education consistent with the idealistic thread ("it … addresses the issue that we're doing more than just training people … something to broaden their horizons"), only to speak less supportively of the inclusivity of citizenship education later on in the interview:

> The broader their worldview is, the better equipped they're going to be. But Tech and Trades is a little different … (B3)

The texts of the transcripts and the documents were multidiscursive: they drew from a range of discourses, fields of knowledge, and voices (Luke, 1995). I have provided these examples of multidiscursivity not as a way of discrediting my informants; rather, these examples may be attributable to these informants' ability to simultaneously hold multiple perspectives or realities. This adaptive ability on the part of informants permits them to enact their roles within the institution as mediated by the discourses while holding views that may be in contradiction with the institutional policies – essentially, to function locally within the institution while being subjected to the effects of the extra-local. The informants' ability to engage in and co-construct these textually-mediated social relations and realities may be considered essential to the institutional functioning and the informants' survival.

As the participants engaged in their everyday activities supporting the operationalization of the general education policy, including taking part in the blitz, they engaged in this constructive-deconstructive-reconstructive activity through discourses that were "continually relocated and regenerated in everyday texts" (Luke, 1995, p. 15). This assertion can be extended even further: while the texts of general education were multidiscursive, so conversely were the discourses multitextual. This dynamic cross-pollination was exhibited in the adoption of terminology from one discourse and one text to another, leading to a complex multidiscursive, multitextual process of meaning construction to enable local action informed by the extra-local.

Addressing the Problematic

I attempted to tease apart the institutional speech acts and the textually mediated actions that they supported, for each of these acts comprised a social action representing the interests of particular social institutions (Luke, 1995). The second question of the problematic was premised upon the political nature of the blitz: how were the participants' actions bound up in ruling

relations and institutional actions outside of their knowing? I address this question through discussion of the discourses' themes, language acts, and threads, relating my analysis to the context of the Ontario college system, the history of the general education policy, and understandings of the policy's definition and purpose.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the perspective on a characterization of general education as breadth in a technical-education model such as that found in Ontario's college system depends on one's perspective on vocational education: that of social efficiency, social inclusion, or revisionism (Hyslop-Margison, 2001). Here, I relate the discourses to these perspectives.

The Social Efficiency Perspective. This functionalist perspective on vocational education relies on the objective of fulfilling national economic potential. Some of the discourses of general education at Fontanel spoke of the need for lifelong learners, an optimistic phrase that can be perceived to mean re-employable workers to fit the needs of the economy and its employers. The spectre of re-employment was apparent: informants spoke of students going to jobs "that will require more than just doing some sort of routine labour … And then you get the shift in the global workplace" (A1) where students need to be re-employable if that shift affects them: "but then your skills become outdated" (A3).

The discourses of the utilitarian thread echoed this functionalist perspective: "You come here, you get trained for your job, you leave, you get your job. And that's how we promote the college. But we don't actually follow through with that" (B4).

The discourses of the pragmatic thread also mirrored this perspective:

> General education, I think, is seen more to help create citizens, neighbours, self, more than supporting employment directly. And so it doesn't … I think that's been a struggle for general education in the colleges which see themselves as employment-oriented. That

> see our learners' goals as being employment-oriented. It's been an issue, because it doesn't fit as clearly there. (A5)

The Social Inclusion Perspective. This liberal perspective on vocational education relies on the objective of integrating economically disadvantaged students; this perspective assumes that such integration is positive. Some of the discourses on general education echoed this perspective: "I think what they're looking at is broadening the students' civil life and looking at making sure that the students … have another chance to look at life in another way" (B2).

The discourses of the humanist thread reflected this perspective: general education was perceived to provide an opportunity for students to participate in critical or reflective thought while creating a citizenry capable of engaging in the life of their communities:

> The idea of general education … was to engage learners in the society around them and in their own growth and change. (A5)
>
> I think it makes you a more informed citizen. I really do believe that, so that you might think more critically about everything from, you know, political news, social news, valuing the world around you, making decisions about life. (A3)

One informant exemplified this perspective when speaking of the potential for general education "to ensure some sort of cultural literacy among the students graduating from a technical college" (B5), and reflected optimistically that the general education

> Seems to come into opposition with the large mandate of a technical college which is to train students in technical skills. So, there seems to be … I wouldn't say a juxtaposition, maybe an alignment of those two philosophies of postsecondary education: the technical aspect and the more humanistic approach (B5)

The Revisionist Perspective. This more radical perspective on vocational education is explicitly critical of the assumptions supporting both the social efficiency and the social inclusion perspectives: "Revisionists challenge traditional vocational education on the grounds that it represents a calculated strategy … to reproduce social divisions and consolidate ideological control over working class students" (Hyslop-Margison, 2001, p. 12). This perspective on vocational education, and on the general education within this stream, requires evidence that the motivation of social reproduction and ideological control exists; the discourses of general education contained evidence of the ongoing reproduction of these social divisions:

> The general education piece was seen as bringing to the table something more properly belonged in university or high school, that colleges weren't about educating the citizen (A3)

Exploring the Discourses

From a criticalist stance, I explored the discourses from this more radical perspective; I attempted to intervene in the institution's flow of talk and texts from three related assumptive bases: the manufacture of (re-) employable workers, the production of good citizens, and the perpetuation of social structures. I go on to argue that these bases become closely and even causally linked.

The Manufacture of (Re-) Employable Workers. Echoes of the need to generate productive workers while simultaneously maximizing employment opportunities for the labour force appeared in these discourses of general education through the themes, threads, and language acts. Several issues with this two-pronged intention are identifiable: the diminishment of general education, the concept underlying lifelong learning, and the belief in the inevitable effects of globalization on the stability of labour markets.

The tidy but flawed bundling of general education and employability skills discussed in Chapter 2 translates into cross-curricular competencies that are premised as preparation for challenges such as employment instability and occupational transition. However, this collapse of several elements into one essentially equates general education to critical thinking and renders it a bounded skill that can be taught, as a career-specific skill might, rather than as a cognitive competency that can be developed. This rendering diminished the breadth that general education was originally intended to bring to vocational credentials.

Underlying the linkage of general education to lifelong learning is a notion of instrumental or inter-occupational flexibility for purposes of labour market adaptability, masking an ideological agenda where employability skills are dressed up as liberal education. To follow this line of thinking is to recognize the tricky balance between training graduates for immediate occupational fit, all the while being concerned with preparation for longer-term cross-occupational mobility. While students might need sufficient exposure to sufficient general education content to provide the foundation for lifelong learning, in other words, re-employability, the degree of sufficiency then becomes perpetually in question, given that this insurance for re-employability takes time away from learning vocational skills for employment directly upon graduation. This focus on continuous learning for productive workers as the platform for the inclusion of general education appeared in many documents that contributed to the current general education policy, including the Vision 2000 report (Ontario Council of Regents for Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology, 1990). This ongoing issue of sufficiency within an instrumentally vocational credential was reflected in one informant's words: "In respect to Gen Ed, are you supposed to learn something, or are you supposed to learn to talk about things?" (M1).

This employability skills discourse as characterized by Hyslop-Margison and Sears (2006) stems from the need to update skills in the face of redundancy, premised upon a human capital perspective, whereby the primary goal of vocational education is to prepare students for projected labour market conditions that they cannot hope to shape, "viewing students as passive learners being prepared for globalization" (Hyslop-Margison, 2001, p. 68). The issue with this discourse is two-fold. Firstly, this need for updating of skills in the face of the threat of obsolescence ignores the difference between social reality and natural reality (Hyslop-Margison & Sears, 2006). Secondly, because of the history of general education in terms of Ontario's policies for general education, the stakeholders who may have been best served were those primarily concerned with protecting the interests of industry and business – possibly at odds with the best interest of either graduates or, more widely, with the interests of a democratic society (Hyslop-Margison & Sears, 2006).

The selection of a post-secondary technical education model by Ontario in the 1960s completed the province's vocational streaming curriculum at the secondary level; in spite of its original idealistic positioning as a component of cognitive breadth, general education may have come to be used for re-vocationalization and adaptation to an inevitably shifting global economy. In this way, general education could be perceived as meta-vocational education – training for the needs of any and all occupations that might result from the volatility of the global labour market, the quintessential training of the passive, adaptable, and compliant employee – the ultimate in responsivity on students' part to the needs of employers.

The Production of Good Citizens. The stated purpose in 2005 of general education in the Ontario college system was "to contribute to the development of citizens who … are able to contribute thoughtfully, creatively, and positively to the society in which they live and work"

(Ontario Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities, 2009). One informant summarized the policy in this way: "the external stakeholders throughout the province have decided to make you a better person in the community" (B6). If the general education policy was intended to provide citizenship education, then three issues warrant discussion: its depoliticized character, its reliance upon passive subjects, and its equating of the good citizen with the good person (Osborne, 2004).

The central aim of general education stemming from the Vision 2000 report was preparation of students for the roles and responsibilities of citizenship. However, these roles and responsibilities of citizenship as they appeared in the policy seemed tightly delimited in a way that is characterized by Hyslop-Margison and Sears (2006):

> … narrowing in the sense that the scope of appropriate citizen involvement is limited to participating in current political and social structures and taming in the sense that proper civic engagement is seen as enhancing rather than critiquing social and political institutions (p. 19)

This constrained conception of citizenship education was depoliticized in Ontario's general education policy: while it positioned its intent of active and engaged participation in its courses, it avoided the contextualizing of citizenship in a democratic arena. The policy's intent appeared to be the training of students in a sanitized or falsely context-neutral conception of citizenship, rather than encouraging critical thought and participation in the fullness of citizenship in a democratic arena, with all the rights, privileges and responsibilities thereof.

Nowhere in the general education policy is the concept of a democratic citizen mentioned; Hyslop-Margison and Sears (2006) comment that more active conceptions of citizenship require education that is contextualized and subsequently politically empowering. The policy's conception of citizenship education was more elitist and passive than

democratically active; as one informant speculated on the "real impetus" for general education: "Are we just training people to fit into a certain milieu, or are we trying to get them to be able to think? " (B3). The policy, crafted as it was within the technical-education model, trained students to fit into an existing economic structure with a compromised idea of democratic citizenship.

At Fontanel, one document of guidance provided the following clarification on general education: "Graduates are equipped to participate fully and actively in society and to recognize the values of social responsibility and good citizenship" (See Appendix D). *Good* citizenship, then, as defined by the general education policy would seem to be exemplified by a citizen who behaves within the current structure and contributes positively to the society in which s/he lives and works, rather than critiquing its political and social structures. This good citizen accepts the social order as the natural order – equating "the good citizen with the good person, the man or woman who helps others, respects other people's rights, obeys the law, is suitably patriotic and the like" (Osborne, 2004, p. 13). By extension, the good citizen is a nice person (Sears, 2015) who unquestioningly accepts the civic ideals put forward in the general education courses:

> Learning is indoctrinatory and undemocratic when students become passive objects … (it) ultimately foster(s) compliance with and adaptation to social structures that lie beyond the classroom (Hyslop-Margison & Sears, 2006, p. 59).

From a critical pedagogy perspective, then, this model of citizenship education contravenes or, at the very least, compromises the essence of democracy.

The Perpetuation of Societal Structures. This model of passive citizenship education serves to reproduce stratified social and economic structures, originating from Ontario's streaming process in its secondary schools. As discussed in Chapter 2, the technical education model of Ontario's colleges was built upon a belief that many individuals lacked the capacity for

a university education, and that abstract thinking was the purview of a small academic elite. What follows from this dichotomous framing of vocational versus liberal education is the acceptance of social status by participants in both streams of education:

> An education program that encourages uncritical student acceptance of prevailing economic and labour market conditions constitutes inadequate preparation for participatory democratic citizenship because it fails to entertain alternative social visions. It is inconsistent with principles of democratic learning to expect students to conform their vocational aspirations to corporate needs by uncritically assimilating the attitudes, dispositions, and skills required by industry (Hyslop-Margison, 2001, p. 28).

Several of the informants echoed this maintenance of a status quo, fundamentally supporting socially and historically constituted power relations. One informant felt that the courses permitted the students to "maybe know a little bit more about *their place in society* … I think that Gen Ed is at least attempting to open their eyes to that sort of thing" (B1, emphasis mine). Another stated "it's not trying to teach you all the time about how to write this proper document, but *it's more your place in society* as an individual, in the professional workforce" (B2, emphasis mine).

From a critical analysis of the discourses surrounding the review process of Fontanel's mandated Gen Ed courses, general education in Ontario's college system becomes a matter of subjugation: learning to take the bit in one's mouth, as it were. The purposes and goals of general education in the technical-education model were delimited at the point of decision to adopt such a binary model. So while the intent of the province's general education policy may have been to provide breadth, at the college level – at least in the case of Fontanel – that breadth was interpreted to mean complementary to, rather than in opposition to the, narrowly focused,

vocationally-oriented programs of study. A course was GenEd-able if language could be added to it to give the perception of breadth. If you were GenEdifying a course, you were redesigning it to complement the vocational studies. If it was GenEd-y enough, it fulfilled expectations in terms of the manufacture of workers, the production of citizens, and the perpetuation of social structures.

Breadth in general education in this situation, then, no longer resembles the *artes liberales* in its traditional conception of the education befitting a free person (Hyslop-Margison, 2001). Conceived of in this way, breadth becomes subjugative of those interpreting the policy, those operationalizing it in the blitz, and those being instructed. If the intention of the general education policy was to prepare free citizens for the good life, it needed to be revisited to avoid its potential for ongoing subordination:

> The more the powers of each individual are concentrated in one employment, the greater skill and quickness will he naturally display in performing it. But, while he thus contributes more effectually to the accumulation of national wealth, he becomes himself more and more degraded as a rational being. In proportion as his sphere of action is narrowed his mental powers and habits become contracted; and he resembles a subordinate part of some powerful machinery, useful in its place, but insignificant and worthless out of it. (Newman, 1915, p. 143)

I posit the breadth that was intended in general education is not in evidence in these discourses: general education is not enabling the cultivation of independent thought – and the cost of that vocational overconcentration is, ultimately, personal worth and the devaluation of contribution to a truly democratic society. This more radical criticalist examination of the discourses follows the

three related assumptive bases elaborated upon in this chapter: good citizens are produced in the form of (re-) employable workers so that social structures are perpetuated.

The Constructive Moment: Generating Agency

The second question of the problematic essentially answers the first question: what could be said and done by the informants was bound up in relations outside of their knowing. After describing these constraints through critical analysis, I moved on to a more constructive moment in an effort to generate agency in the discourses' participants so that, through this research, the informants are able to see how the texts position them and generate the very relations of institutional power at work in policy (Luke, 1995).

I began to address my preconceptions about the topic as a researcher and as a prior participant in the PQR Gen Ed course blitz as a member of the Gen Ed 'police', a term used by several informants (A2, A5, M2): "The ethnographer aims to be changed in this relationship, and it is this process of change that exposes her or his preconceptions – the preconceptions of the discourse or discourses in which she or he participates – to being undone" (Smith D. E., 2005, p. 143). The chafing motivated me as I considered my preconceptions, and I committed to defamiliarization, conscientization, and reconfiguration as I related the analysis to the theoretical framework of Chapter 3, including researcher values and posture, the aim of my inquiry, and the nature of the knowledge that is generated.

Defamiliarization. A critical analysis of the discourses of general education, including mapping the blitz process, enabled me to explore the relational understandings of the social in a way that was commensurate with IE. This exploration required me to make the familiar strange (Sears, 2015): "Before familiarity can turn into awareness the familiar must be stripped of its inconspicuousness; we must give up assuming that the object in question needs no explanation"

(Brecht, 1964, p. 144). The same chafing that motivated this research extended to an explicit recording of preconceptions through a conscious process of defamiliarization (Freire, 1972): looking at the blitz process that I thought I knew as if for the first time through the language of the texts. I had to reject the idea that the workings of the blitz, and the operationalization of the policy in general, were self-evident and natural so that I could even ask, let alone answer, rudimentary questions about an everyday reality that I thought I already knew (Sears, 2015). I sought structural and historical insights of a variety that Freire (1972) might term *demythologization* to better understand what lay behind the policy.

These questions could be grouped into several broad categories, working backwards, as it were, from my taken-for-granted idea of the blitz. Firstly, there were my assumptions around the products of the blitz in terms of the course review documents, which I believed, as some of my informants did, were required by an extra-local participant in terms of the Ministry. Secondly, there were my beliefs that the course review documents put in motion changes to the course outlines to bring them more in line with Fontanel's general education policy. Once I mapped the process, I came to understand that these expectations were not realized. The map, as an abstraction, permitted the key elements of the blitz to stand out, while making evident that certain elements were not there at all. Acronyms found in the map are expanded in the glossary in Appendix A.

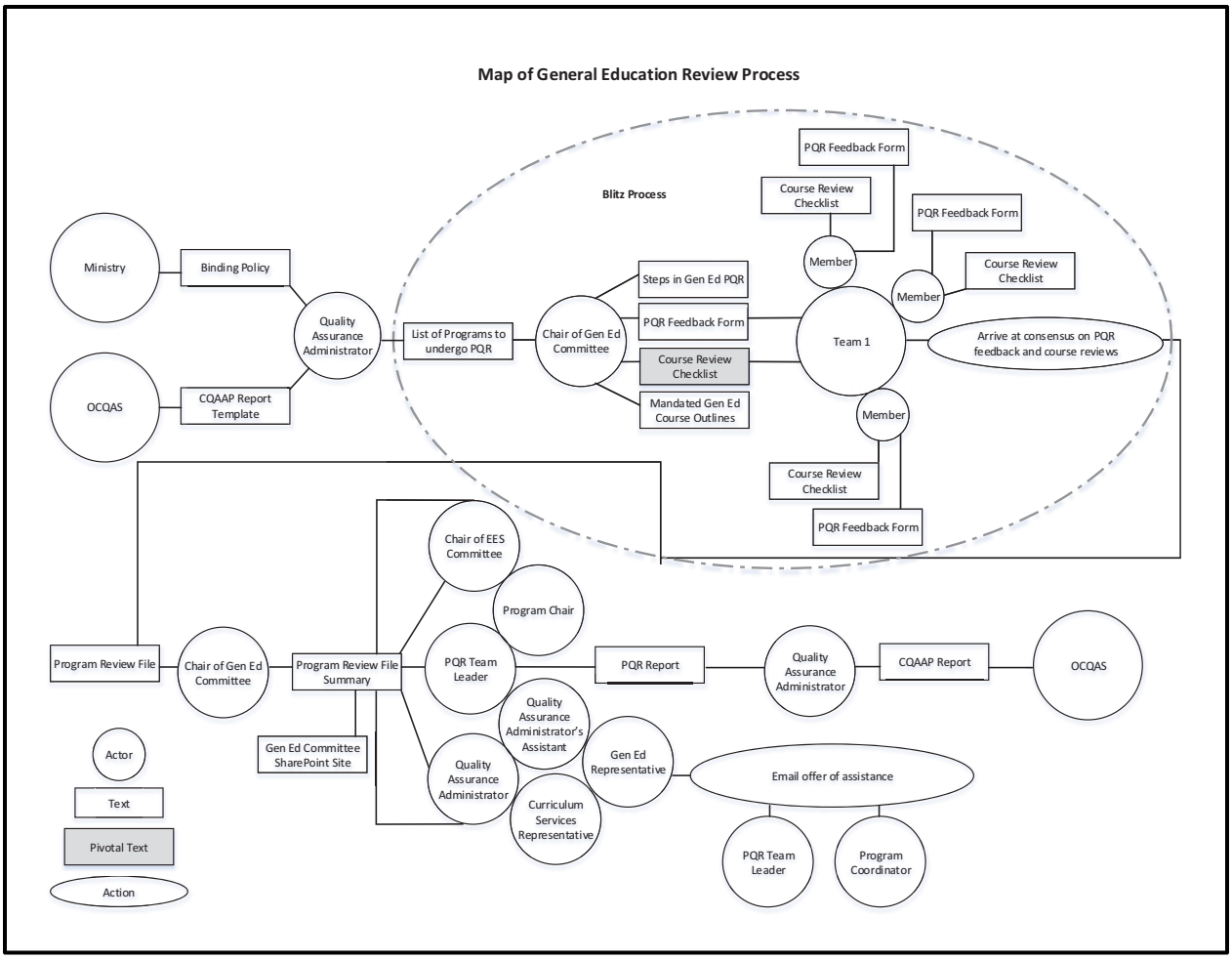

Figure 1: Map of General Education Review Process at Fontanel College allowing for the identification of both present and absent elements in the blitz.

Thirdly, I believed that committee members shared an understanding of Fontanel's general education policy (Appendix C), guided by the Lifesaver document (Appendix D). But when I reviewed the informants' descriptions of the process, I saw that the blitz participants referred to neither Fontanel's policy nor to this document of guidance when reviewing the course outlines; I was surprised to learn that they did not use them. So while both of these documents appeared in my literature review, they could not be used as texts for analysis of themes, discourse threads, and language acts, because although they were mentioned by some of the informants, they were not used in the blitz process by the participants who were interviewed. Instead, both the college policy and the Lifesaver were documents in a textual hierarchy –

perhaps in a dotted line kind of way – whereas the provincial policy functioned as the ruling or boss text in an institutional ethnographic sense.

Finally, I believed that general education was a vital element to every postsecondary journey. Who could possibly argue with *general* education? It was obviously superior to vocational education. When I began this research, I thought I was undertaking a mission to enlighten others as to the value of liberal education at the college level, represented, as I thought it was, by general education. And here I began to understand the extent of my preconceptions and the need for defamiliarization: "The undigested common sense we pick up here and there in our lives most often confirms the sense that the current world order is the only possible kind of social arrangement (Sears & Cairns, 2015, p. 13). I had undertaken the research with some presuppositions regarding the intent and assumptions of the province's general education policy that I came to discover, through an examination of the literature and the discourses in the texts, were far from sound.

Conscientization. In this exploration, I admitted to an agenda for change in the practice at Fontenal that had come to result from the policy; quietly emancipatory as this function of knowledge might be, this agenda for conscientization in the constructive moment stemmed from my criticalist position: 'conscientization' refers to learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take aim against the oppressive elements of reality" (Freire, 1972, p. 17). While I had been an implicated advocate during my time as a member of the committee, during my research, I sought to illuminate the relations of ruling within the institution and the hegemonic assumptions that may have been the foundation for the discourses of general education.

My discomfort from my participation in and the possible perpetuation of these elements had motivated the research. I perceived two major contradictions embedded in the policy: the belated and perhaps superficial attempt to bridge the liberal-vocational divide by an overlay of general education in the face of longstanding beliefs in social stratification, and the notion of mandatory education in undemocratic citizenship in the face of a democracy positioned as participatory. As introduced in Chapter 2, there were many difficulties inherent in a dichotomous framing of vocational versus non-vocational curriculum whereby general education was, simplistically defined, that which was not vocational. These difficulties stemmed from the initial mandate of the colleges, the wider duality between the university and the college system, and the resultant devaluation of that which was not perceived as fitting within the character of an Ontario college and for the students of an Ontario college. Hyslop-Margison (2004) addresses the conflict inherent in the after-the-fact embedding of general education in vocational programs:

> How can a student be properly integrated into a culture – in the case of vocational education this represents prevailing labor market expectations and human capital demands – and be simultaneously encouraged to critique or potentially transform those norms? (p. 3)

The apparent fruitlessness of this endeavor was echoed by several informants:

> General education, I think, is seen more to help create citizens, neighbours, self, more than supporting employment directly. And so it doesn't … I think that's been a struggle for general education in the colleges which see themselves as employment-oriented. That see our learners' goals as being employment-oriented. It's been an issue, because it doesn't fit as clearly there. (A5)

> So (general education was introduced) without that context of understanding or even belief in the bigger worldviews … for a lot of our staff, a lot of our faculty, that was not the case, because they didn't come from a university system. So that kind of conversation wouldn't necessarily be, that kind of language wouldn't necessarily be part of their conversation. (A2)
>
> And so how do you take this university concept of general education and just plop it into the system without a lot of context? (A2)

I had believed that Fontanel's general education policy was intended, as was the Ministry's, to increase critical consciousness on the part of students in vocational programs. This belief was echoed by an informant:

> The assumptions built into it were that education should not be strictly instrumental. That it should be the growth of a whole person, and that might have been a shift in how some educators in the college system in Ontario were thinking, because they were thinking of preparing people to do specific jobs. And out of this analysis came desire to prepare people to be more independent thinkers. (A3)

The conception of general education as consciousness-raising was not realized within the boundaries of this analysis.

Reconfiguration. The transformative potential of IE research comes from the character of the analysis it produces both in terms of maps of ruling relations and in building knowledge of the institutions in Western society in which these relations are perpetuated (Smith D. E., 2005).

Poststructurally, I perceived value in my explication of the formations and the subjects as represented in their discourses and the language that comprises them so that I might understand "how knowledge, truth, and subjects are produced in language and cultural practice as well as

how they might be reconfigured" (St Pierre, 2000, p. 486, emphasis mine). But through these reconfigurations, from a theoretical perspective, the reality grew more and more decentred and in greater question because of the destabilized referent of language (Smith D. E., 1999). The research explored the bases for these destabilized referents in the texts comprising the discourses: "All signifiers … are derivative with regard to what would wed the voice indissolubly to the mind or to the thought of the signified sense, indeed to the thing itself" (Derrida, 1978, p. 11).

Reconfiguration became possible through an examination of the language in the discourses of general education. This examination could be spurred by a recognition by the participants in the discourses of the power of the language that is used to produce the knowledge and resultant institutional practices. What is it to GenEdify? To make a course GenEdable? It was my aim through the critical analysis of these discourses to explicate some of the impacts that the language had on the informants – and on me, as a participant, and to work for reconfiguration of the review and the products of the review.

Ethical Considerations

Here, I revisit three ethical considerations in the research that I initially considered in my proposal, including power relations resulting from my employment at Fontanel, my preconceptions regarding the process and the findings, and the protection of my informants. Acknowledgement of these considerations did not translate into a claim of objectivity; instead, it encouraged me to take steps to accommodate reflexivity. I foregrounded my standpoint in Chapter 1 "as a means to disrupt and undermine notions of objectivity" (Haggerty, 1998).

Power Relations Resulting from Employment at Fontanel. As I undertook this research without the neutrality of an outsider, my employment at Fontanel constituted a major

ethical consideration. This aspect was three-fold, involving my relationship to my informants and the positions that I and my informants held in the institution. I anticipated that different interests would become evident as I negotiated the approvals for the research, including varying expectations of results, as well as the power inherent in the ruling relations that I sought to investigate: "The basic dimensions of the issue … are those of the ethnographer's power relation to those with whom she or he is talking and of her or his relationship to them as insider or outsider" (Smith D. E., 2005, p. 136).

Interestingly, my insider status did not appear to affect the negotiation of approval for the research in any way, nor was there any curiosity regarding my topic, methodology, methods, or findings. I was treated as a graduate student from another institution, for this was the role in which I acted while conducting the research.

While my insider status may have enabled me to access texts and informants more easily, I made it clear that I was not returning to the committee, and that at the time the interviews were conducted, I was not returning to employment at the college for another six months. Moreover, I was not in a position of seniority to any of the informants when the interviews were conducted. This perception on the part of informants of my status as a past member occasionally proved to be challenging: I had to prompt the informants to explain in more detail the process and their understandings of the policy, because they seemed uncomfortable telling what they thought I already knew: "I feel weird describing this to you when you know this already … " (B1). I reflected on this informant's anxiety in my research journal and on the data that I needed to gather from the perspective of institutional ethnographic research:

Wednesday, February 10

> I held my first interview today with B1. He was nervous for the first twenty minutes. It was after I turned off the tape recorder that he started really talking, so I asked his permission to turn it back on. He felt awkward telling me things that he thought I already knew. But the reality is that no one shares the same understanding of the process within the institution. (Research Journal)

At times, though, unbeknownst to my informants, I was the one who felt anxious:

> Monday, February 22
>
> I've been scared about speaking to some of the experts who were originally involved in implementing GenEd. Not sure what I'm scared of – I'm supposed to be doing research, not coming to them with findings already. Perhaps I'm afraid that I won't ask the one question that will reveal a tidy structuring of discourses.

My Preconceptions Regarding the Process and The Findings. A second consideration was the requirement that I address my preconceptions about the topic as a researcher as a prior participant in the blitz: "The ethnographer aims to be changed in this relationship, and it is this process of change that exposes her or his preconceptions – the preconceptions of the discourse or discourses in which she or he participates – to being undone" (Smith D. E., 2005, p. 143). I had intended to explicitly record my preconceptions through an analytic technique such as a subjectivity audit (Peshkin, 1988) or bracketing within my field notes (Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, & Steinmetz, 2001) as modelled by Hollenbeck (2015) to make explicit my reactions and responses and understandings beyond what my informants could tell me: "The objective is to move back and forth between discursive practice and discourses-in-practice, documenting each in turn, and making informative references to the other in the practice" (Holstein & Gubrium, 2011, p. 347).

Instead, I documented my responses to the process in my research journal (Surman, 2016) in an effort to expose these preconceptions:

> Wednesday, February 10
>
> Decisions, even small ones made consciously or unconsciously, make a difference. The order of the questions. The order of the interviewees. The effect of previous interviews on the probes. The preface to the interview. The method of transcription (Surman, 2016).

I became highly aware the words of Booth, Colomb, and Williams: "new knowledge depends on what questions you ask – and don't; how the way you present your research shapes the questions you can ask and how you answer them" (2008, p. 4)

The effect of this response on the research process was three-fold. Firstly, I became more aware of the need to adhere to the script of the approved semi-structured questions as closely as I could, regardless of the experience or institutional position of the informant. Secondly, when it came time for analysis, I read the transcripts in two different orders to lessen the recency-primacy effect; for the theme analysis, I read them in the groupings of type (entry-level data, second-level process-oriented interviews, and so on), and for the language acts analysis, I read them in the order that the interviews were conducted.

Thirdly, when I transcribed the interviews, I retained every word and phrase that was spoken without paraphrasing, correcting grammar, or removing duplicative utterances. These transcripts were returned to the informants within 48 hours of the interview to increase opportunity for and confidence in their accuracy. Many of the informants expressed embarrassment upon review of their unedited transcripts, for they felt that they reflected disorganized thoughts or a lack of preparation. However, increased credibility and trust appeared to result from the prompt receipt of these unedited texts; in almost all cases, the informants

acknowledged receipt of the transcripts, reviewed them, and corrected for inaccuracies where necessary.

My research journal disclosed many of my preconceptions:

> Wednesday, February 24
>
> We have moved so far away from the directive and the original translation of that directive. Whatever happened to the Lifesaver document that was so clear? Was there so much resistance that it got buried? Why so many checkboxes, so many checklists, with no concern as to why the actual curriculum is in place?
>
> Wednesday, March 16
>
> Had a hard time transcribing B6's interview. Such a conflict in worldview. Insulted by (the) attitude (towards general education).

I initially considered supplementing the analysis of the discourses' themes, threads, and language acts with the application of a listening guide approach, also called the voice-centred relational method (Doucet & Mauthner, 2008). The listening guide approach would have required a reading of the transcripts for the voice of the I: how the informants narrated a sense of self in their depictions of the process. It would also have involved reading for contrapuntal voices and networks within each transcript, reflective of the broader social relations in which the informants were enmeshed.

However, such an approach as a supplementation to IE (Walby, 2013) was incommensurable with discourse analysis, the method that I had already selected as more in line with my theoretical underpinnings – in essence, I could not use both approaches. Since they shared the same objective – to discover how the language of the institution emerged in the talk of

the informants – I subsequently decided to augment the analysis with a discussion of the discourses' language acts in an effort to mediate the effect of my preconceptions.

Protection of the Informants. A third consideration was the perception of potentially negative consequences for the informants (Stooke, 2004). At the outset of each interview, I positioned my study as an effort to understand the work done by them and its connections to work done by others in the blitz. Although my interview questions were focused on descriptions of work processes and on understandings of the policy, the informants' perspectives also ended up being documented.

One informant gave voice to such consequences from expressing perspectives: "Don't mention any names … some of the information a limited number of people would have access to. So if X were to hear that comment, X would know it would come from me."

To ensure confidentiality and anonymity for the informants, I replaced identifiers with codes in the interview data. In addition to provision of a transcript to each informant, I accepted all revisions that were provided. Informants were also given a second opportunity to revise or withdraw portions of their interview as used as quotations in the analysis. Although given the opportunity, no informants exercised their option to withdraw from the study once in process.

I attempted to retain balance between providing proof of attribution of quotations to a variety of the informants and ensuring confidentiality and anonymity. I devised a coding system whereby the interviews conducted with informants holding administrative positions were identified by the letter A, those conducted with informants directly involved in the blitz were identified by the letter B, and those holding ministry positions by the letter M; this coding system was described in Chapter 4.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I outlined a critical analysis of the discourses of general education at Fontanel that were explored in Chapter 4, extending the analysis to a discussion of the disjuncture and the ruling relations. I related my analysis to the context of the Ontario college system, the history of the general education policy, understandings of its definition and purpose, specifically in light of the Ontario's technical-education model. The analysis of these constitutive and constructive effects of these discourses on the social took place from my interpretive critical poststructural stance. The chapter closed with a discussion of the ethical considerations in the research.

Chapter 7: Where I Now Find Myself

In this final chapter, I build on the constructive moment of this critical inquiry at Fontanel and beyond the college before revisiting my standpoint.

Building on the Constructive Moment

As an interpretivist, I use as many of my informants' words as possible to illuminate the realities represented in their discourses and through the language acts. As a criticalist, I move on to a more constructive moment in an effort to generate agency in the discourses' participants so that they are able to see how the texts position them and generate the very relations of institutional power at work in policy (Luke, 1995). And finally, as a poststructuralist, I provide a guide to the choices available to participants in terms of veracity, accuracy, and adequacy of representation (Smith D. E., 1999). I explore these choices through the language comprising the discourses. This presentation and analysis increases the chance that the research is judged credible by my informants and that the institutionalization can be subverted.

While I do not *explain* the textually-mediated social relations represented by the discourses and their language acts, I *explicate* them so that they are visible to those who, at times and through certain actions, unwittingly construct these relations as participants. The informants use language to give value and to build layers of significance to the blitz and to promote the recognition of engaging in a certain sort of activity to make clear to others what it was they perceived themselves to be doing; they use language to enact identities and to have others recognize these identities as operative. A course is GenEd-able if sufficient language can be added to it to get the "rubber stamp of Gen Ed" (A1) – the stamp of approval. If you are GenEdifying a course, you are making it fit into the guidelines. Things are not inherently connected; these connections of relevance between the local and the extra-local are made

through language. If a course is GenEd-y enough, it is approved and Fontanel is compliant; perceived compliance is positioned as a virtue in these discourses.

A progression of defamiliarization, conscientization, and reconfiguration undertaken from my theoretical stance relies upon the perceived validity of my research and, subsequently, the informants' awareness of the unseen forces that are explored. The possible implications for Fontanel are several: the participants in the blitz become aware of their complicity, the college policy and the committee's mandate are reviewed; the checklist and documents are revised; the course outlines are re-examined; and changes are made to the course outlines and, most importantly, to the general education offered to the students so that fundamental concepts of participatory democratic citizenship are provided. Explication of construction can lead to deconstruction and reconstruction.

The critical analysis presented here also relies upon a focus on the mandated general education courses situated in a particular program as reflected in discourses. Further research could be undertaken upon the general education electives available to students at Fontanel in one or across several programs. Such results could increase the validity of this research, while possibly resulting in the additional provision of courses, consistent with the policy's intent, as offered to students.

Beyond Fontanel

While the research at Fontanel is not generalizable to all Ontario colleges, it identifies and explains social processes that have generalizing effects (Holstein & Gubrium, 2011): recognition of the ways in which the policy of general education is reflected in the discourses at Fontanel shines a light on the intent, assumptions, and context of this policy – and what needs to be changed if policymakers, academic administrators, and faculty want to provide education for

free citizens. Subsequently, it may be argued that the contribution of the general education courses to the manufacture of (re-) employable workers and the production of docile citizens for the perpetuation of social structures could be redirected.

The research is transferable if the explication of the ways that the policy of general education is reflected in discourses at one Ontario CAAT rings true to participants in other institutions. After all, the broader institution that is depicted in this research includes organizations and participants common to other colleges. Participants in general education at those colleges may be able to perceive ways in which their actions are bounded by the extra-local and tied into institutional actions arising outside their knowing (Smith D. E., 1999); they may choose to make changes to general education to reflect more liberal ideals. The institutional focus of the IE methodology contributes to its transferability: it encouraged me to remain distant from the informants' narratives – and my own. Other approaches to the research, such as narrative inquiry, might have detracted from this opportunity.

Further research into general education at other Ontario colleges will increase this study's transferability and its ability to impart action even further. The products of such research, conducted using case studies, IE, critical discourse analysis, or other methodologies, will increase the chances of intervention in the discourses: the more multitextual the discourses become, the greater the opportunity for a reformulation of the policy and the ways it is operationalized, thereby increasing the chances of raising students' consciousness so that they might more fully participate in Canadian society: "the trained technician can be a morally articulate autonomous citizen actively promoting democratic social ideals" (Hyslop-Margison, 2001, p. 6).

Revisiting My Standpoint

When I depicted my standpoint in Chapter 1, I attributed my troubled stance in relation to general education at Fontanel to internal conflict based on a self-identification of the value that I placed on my own liberal arts education, my perception of Fontanel's vocational roots and mindset and its inconsistency with the aims of general education, and the professional ethic that I possessed in regards to student potential to engage in critical thought. This initial attribution was justified: the critical analysis of the discourses at this college reflected the dichotomies that persist in Ontario's postsecondary system.

My split discourse personality disorder (Surman, 2015) was reflected in the multidiscursivity that I observed in the texts. Some of the informants seemed to share the same disorder that I did; they gave voice to the disjuncture that emerged from the difference between the ruling and experiential. Our actions, bounded by the act-text-act sequence of the blitz, contributed to the perpetuation of the disjuncture and the prevailing social structures.

I had ceased to be a member of the committee a year prior to beginning this research, and often repeated, particularly to informants, that I would not return to a general education role. The inconsistencies in my beliefs as I fulfilled my various Gen Ed roles was a thing of the past. I would, instead, opt to teach in the vocational programs that were traditionally the realm of the college, or in graduate certificate programs that did not include general education in the programs of study. My questions regarding the necessity and the value of the biannual blitz and the definition, nature, and curriculum of a Gen Ed course had been explored to my satisfaction.

But something still chafed, because my standpoint had shifted. The concepts of agency and power that emerged from the construction and deconstruction of these discourses had affected me. Leaving general education behind no longer seemed to be a consequence that fit

with the worldview with which I had entered the exploration. Therefore, after the data was gathered and the writing of the dissertation underway, I moved into an academic leadership position where I was responsible for general education. One of the reasons I was encouraged to take this position was because of the research: this position provides an opportunity to make changes to general education. The research can simultaneously act as a destructive and reconstructive force; the analysis, as an intervening text with a mediating role, permits a redirection of the discourses – given that the analysis is available and accessible to my informants, a likelihood increased by my change in position in the institution. I have come to understand that my use of the term 'standpoint' was, perhaps, less than accurate, given D. E. Smith's application of the term to the methodology of institutional ethnography (2005) and its association with standpoint theory. My 'standpoint' was more synonymous with 'location' or 'stance'. It is fair to say that, over time, my location had shifted internally and organizationally – increasing the opportunity for critical and constructive intervention.

I have come to understand my participation and responsibility in the enactment and amplification of the social (Law & Urry, 2004) as a researcher and an educator differently. If I had the chance to conduct the research again, I would interview more informants from less traditionally vocational programs taking part in the blitz to enrich the value of my analysis. I would also interview students to better understand the discourses and the conceptions of subjugation. Armed with this data, I could more persuasively intervene and redirect the discourses using my research as text. How I come to exercise that freedom in an academic leadership position may form the basis of more reflexive research in an ongoing effort to resist institutional capture in terms of language, discourses, and actions.

A rallying cry for the exercise of this freedom can be found in a little booklet from 1939 published by the Ontario College of Education:

> In Greece, it was the slaves' task to work and the free man's business to be the best kind of man. In the minds of some, there is still a fundamental difference between a liberal education suited to a gentleman and a vocational education suited to a workman. Today, it is being increasingly realized that everybody must work, and that all may attempt to become the best kind of men as well. Any wide separation of liberal and technical education leads to the impoverishment of both. (Fletcher, 1939, p. 375)

If the intention of the general education policy was to prepare free citizens for a good life, it needs to be revisited so that it might cultivate independent thought, increase personal worth, and contribute to a truly democratic society.

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Appendix A: Glossary

ACAATO	Association of Colleges of Arts and Technology of Ontario, later renamed to Colleges Ontario
Appendix C	Appendix C of the *Binding Policy Directive Framework for Programs of Instruction for Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology in Ontario*
CAAT	College of Applied Arts and Technology
CQAAP	College Quality Assurance Audit Process
CSAC	College Standards and Accreditation Council
CVS	Credential Validation Service
EES	Essential Employability Skills
Gen Ed	General Education
MTCU	Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, later renamed to Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development
OCQAS	Ontario College Quality Assurance Service
PQR	Program Quality Review
PQR blitz	the biannual process of the review of the course outlines completed by the General Education Committee

Appendix B: Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Binding Policy Directive Framework for Programs of Instruction

Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities

Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology
Policy Framework

Framework for Programs of Instruction

Issued: April 1, 2003 **Revised: 31/07/09**

Ontario

Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities

Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology
Policy Framework

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3.0 Programs	Framework for Programs of Instruction	Minister's Binding Policy Directive

Purpose and Application

The delivery of programs of instruction is the core business of colleges of applied arts and technology in Ontario. As defined in O. Reg. 34/03 under the *Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Act, 2002*, a program of instruction means a group of related courses leading to a diploma, certificate, or other document awarded by the college.

The Act identifies the colleges' objects or mandate to offer a comprehensive program of career-oriented, postsecondary education and training that:

- assists individuals in finding and keeping employment;
- meets the needs of employers and the changing work environment: and,
- supports the economic and social development of their local and diverse communities.

This binding policy directive applies to all colleges of applied arts and technology and defines expectations for all programs of instruction offered by colleges regardless of the funding source, except for ministry-funded apprenticeship training.

The binding policy directive came into effect on April 1, 2003.

The *Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, 2000* provides the authority for colleges of applied arts and technology to apply for ministerial consent to offer applied degrees subject to the terms and conditions established under the legislation and by the Minister.

For further information regarding this binding policy directive, click on the Contact link to consult with the appropriate ministry contact, listed in the Contacts section on the web site.

Principles

- Colleges play a major role in the achievement of economic prosperity in the province of Ontario through the provision of programs of instruction that prepare graduates to meet the needs of the workplace, the economy, and society.
- A college is best positioned to determine the programs of instruction it should offer based on its own strategic direction and the needs of its community. A

college is also best positioned to ensure the ongoing relevance and quality of its programs of instruction.

- A college is best positioned to determine when it can better serve its students preparing them to meet the needs of the workplace, the economy, and society offering programs in partnership or other cooperative arrangement with other entities, including private career colleges, that are legally authorized to offer postsecondary educational programs.

- Credentials awarded in the college system must be credible and meaningful and understood by, students, employers, and the general public.

- A college's decision-making processes can be made more effective by enabling students, external stakeholders, and college staff to provide advice relating to the development, establishment, delivery, and review of its program of instruction.

- All advertising and marketing of college programs must reflect transparency and accuracy.

Glossary

Co-op diploma apprenticeship program: a program of instruction that combines the elements of an Ontario College Diploma and an apprenticeship trade program and leads to the awarding of an Ontario College Diploma and a Certificate of Qualification for a specific trade. This integrated program includes both in-school training as well as on-the-job training based on ministry-approved standards.

Prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR): a process that uses a variety of tools to help learners reflect on, identify, articulate, and demonstrate past learning. Prior learning can be acquired through study, work, and other life experiences that are not recognized through formal transfer of credit mechanisms.

- **Challenge process:** a method of assessment, other than portfolio assessment, developed and evaluated by subject-expert faculty to measure an individual's learning achievement against course learning outcomes. The process measures demonstrated learning through a variety of written and non-written evaluation methods for the purpose of awarding credit without requiring enrolment in a course.

- **Portfolio assessment:** a method of assessment that involves the evaluation of an organized collection of materials developed by a learner that records learning achievements and relates them to personal, educational, or occupational goals, in this case, achievement of stated learning outcomes of college courses or programs.

Program of instruction: a group of related courses leading to a diploma, certificate, or other document awarded by the board of governors.

Program standard: a document produced by the ministry that sets out the essential learning that a student must achieve before being deemed ready to graduate. A program standard applies to all programs of instruction in an identified category regardless of the funding source and, for most programs, consists of a vocational standard, a generic skills standard, and general education requirements. Prior to graduation, students must achieve all three parts of the program standard.

Binding Policy Directive

A. Authority to Approve Programs

The board of governors of a college is to approve programs of instruction, consistent with Section D below, to achieve a comprehensive program of career-oriented postsecondary education and training offered by the college, consistent with the college's mandate and overall strategic direction, the economic and social needs of its local and diverse communities, and government directions and priorities.

B. Credentials Awarded for Successful Completion of Programs of Instruction

A college is to award credentials at the successful completion of programs of instruction consistent with the attached Credentials Framework (see Appendix A).

C. Advisory Committees

The board of governors is to ensure that an advisory committee for each program of instruction or cluster of related programs offered at the college is established and is made up of a cross-section of persons external to the college who have a direct interest in and a diversity of experience and expertise related to the particular occupational area addressed by the program. The board of governors is to establish in by-law the structure, terms of reference, and procedures for program advisory committees.

D. Programs of Instruction

I. All programs of instruction with similar outcomes and credentials are to have the same title.

II. Programs of instruction are to include, along with the vocational outcomes relevant to the particular industry, field of study, business, or profession, the applicable outcomes for generic employability skills and general education as outlined in the Credentials Framework in Appendix A, and further expanded in Appendix B and Appendix C.

III. When a college chooses to deliver a program of instruction for which a Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities program standard exists, the program must meet all the requirements of the program standard.

IV. Colleges are to establish a system-wide credentials validation service that will provide reasonable assurance that all postsecondary programs of instruction leading to one of the following credentials – Ontario College Certificate, Ontario College Diploma, Ontario College Advanced Diploma, or Ontario College Graduate Certificate (or the French-language equivalent) – offered by the colleges, regardless of funding source, conform to the Credentials Framework and are consistent with accepted college system nomenclature/program titling principles.

V. Prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) is to be made available for as many credit courses as possible in programs of instruction in which enrolment is eligible for funding through the general purpose operating grant. If a credit course is to be excluded from PLAR, the reasons and considerations should be clearly documented for the student.

Information on the PLAR process is to be made available to the public in the college central admissions publication and posted on the college's web site.

VI. Colleges are to have protocols in place for students regarding grading, advancement, and dispute resolution. These protocols must be clearly articulated and provided to all students and college staff by posting the protocols on the college web site and by allowing people who do not have Internet access to obtain a copy of the protocols.

E. Applied Degrees

Pursuant to the *Post-secondary Choice and Excellence Act, 2000*, colleges may offer applied degrees as authorized by consent of the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities and consistent with the Act and any terms and conditions stipulated in the consent.

F. Quality Assurance

I. Colleges are to establish mechanisms for the review of their programs of instruction to ensure ongoing quality, relevancy, and currency. A college's policy on quality assurance for programs of instruction is to be publicly available.

II. If there is a legal requirement for graduates in a program to be certified, registered, licensed or granted some other form of official recognition by an regulatory authority that is authorized by Ontario law to grant such certification, registration, license or other form of recognition, in order for the graduate to work in the occupation in Ontario or use an occupational title, the college shall not offer the program, except with the consent of the Minister, unless:

(a) the program has been accredited or approved by the relevant regulatory authority; or

(b) the regulatory authority has formally acknowledged to the college that the program graduates are eligible to write any certifying or registration exam required by the regulatory authority or the program is otherwise recognized by the regulatory authority for the purposes of certifying or registering a graduate.

G. Programs Offered Through Partnerships or Other Arrangements with Other Postsecondary Education Institutions

I. Colleges offering programs in partnership or through other arrangements with other postsecondary education institutions, including private career colleges, must clearly indicate the nature of these partnerships or arrangements on all communications and materials prepared by the college and the other institution.

II. Students enrolled in programs offered through these partnerships or arrangements are students of the college and are entitled to all the rights and privileges accorded to other students of the college, regardless of the location of the program delivery.

H. Program Accreditation or Recognition by Voluntary External Bodies

A college may seek to have a program accredited or recognized by a voluntary external body. If a college does seek such accreditation or recognition the college shall not communicate or advertise, directly or indirectly, with respect to such accreditation or recognition unless the program has been formally accredited or recognized by the body and such accreditation or recognition remains in good standing.

For the purpose of this directive, a voluntary external body is an accrediting body or other body which has no legislative authority to require program accreditation or recognition, whether as a condition of graduate employment or membership in the body.

I. Advertising and Marketing

1. All advertising and marketing about college programs must be consistent with the requirements set out in Appendix D.

2. The board of governors of a college shall ensure that the college has established:

(a) a mechanism to ensure that all marketing relating to its programs, whether undertaken directly by the college or indirectly by persons or entities acting on the college's behalf or in partnership or other arrangement with the college, reflects accurate and comprehensive representation of the program or programs; and

(b) a process to receive and review complaints regarding college advertising and marketing of college programs consistent with Appendix D.

Summary of Responsibilities

Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology

The board of governors is responsible for:

- Approving the programs of instruction a college will offer.
- Ensuring that programs of instruction are developed and implemented consistent with provincial standards where they exist.
- Ensuring that all new and modified postsecondary programs of instruction leading to one of the following credentials – Ontario College Certificate, Ontario College Diploma, Ontario College Advanced Diploma, or Ontario College Graduate Certificate (or the French-language equivalent) – receive system-wide validation that the programs of instruction conform to the Credentials Framework and are consistent with accepted college system nomenclature / program titling principles.
- Ensuring that credentials awarded to students on successful completion of their respective programs of instruction are consistent with the Credentials Framework.
- Ensuring that program advisory committees are established.
- Ensuring that protocols for grading, advancement, and dispute resolution are established and publicly communicated.
- Ensuring that programs of instruction offered by the college are reviewed and revised on an ongoing basis.
- Ensuring that college communications, advertising and marketing meet the requirements of this Directive, including ensuring that the requirements set out in the College Advertising and Marketing Guidelines and the accountability requirements contained in Appendix D are complied with.

Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities

The ministry is responsible for:

- Working with the college system in monitoring the programs of instruction offered in the system to ensure that the mandate of the system is fulfilled.
- Maintaining the Credentials Framework, including the essential employability skills and general education policy, in consultation with the colleges.
- Developing, reviewing, and approving program standards in consultation with the colleges and external stakeholders.

Appendix A: Credentials Framework

A college is to award credentials at the successful completion of programs of instruction consistent with the Credentials Framework detailed on the following pages.

This framework represents the *minimum* provincial requirement for credentials to be awarded and applies to all programs of instruction, regardless of funding source.

	Non-Credit	***Certificate***	***Ontario College Certificate*** –	***Ontario College Diploma*** –	***Ontario College Advanced Diploma*** –	***Ontario College Graduate Certificate*** –	***Applied Degree***
1. Scope of Curriculum Outcomes: Breadth and Depth							
1.1 Complexity of Knowledge and Vocational Outcomes	***Locally determined***	Complexity of knowledge may focus on preparing graduates to begin postsecondary studies or may focus on targeted vocationally specific skills.	Meets all specific vocational learning outcomes as defined by provincial program standards, where these exist. Breadth, depth, and complexity of knowledge would prepare graduates to perform in a range of varied activities or knowledge application situations where the range of contexts in which the choice of actions required is usually clear, and complexity in the	Meets all specific vocational learning outcomes as defined by provincial program standards, where these exist. Breadth, depth, and complexity of knowledge cover the planning and initiation of alternative approaches to skill and knowledge application across a broad range of technical and/or administrative requirements; coordination; and	Meets all specific vocational learning outcomes as defined by provincial program standards, where these exist. Breadth, depth, and complexity of knowledge involve analysis, diagnosis, design, planning, execution, and evaluation across a broad range of technical and/or management functions. Opportunities may exist for new/additional applications of technical, creative,	Meets all specific vocational learning outcomes as defined by provincial program standards, where these exist. Breadth, depth, and complexity of knowledge would enhance the ability of graduates to perform a more specialized range of activities, most of which would be complex or non-routine. Leadership and guidance may be involved when organizing self or others, as well as when contributing	***Degree level standards established by the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board (PEQAB) are applied by PEQAB when it makes recommendations to the Minister under the authority of the Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, 2000.***

	Non-Credit	*Certificate*	*Ontario College Certificate* –	*Ontario College Diploma* –	*Ontario College Advanced Diploma* –	*Ontario College Graduate Certificate* –	*Applied Degree*
			range of options to be applied is limited. Complexity of knowledge prepares graduate for further postsecondary studies. Performance of a prescribed range of functions involving known routines and procedures and some accountability for the quality of outcomes.	evaluation. Performance of a range of skills, with associated knowledge, showing substantial depth in some areas where judgment is required in the planning and selecting of appropriate equipment, services, or techniques for self and others.	or conceptual knowledge to practical and/or real world situations. Performance of a significant range of skills associated with fundamental principles and complex techniques across a wide and often unpredictable variety of contexts in relation to either varied or highly specific functions. Contributions to the development of a broad plan, budget, or strategy are involved, as is accountability for self and others in achieving the outcomes for a team.	to technical solutions of a non-routine or contingency nature. Performance of a prescribed range of skilled operations that includes the requirement to evaluate and analyze current practices and develop new criteria, and may include the provision of some leadership and guidance to others in the application and planning of skills.	
			Applications may include some complex or non-routine activities involving individual responsibility or autonomy and/or collaboration with	Applications involve participation in the development of strategic initiatives, as well as personal responsibility and	Applications of skill and knowledge involve significant judgment in the planning, design, and technical leadership and/or guidance functions	Applications may involve some complex or non-routine activities involving individual responsibility or autonomy and/or leadership and	

	Non-Credit	*Certificate*	*Ontario College Certificate* –	*Ontario College Diploma* –	*Ontario College Advanced Diploma* –	*Ontario College Graduate Certificate* –	*Applied Degree*
			others as part of a group or team.	autonomy in performing complex technical operations or organizing others. Applications may include participation in teams, including teams concerned with planning and evaluation functions. Group or team coordination may be involved.	related to products, services, operations, or procedures. The degree of emphasis on breadth as against depth of knowledge and skills may vary, with most weighting placed on depth.	guidance for others as part of a team or group. The qualification may involve broadening the skills individuals have already gained in a postsecondary program of instruction, or developing vocational knowledge and skills in a new professional area.	
			– Portions of the above section are reproduced by kind permission of the Australian Qualifications Framework Advisory Board to the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, Australia.				

	Non-Credit	*Certificate*	*Ontario College Certificate* –	*Ontario College Diploma* –	*Ontario College Advanced Diploma* –	*Ontario College Graduate Certificate* –	*Applied Degree*
1.2 Essential Employability Skills		***Locally determined***	Graduates have achieved the basic fundamental, personal management, and teamwork skills to get, keep, and progress in a job-of-choice, or to enter further postsecondary studies. There is an appropriate depth of achievement, consistent with the essential employability skills learning outcomes, identified for this level of credential.	Graduates have achieved the basic fundamental, personal management, and teamwork skills to get, keep, and progress in a job-of-choice. There is an appropriate depth of achievement, consistent with the essential employability skills learning outcomes, identified for these levels of credentials.		***Locally determined***	

	Non-Credit	Certificate	Ontario College Certificate –	Ontario College Diploma –	Ontario College Advanced Diploma –	Ontario College Graduate Certificate –	Applied Degree
1.3 General Education		***Locally determined***	Locally determined, however it is desirable that graduates at this level will have been engaged in learning that incorporates some breadth beyond the vocational field of study, especially in programs of instruction intended to lead to further postsecondary study in a related field.	Consistent with the general education policy for colleges of applied arts and technology, graduates have been engaged in learning that exposes them to at least one discipline outside their main field of study and increases their awareness of the society and culture in which they live and work. This will typically involve students taking 3 to 5 courses (or the equivalent) designed discretely from vocational learning opportunities. This learning would normally be delivered using a combination of required and elective processes.		***Locally determined***	
2. Typical Duration for Completion		Specific design, delivery, and duration of curriculum is locally determined and may vary among programs and disciplines, recognizing that some colleges may use a system other than hours (e.g., credits) to determine program completion. It is understood that a range of hours may apply to the achievement of program learning outcomes leading to any particular credential. This framework outlines the typical duration of a program at this level for students entering with the minimum admission requirements.					

	Non-Credit	***Certificate***	***Ontario College Certificate –***	***Ontario College Diploma –***	***Ontario College Advanced Diploma –***	***Ontario College Graduate Certificate –***	***Applied Degree***
		Locally determined	Typically the duration to achieve this credential is 2 academic semesters or approximately 600 to 700 equivalent instructional hours.	Typically the duration to achieve this credential is 4 academic semesters or approximately 1200 to 1400 equivalent instructional hours.	Typically the duration to achieve this credential is 6 academic semesters or approximately 1800 to 2100 equivalent instructional hours.	Typically the duration to achieve this credential is 2 academic semesters or approximately 600 to 700 equivalent instructional hours.	
3. Admission Requirements	***Locally determined***	***Locally determined***	Admission requirements are established in O. Reg. 34/03 and Minister's Binding Policy Directive on Admissions Criteria.			Ontario College Diploma, Ontario College Advanced Diploma, Degree, or equivalent	
4. Name of Credential	***Locally determined, excluding the use of the words contained in any provincially approved***	Certificate Certificat	Ontario College Certificate Certificat d'études collégiales de l'Ontario	Ontario College Diploma Diplôme d'études collégiales de l'Ontario	Ontario College Advanced Diploma Diplôme d'études collégiales de l'Ontario – niveau avancé	Ontario College Graduate Certificate Certificat post-diplôme de l'Ontario	

	Non-Credit	*Certificate*	*Ontario College Certificate –*	*Ontario College Diploma –*	*Ontario College Advanced Diploma –*	*Ontario College Graduate Certificate –*	*Applied Degree*
	credential titles. May use such terminology as Attestation, Award, Statement, etc.						

Appendix B: Essential Employability Skills

Context

"Essential Employability Skills (EES) are skills that, regardless of a student's program or discipline, are critical for success in the workplace, in day-to-day living, and for lifelong learning.[1]"

The teaching and attainment of these Essential Employability Skills (EES) for students in, and graduates from, Ontario's colleges of applied arts and technology are anchored in a set of three fundamental assumptions:

- These skills are important for every adult to function successfully in society today.
- Our colleges are well equipped and well positioned to prepare graduates with these skills.
- These skills are equally valuable for all graduates, regardless of the level of their credential, whether they pursue a career path, or they pursue further education.

Skill Categories

To capture these skills, the following six categories define the essential areas where graduates must demonstrate skills and knowledge.

- Communication
- Numeracy
- Critical Thinking & Problem Solving
- Information Management
- Interpersonal
- Personal

[1] As defined by the ACCC /HRDC EES committee July,'03

Application / Implementation

In each of the six skill categories, there are a number of defining skills, or sub skills, identified to further articulate the requisite skills identified in the main skill categories. The following chart illustrates the relationship between the skill categories, the defining skills within the categories, and learning outcomes to be achieved by graduates from all postsecondary programs of instruction that lead to an Ontario College credential.

EES may be embedded in General Education or vocational courses, or developed through discrete courses. However these skills are developed, all graduates with Ontario College credentials must be able to reliably demonstrate the essential skills required in each of the six categories.

Skill Category	**Defining Skills** **Skill areas to be demonstrated by graduates:**	**Learning Outcomes: The levels of achievement required by graduates.** **The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to:**
Communication	• reading • writing • speaking • listening • presenting • visual literacy	Communicate clearly, concisely and correctly in the written, spoken, and visual form that fulfills the purpose and meets the needs of the audience. Respond to written, spoken, or visual messages in a manner that ensures effective communication.
Numeracy	• understanding and applying mathematical concepts and reasoning • analyzing and using numerical data • conceptualizing	Execute mathematical operations accurately.
Critical Thinking & Problem Solving	• analyzing • synthesizing	Apply a systematic approach to solve problems. Use a variety of thinking skills to anticipate and solve problems.

Skill Category	Defining Skills Skill areas to be demonstrated by graduates:	Learning Outcomes: The levels of achievement required by graduates. The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to:
	• evaluating • decision making • creative and innovative thinking	
Information Management	• gathering and managing information • selecting and using appropriate tools and technology for a task or a project • computer literacy • internet skills	Locate, select, organize, and document information using appropriate technology and information systems. Analyze, evaluate, and apply relevant information from a variety of sources.
Interpersonal	• team work • relationship management • conflict resolution • leadership • networking	Show respect for diverse opinions, values belief systems, and contributions of others. Interact with others in groups or teams in ways that contribute to effective working relationships and the achievement of goals.

Skill Category	Defining Skills Skill areas to be demonstrated by graduates:	Learning Outcomes: The levels of achievement required by graduates. The graduate has reliably demonstrated the ability to:
Personal	• managing self • managing change and being flexible and adaptable • engaging in reflective practices • demonstrating personal responsibility	Manage the use of time and other resources to complete projects. Take responsibility for one's own actions, decisions, and consequences.

Appendix C: General Education Requirement

Purpose

The purpose of General Education in the Ontario college system is to contribute to the development of citizens who are conscious of the diversity, complexity, and richness of the human experience; who are able to establish meaning through this consciousness; and, who, as a result, are able to contribute thoughtfully, creatively, and positively to the society in which they live and work.

General Education strengthens student's generic skills, such as critical analysis, problem solving, and communication, in the context of an exploration of topics with broad-based personal and / or societal importance.

Themes

The following themes will be used to provide direction to colleges in the development and identification of courses that are designed to fulfill the General Education requirement for programs of instructions:

- Arts in Society
- Civic Life
- Social and Cultural Understanding
- Personal Understanding
- Science and Technology

Appendix C1 that follows provides statements of rationale and offers suggestions related to more specific topic areas that could be explored within each theme. These suggestions are neither prescriptive nor exhaustive. They are included to provide guidance regarding the nature and scope of content that would be judged as meeting the intent and overall goals of General Education.

Courses

It is understood that the discrete courses developed and offered to deliver General Education will include measurable outcomes that provide evidence of student achievement. Typically, students' achievement is demonstrated by their ability to apply

these specific learning experiences to a broader understanding of the themes under study.

Requirement

The General Education requirement for programs of instruction is stipulated in the Credentials Framework (Appendix A in the Minister's Binding Policy Directive Framework for Programs of Instruction).

While the inclusion of General Education is locally determined for programs of instruction leading to either a college certificate or an Ontario College Certificate, it is recommended that graduates of the Ontario College Certificate programs have been engaged in learning that incorporates some breadth beyond the vocational field of study.

In programs of instruction leading to either an Ontario College Diploma or an Ontario College Advanced Diploma, it is required that graduates have been engaged in learning that exposes them to at least one discipline outside their main field of study, and increases their awareness of the society and culture in which they live and work. This will typically be accomplished by students taking 3 – 5 courses offered and designed discretely and separately from vocational learning opportunities (courses).

These learning opportunities would normally be delivered using a combination of required and elective processes. Further clarification is provided in Appendix C2 Questions and Answers related to the implementation of the general education policy in programs of instructions in colleges of applied arts and technology in Ontario.

Appendix C1: Themes for Courses Developed to Provide General Education

Theme 1. Arts In Society

Rationale:

The capacity of a person to recognize and evaluate artistic and creative achievements is useful in many aspects of his/her life. Since artistic expression is a fundamentally human activity, which both reflects and anticipates developments in the larger culture, its study will enhance the student's cultural and self-awareness.

Content:

Courses in this area should provide students with an understanding of the importance of visual and creative arts in human affairs, of the artist's and writer's perceptions of the world and the means by which those perceptions are translated into the language of literature and artistic expression. They will also provide an appreciation of the aesthetic values used in examining works of art and possibly, a direct experience in expressing perceptions in an artistic medium.

Theme 2. Civic Life

Rationale:

In order for individuals to live responsibly and to reach their potential as individuals and as citizens of society, they need to understand the patterns of human relationships that underlie the orderly interactions of a society's various structural units. Informed people will have knowledge of the meaning of civic life in relation to diverse communities at the local, national, and global level, and an awareness of international issues and the effects of these on Canada, and Canada's place in the international community.

Content:

Courses in this area should provide students with an understanding of the meaning of freedoms, rights, and participation in community and public life, in addition to a working knowledge of the structure and function of various levels of government (municipal, provincial, national) in Canada and/or in an international context. They may also provide an historical understanding of major political issues affecting relations between the various levels of government in Canada and their constituents.

Theme 3. Social and Cultural Understanding

Rationale:

Knowledge of the patterns and precedents of the past provide the means for a person to gain an awareness of his or her place in contemporary culture and society. In addition to this awareness, students will acquire a sense of the main currents of their culture and that of other cultures over an extended period of time in order to link personal history to the broader study of culture.

Content:

Courses in this area are those that deal broadly with major social and cultural themes. These courses may also stress the nature and validity of historical evidence and the variety of historical interpretation of events. Courses will provide the students with a view and understanding of the impact of cultural, social, ethnic, or linguistic characteristics.

Theme 4. Personal Understanding

Rationale:

Educated people are equipped for life-long understanding and development of themselves as integrated physiological and psychological entities. They are aware of the ideal need to be fully functioning persons: mentally, physically, emotionally, socially, spiritually, and vocationally.

Content:

Courses in this area will focus on understanding the individual: his or her evolution; situation; relationship with others; place in the environment and universe; achievements and problems; and his or her meaning and purpose. They will also allow students the opportunity to study institutionalized human social behaviour in a systematic way. Courses fulfilling this requirement may be oriented to the study of the individual within a variety of contexts.

Theme 5. Science And Technology

Rationale:

Matter and energy are universal concepts in science, forming a basis for understanding the interactions that occur in living and non-living systems in our universe. Study in this

area provides an understanding of the behaviour of matter that provides a foundation for further scientific study and the creation of broader understanding about natural phenomena.

Similarly, the various applications and developments in the area of technology have an increasing impact on all aspects of human endeavour and have numerous social, economic, and philosophical implications. For example, the operation of computers to process data at high speed has invoked an interaction between machines and the human mind that is unique in human history. This development and other technological developments have a powerful impact on how we deal with many of the complex questions in our society.

Content:

Courses in this area should stress scientific inquiry and deal with basic or fundamental questions of science rather than applied ones. They may be formulated from traditional basic courses in such areas of study as biology, chemistry, physics, astronomy, geology, or agriculture. As well, courses related to understanding the role and functions of computers (e.g., data management and information processing), and assorted computer-related technologies, should be offered in a non-applied manner to provide students with an opportunity to explore the impact of these concepts and practices on their lives.

Appendix C2: Questions and Answers

The following series of Questions and Answers is offered as an attempt to provide clarity of understanding and ease of implementation of the General Education requirement for programs of instruction offered by colleges of applied arts and technology in Ontario and leading to one of the following credentials: Ontario College Certificate, Ontario College Diploma, or Ontario College Advanced Diploma. It is not presented as an exhaustive list.

1. Why is there a new general education policy?

Under the Minister's Binding Policy Directive Framework for Programs of Instruction, released effective April 1, 2003 to support the Ontario Colleges Applied Arts and Technology Act, 2002, certain initial changes to the previous policy were noted. Specifically, the policy changes were noted as:

- in Ontario College Certificate (one-year) programs there is an expression of the desirability that students have exposure to general education that incorporates some breadth beyond the vocational field of study, along with the removal of the requirement for one 45-hour course per semester; and,
- in Ontario College Diploma and Ontario College Advanced Diploma (two-year and three-year) programs, while maintaining the requirement for some discretely designed general education learning opportunities (i.e., 3 – 5 courses), the requirement for one 45-hour course per semester is removed.

This was an initial step in the re-articulation of the requirement on General Education. At the same time the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities undertook to work cooperatively with the Coordinating Committee of Vice-Presidents, Academic to further update the general education requirement in light of the Credentials Framework, by updating and re-articulating the goals and objectives originally established in 1994.

2. What is different under the new general education policy?

There is a re-articulation of the purpose and goals of General Education in colleges of applied arts and technology in Ontario.

There is a change (from 8 to 5) in the number of broad goal areas, now described as themes, to assist colleges in the development, identification, and delivery of courses designed to fulfill the General Education requirement.

There is no longer a mandated time requirement (i.e., one 45-hour course per semester) attached to courses used to deliver General Education.

As noted above, there is a change in the requirement of having courses of a prescribed number of hours throughout a program of instruction. In programs of instruction leading to an Ontario College Certificate (a program that would be considered as a one-year post-secondary program), there is room for a college to determine, locally, whether or not to have discrete courses in their programs.

In programs of instruction leading to an Ontario College Diploma or an Ontario College Advanced Diploma, the requirement is to have students engage in 3-5 discrete courses in an area of study that is outside their chosen vocational field of study.

3. **The credentials framework says that for general education in Ontario college diploma and Ontario college advanced diploma programs, "… this will typically involve students taking 3-5 courses (or the equivalent)…". What does this mean?**

In some colleges student progress is expressed through an accumulation of 'credits' rather than 'courses'. There is no standard measure for 'credits' as used in this context. As a result, a college is expected to provide students with learning opportunities outside their chosen field of vocational study that would be equivalent to 3 – 5 courses. For example, if a college expressed successful completion of a course as being worth 3 credits, a student would have to accumulate a total of 9 to 15 credits to meet the 'equivalent of 3-5 courses'.

4. **Does a college have to have one course delivering general education in each semester, or could they be 'clustered'?**

The requirement is that students are engaged in learning that exposes them to at least one discipline outside their main field of study. The requirement for this to be done in 3-5 courses applies to the entire program of study. As such, the courses developed to deliver General Education may be offered at any point throughout the program of instruction.

5. **Can either discipline-specific or interdisciplinary courses be used to deliver general education?**

As with the previous policy, courses and their learning outcomes may be drawn from either a specific discipline, or from across disciplines. Courses developed or used to deliver General Education provide a vehicle for an increased depth of understanding of a broad topic area, and are not intended to develop proficiency in specific applied skills.

For example, a course developed under the theme of Arts in Society may include experimentation with painting in order to provide students with a firsthand experience with the challenges and accomplishments of the artist under study, and not primarily for the purpose of developing painting skills.

6. How many of the five themes must be addressed through courses developed to deliver general education?

Students are to be exposed to at least one discipline outside their main field of study so as to increase their awareness of the society and culture in which they live and work. Although students are encouraged to develop life-long learning habits and pursue areas of interest, of equal importance is the need to expand those areas. In order to achieve an appropriate level of breadth, students are encouraged to select courses in more than one theme. The achievement of breadth is dependent on colleges having sufficient offerings and the students being able and required to take advantage of them.

Appendix D: College Advertising and Marketing Guidelines

I. Overview

It is the Ministry's expectation that all college advertising and marketing should primarily focus on college programs.

All college advertising and marketing must be transparent and accurate and conform to the following guidelines, which are based on the *Canadian Code of Advertising Standards*.

A. Accuracy and Clarity

(a) Advertising and marketing must not contain inaccurate or deceptive claims, statements, illustrations or representations, either direct or implied, with regard to a program. In assessing the truthfulness and accuracy of a message, the concern is not with the intent of the sender or precise legality of the presentation. Rather, the focus is on the message as received or perceived, i.e. the general impression conveyed by the advertising or marketing.

(b) Advertising and marketing must not omit relevant information in a manner that, in the result, is deceptive.

(c) All pertinent details of a program, including abilities required to complete the program, must be clearly and understandably stated.

(d) Disclaimers and asterisked or footnoted information must not contradict more prominent aspects of the message and should be located and presented in such a manner as to be clearly visible and/or audible.

(e) Both in principle and practice, all advertising and marketing claims and representations must be supportable. Supporting information should be kept on file and be readily available for review.

B. Program Costs

No advertising or marketing shall include deceptive claims regarding program costs.

C. Guarantees

No advertising or marketing shall offer a guarantee of employment, employment opportunities or job placement, unless such guarantees can be verified.

D. Testimonial Advertising

Testimonials, endorsements or representations of opinion or preference, must reflect the genuine, reasonably current opinion of the individual(s), group or organization making such representations, and must be based upon adequate information about or experience with the program being advertised, and must not otherwise be deceptive.

II. Limitations on Advertising and Marketing of College Programs

Ministry funded programs that have not received funding approval by the Ministry may not be advertised in advance of that approval, nor may students be accepted into an unapproved program.

A college may not advertise or market a program subject to the Directive set out in Section F, II, except with the prior approval in writing of the Ministry.

A college may not advertise or market the accreditation or recognition of a program by a voluntary external body except in accordance with Section H of the Directive.

III. Accountability

Each college shall establish a process to receive and review complaints regarding advertising and marketing of college programs.

A college shall respond to any such complaints in a timely fashion and shall provide a summary of such complaints in its annual report, including information regarding number of complaints received, how they were disposed of, and the time frame involved. For details see the Annual Report Operating Procedure.

Appendix C: Fontanel's General Education Policy

AA 27 General Education Courses

Classification:	Academic Affairs
Responsible Authority:	Dean, Academic Development
Executive Sponsor:	Vice President, Academic
Approval Authority:	President's Council
Date First Approved:	2001.05.23
Date Last Reviewed:	2012.11.07
Mandatory Review Date:	2017.11.07

PURPOSE

To comply with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities' Binding Policy Directive: *Framework for Programs of Instruction* which requires the inclusion of discrete General Education courses in programs of study

SCOPE

All Ontario College Certificate, Ontario College Diploma, Ontario College Advanced Diploma programs

DEFINITIONS

Word/Term	Definition
Program of Study	A group of courses leading to a certificate, diploma or degree
Academic Administrator	Program Chair, Course Chair or Academic Manager
PLAR	Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition
GECC	General Education Curriculum Committee
Gen Ed	General Education
CRC	Curriculum Review Committee

POLICY

1. The purpose of General Education courses in the Ontario college system is to develop educated citizens who are aware of the diversity, complexity, and richness of the human experience and who are able to contribute thoughtfully, creatively, and positively to the society in which they live and work. General Education courses are to cover five (5) specific themes:

- Arts in Society
- Civic Life
- Social and Cultural Understanding
- Personal Understanding
- Science and Technology.

2. The College is accountable for delivering the standards as published by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

3. In programs of study leading to an Ontario College Diploma or an Ontario College Advanced Diploma, graduates shall successfully complete courses in a discipline outside their main field of study. This will typically be accomplished by students taking three courses offered and designated as General Education courses. Although some General Education courses may be mandated by the College, students shall have the opportunity to exercise choice amongst General Education electives.

4. In programs of study leading to an Ontario College Credential, the graduates shall engage in learning that incorporates some breadth beyond the vocational field of study.

5. Postsecondary programs at Fontanel College will comply with Ministry policies by including General Education courses equivalent to 45 normative hours using a combination of mandated and elective courses as follows:

General Education Requirement	*Program Credential*				
	Fonatanel College Certificate	Ontario College Certificate	Ontario College Diploma including NSDP	Ontario College Advanced Diploma	Ontario College Graduate Diploma
Courses required	N/A	1	3	3	N/A
Courses that may be mandated	N/A	1	2	2	N/A
Minimum *Themes* learners must cover	N/A	1	2	2	N/A

Minimum *Themes* available to learners	N/A	1	5	5	N/A

*NSDP = Non-Semestered Diploma Program

6. General Education courses are intended to encourage and support continuous learning, and shall be delivered in class or electronically as discrete courses designed to address one or more of the five themes. To the extent possible, General Education electives are to be delivered online.

7. General Education courses, whether mandated or elective, shall meet the criteria for a General Education course, listed in item 9 below.

8. General Education courses can require as prerequisite an introductory Gen Ed course. This is to allow the option of depth to be met. However, General Education courses shall not require a vocationally-specific course as a prerequisite.

9. To be designated a General Education course, a course shall meet the following criteria.

a. be 45 hours in length; any exceptions must be approved by the Vice President Academic;

b. clearly contribute to learning that is distinct from specific vocational skills;

c. enable college learners to more effectively meet the societal challenges that face them as they take their place in community, family, and working life;

d. ensure the focus of the course is sufficiently broad to be of value to students regardless of their vocational interests;

e. deal with issues related to the content, and not just with mastery of the content;

f. provide opportunities for learners to explore questions related to issues and values raised by the subject matter and their application to contemporary life, covering at least two of the following:

- ethics;
- historical context;
- theoretical bases.

g. include discussion, demonstration, or practice in a variety of modes of inquiry in mandated and/or elective course.

10. The General Education Committee, a sub-committee of the Curriculum Review Committee, will review new General Education courses against these criteria to ensure that college programming meets provincial guidelines. In addition, they will review the programs of study and make recommendations to ensure programs meet General Education requirements. The Committee will also validate the General Education designation and theme identification for individual courses.

11. Students choose General Education electives from a pool of courses, approved by the General Education Committee.

12. Mandated General Education courses may be provided as service courses to other departments.

13. Mandated General Education courses associated with a program will be reviewed on a five year cycle as part of the Program Quality Review. Online Elective General Education courses in the General Education pool are program independent and are not reviewed during Program Quality Review. Each Online Elective General Education pool course will be reviewed at least once every five years as part of the Cyclical Review of Online Elective General Education Courses.

Transfer of Academic Credit/PLAR for General Education Courses

14. For *mandated courses*, the granting of transfer of credit will be based on the successful prior completion of a course covering the same theme and meeting similar course learning requirements. The Course Chair will be responsible for assessing applications for transfer of credit.

15. For *elective courses*, the granting of transfer of credit will be based on the nature of the course(s) a student has successfully completed. There are two possibilities:

    15.1 If the course the student wishes to use as the basis for an exemption matches a Fontanel College General Education elective directly, the request for transfer of credit will be sent to the course academic administrator for validation. Students will receive a grade of EX on their transcript next to the General Education elective being matched.

    15.2 If the course the student wishes to use as the basis for an exemption does not match Fontanel course learning requirements outcomes but appears to match one of the theme areas, the request for transfer of credit will be sent to the administrator who is responsible for General Education at the student's campus for a ruling. Unlike mandated General Education and vocational courses, students can apply for a transfer of credit if the eligible course taken was completed more than five years prior to their current program of study. Successful students will receive a grade of EX on their transcript next to the General Education theme number being matched:
    - GED0011 Arts in Society
    - GED0012 Civic Life
    - GED0013 Social and Cultural Understanding
    - GED0014 Personal Understanding
    - GED0015 Science and Technology

16. Students who wish to use PLAR to challenge the General Education electives based on prior learning may challenge the theme areas. The Prior Learning Assessment Office and subject resource specialist will assess applications for credit and, where credit is recognized, assign it to the appropriate theme outlined below, and enter it on the student's transcript.
    - GED0011 Arts in Society
    - GED0012 Civic Life
    - GED0013 Social and Cultural Understanding
    - GED0014 Personal Understanding

- GED0015 Science and Technology

17. Students who apply for transfer of academic credit must still meet the General Education breadth requirements. The General Education courses must cover the number of themes identified for their program of study. If all previous courses have been in only one theme, the student will be required to take one or more courses to achieve the required breadth.

PROCEDURE

	Action	Responsibility
1.	**Programs of Study**	
1.1	In designing or reviewing programs of study, ensure that the Academic Administrator combination of mandated and elective courses allows students access to General Education courses in each of the five themes: • Arts and Society, • Civic Life, • Social and Cultural Understanding, • Personal Understanding, • Science and Technology.	
1.2	Ensure that programs of study for postsecondary programs comply with the requirements for mandated and elective courses as outlined in Article 5 under Policy.	Academic Administrator
2.	**General Education Courses**	
2.1	Identify the one theme addressed in the General Education course outline when: a. the course is being developed, b. the course is first included in a Program of Study, c. the course is presented as part of the Program Quality review.	Professor
2.2	Assign the one theme of a General Education course in the curriculum course module of GeneSIS.	Professor
2.3	Deliver *Mandated* General Education courses, as developed, loaded, and scheduled.	Department responsible for the subject area, Professor

2.4	Deliver *Elective* General Education courses as developed, loaded, and scheduled.	Department responsible for the subject area, Professor
2.5	Co-ordinate and monitor centrally the elective offering of General Education courses.	Office of the Vice President, Academic.

3. Transfer of Credits - Academic Credits

3.1	Once accepted in a full-time program, or when requesting transfer of credit for continuing education courses, submit an Application for External Transfer of Academic Credit for General Education Electives form (see Appendix 1) with English transcripts and course outlines, to the Registrar's Office. An assessment fee will be charged, except where articulation agreements are in place.	Student
3.2	Assess applications for transfer of credit for *mandated* courses, based on successful completion of a course covering the same theme and meeting similar course learning requirements.	Course Chair
3.3	Assess applications for transfer of credit for *elective* courses, based on the nature of the course(s) a student has taken, previously and if the request is granted, grant the student a grade of EX for the General Education *elective* being matched or next to the General Education theme number being matched: • GED0011 Arts in Society • GED0012 Civic Life • GED0013 Social and Cultural Understanding • GED0014 Personal Understanding • GED0015 Science and Technology	General Education Elective Coordinator, Learning and Teaching Services

4. Transfer of Credits - Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR)

4.1	Assess applications for credit using PLAR and assign a grade of EX next to the General Education theme number being matched: • GED0011 Arts in Society • GED0012 Civic Life • GED0013 Social and Cultural Understanding • GED0014 Personal Understanding • GED0015 Science and Technology	Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition Office and subject resource specialist

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendix 1 – Application for External Transfer of Academic Credit (Exemption) forms

RELATED POLICIES

AA 09 Transfer of Academic Credit (Internal)
AA 10 Transfer of Academic Credit (External)
AA 15 Certificates and Diplomas
AA 39 Program Progression and Graduation Requirements
AA 26 Course Outlines
AA 06 Prior Learning Assessment
AA 38 Program Quality Assurance

RELATED MATERIALS

Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities' Binding Policy Directive: *Framework for Programs of Instruction.* **Revised: 31/07/09**

http://www.fontanelcollege.com/programDevelopment/Documents/Framework%20ProgramsOfInstructionJuly2009.pdf

AA 27 : APPENDIX 1

APPLICATION FOR EXTERNAL TRANSFER OF ACADEMIC CREDIT (EXEMPTION) FORMS

Forms required to request a transfer of academic credit (exemption) are found at:
http://www.fontanelcollege.com/RegistrarsOffice/forms/forms.htm

The following form is to be completed in order to receive an exemption:

1. Application for External Transfer of Credit for General Education Electives

Appendix D: Fontanel's Document Supporting the Policy

Guidelines for General Education Courses

Lifesaver #5

INTRODUCTION

General Education is included in the Ontario college curriculum to help graduates gain insight into the diversity, complexity, and richness of human experience. By expanding their aesthetic, cultural, historical, scientific, and philosophical awareness, graduates are equipped to participate actively and fully in society and to recognize the values of social responsibility and good citizenship.

To support these goals, general education at Fontanel College will be delivered via discrete courses that address one of the following five themes:

1. Arts in Society
2. Civic Life
3. Social and Cultural Understanding
4. Personal Understanding
5. Science and Technology

GENERAL EDUCATION THEMES — ONTARIO [1]

Theme 1 - Arts in Society

Rationale - The capacity of a person to recognize and evaluate artistic and creative achievements is useful in many aspects of his/her life. Since artistic expression is a fundamentally human activity, which both reflects and anticipates developments in the larger culture, its study will enhance the student's cultural and self-awareness.

Content - Courses in this theme group lead to an understanding of the importance of visual and creative arts in human affairs, of artists' and writers' perceptions of the world and the means by which those perceptions are translated into the language of literature and artistic expression. They will also provide an appreciation of the aesthetic values used in examining works of art and possibly, a direct experience in expressing perceptions in an artistic medium.

Theme 2 - Civic Life

Rationale - In order for individuals to live responsibly and to reach their potential as individuals and as citizens of society, they need to understand the patterns of human

[1] The material in this section comes from the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities' *Policy on General Education* that was approved in October 2004.

INSIDE

relationships that underlie the orderly interactions of a society's various structural units. Informed people will have knowledge of the meaning of civic life in relation to diverse communities at the local, national, and global level, and an awareness of international issues and the effects of these on Canada, and Canada's place in the international community.

Content - Courses in this area should provide students with an understanding of the meaning of freedoms, rights, and participation in community and public life, in addition to a working knowledge of the structure and function of various levels of government (municipal, provincial, national) in Canada and/or in an international context. They may also provide an historical understanding of major political issues affecting relations between the various levels of government in Canada and their constituents.

Theme 3 - Social and Cultural Understanding

Rationale - Knowledge of the patterns and precedents of the past provide the means for a person to gain an awareness of his or her place in contemporary culture and society. In addition to this awareness, students will acquire a sense of the main currents of their culture and that of other cultures over an extended period of time in order to link personal history to the broader study of culture.

Content - Courses in this area are those that deal broadly with major social and cultural themes. These courses may also stress the nature and validity of historical evidence and the variety of historical interpretation of events. Courses will provide the students with a view and understanding of the impact of cultural, social, ethnic or linguistic characteristics.

Theme 4 – Personal Understanding

Rationale - Educated people are equipped for life-long understanding and development of themselves as integrated physiological and psychological entities.

They are aware of the ideal need to be fully functioning persons: mentally, physically, emotionally, socially, spiritually, and vocationally.

Content - Courses in this area will focus on understanding the individual: his or her evolution; situation; relationship with others; place in the environment and universe; achievements and problems; and his or her meaning and purpose. They will also allow students the opportunity to study institutionalized human social behaviour in a systematic way. Courses fulfilling this requirement may be oriented to the study of the individual within a variety of contexts.

Theme 5 - Science and Technology

Rationale - Matter and energy are universal concepts in science, forming a basis for understanding the interactions that occur in living and non-living systems in our universe. Study in this area provides an understanding of the behaviour of matter that provides a foundation for further scientific study and the creation of broader understanding about natural phenomena. Similarly, the various applications and developments in the area of technology have an increasing impact on all aspects of human endeavour and have numerous social, economic, and philosophical implications. For example, the operation of computers to process data at high speed has invoked an interaction between machines and the human mind that is unique in human history. This development and other technological developments have a powerful impact on how we deal with many of the complex questions in our society.

Content - Courses in this area should stress scientific inquiry and deal with basic or fundamental questions of science rather than applied ones. They may be formulated from traditional basic courses in such areas of study as biology, chemistry, physics, astronomy, geology, or agriculture. As well, courses related to understanding the role and functions of computers (e.g., data management and information processing), and assorted computer related technologies, should be offered in a non-applied manner to provide students with an opportunity to explore the impact of these concepts and practices on their lives.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS FOR GENERAL EDUCATION

Post-secondary programs at Fontanel College must include a general education component to comply with Ministry policies. Although the number of required courses depends on the length of the program, the length of each course must be equivalent to 45 normative hours of study.

Programs may include general education courses that are mandated by the program of study or that are selected by students from a designated pool of electives. The following chart summarizes general education course requirements according to the type of credential earned:

General Education Requirement	Program Credential				
	Fontanel College Certificate	Ontario College Certificate	Ontario College Diploma including NSDP	Ontario College Advanced Diploma	Ontario College Graduate Certificate
Courses required	NA	1	3	5	NA
Courses that may be mandated	NA	1	2	3	NA
Minimum *Themes* learners must cover	NA	1	2	2	NA
Minimum *Themes* available to learners	NA	1	5	5	NA

*NSDP = Non-Semestered Diploma Program

- **Apprenticeship Programs** and **Fontanel College Certificate Programs** are not required to include general education courses in their programs of study.
- **Ontario College Certificate Programs** must include **one** general education course of 45 hours that may be mandated.
- **Ontario College Diploma Programs (both 4 terms and Non-Semestered Ontario College Diploma Programs)** must include **three** general education courses of 45 hours each. Two of the courses may be mandated; at least one course should be chosen from an elective pool by the student. Overall, courses must cover a minimum of two theme areas.
- **Ontario College Advanced Diploma Programs (6 terms)** must include **five** general education courses of 45 hours each. Three of the courses may be mandated; at least two courses should be chosen from an elective pool by the student. Overall, courses must cover a minimum of two theme areas.
- **Ontario College Graduate Certificate Programs** do not require general education courses in their programs of study.
- **Mandated General Education Courses** are developed, loaded, scheduled, and delivered by the department responsible for the subject area they address. Students have no choice in the selection of these courses as they are essential components

of a program of study. Mandated general education courses may be provided as service courses to other departments.

- **Elective General Education Courses** are developed, loaded, scheduled, and delivered by the department responsible for the course. However, central coordination and monitoring of the pool of elective courses will be the responsibility of the Office of the Vice President, Academic. Wherever possible, general education electives will use elearning as the delivery mode, and students will have some choice from courses in the designated pool.

THE ROLE OF THE GENERAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The General Education Committee reviews new general education courses to ensure that college programming meets the provincial guidelines and that the general education and theme designations for the course are valid. The General Education Committee is a sub-committee of the Curriculum Review Committee. Any new or revised general education course must be submitted to the General Education Committee for review before it is included in a program of study or added to the general education pool.

The General Education Committee also reviews, on a cyclical basis, the general education component of existing programs to ensure each program continues to meet general education requirements.

TRANSFER OF ACADEMIC CREDIT – GENERAL EDUCATION COURSES

Students who have received academic credits from other post-secondary institutions may be eligible for a transfer of credit and thus be exempted from their general education courses. The exemption process is different for mandated courses and elective courses:

Exemptions from Mandated Courses - Course managers will be responsible for assessing applications for transfer of credit. Approval for transfers of credit will be based on prior completion of a post-secondary course earned within the last five years that covers the same primary theme and meets similar course learning requirements.

Exemptions from Elective Courses - The General Education Coordinator who serves the academic community in a central role is responsible for assessing requests and granting transfers of credit. Approval for transfers of credit for general education courses will be based on prior completion of a post-secondary course covering the same theme and meeting similar learning requirements to those outlined in the general education course checklist. While the five-year period is offered as a guideline, students whose credentials were earned outside the five-year period may apply to have their exemption request assessed. **For more details, please refer to College Directives E9 and E10.**

QUESTIONS??

For more information, contact your school General Education Representative or Learning & Teaching Services at ext. ####.

DELIVERY AND ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES

General education courses should include opportunities for learners to explore issues, and applications to contemporary life. The courses must be delivered in a way that encourages thoughtful reflection on the course content. To this end, learning activities and assessment strategies must address learners' understanding and application of the subject area rather than purely factual knowledge.

Appropriate learning activities or assessment strategies might include		Teaching Strategies that support the spirit of general education might include
• Writing essays	• Examining cases	• Promoting discussion
• Keeping journals	• Using hands-on exercises to make discoveries and make predictions	• Linking content to contemporary and personal issues and events
• Monitoring media coverage of course content	• Linking course content to current events and to learners' personal lives	• Encouraging problem-solving and application of content to broader contexts
• Engaging in discussions	• Interviewing experts	• Presenting various points of view on a subject
• Submitting questions as well as answers	• Conducting surveys	• Demonstrating processes used in the field
• Holding formal or informal debates	• Making presentations.	
• Participating in role-plays		

GUIDELINES FOR INTEGRATING GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS INTO A PROGRAM OF STUDY

Use the following checklists to make sure a proposed course meets the general education criteria for inclusion in a Program of Study.

Program of Study Checklist

Collectively, do the general education courses in this Program of Study...

- ☐ Serve a clear purpose that is distinct from the achievement of vocational learning outcomes?
- ☐ Ensure that graduates have exposure to a diversity of viewpoints, perspectives, traditions, and learning outside their field of vocational study?
- ☐ Provide learners with choice appropriate to the credential level?
  - Ontario College Certificate—no choice
  - Ontario College Diploma—one choice
  - Ontario College Advanced Diploma—two choices
- ☐ Provide breadth by ensuring learners have access to the maximum number of general education themes available to the program?
- ☐ Ensure that learners have successfully completed study in the required number of theme areas?
  - Ontario College Certificate—1 theme
  - Ontario College Diploma—2 themes
  - Ontario College Advanced Diploma—2 themes
- ☐ Incorporate the required number of General Education courses?
  - Ontario College Certificate—one 45-hour course
  - Ontario College Diploma—three 45-hour courses
  - Ontario College Advanced Diploma—five 45-hour courses

RESOURCES

Individuals looking for more information may find the following resources useful:

- Fontanel College's General Education site: http://elearning.fontanelcollege.com/gened/
- The Professor's Resource Site: http://elearning.fontanelcollege.com/profres/

PROFESSOR OF THE 21ST CENTURY

The content of this Lifesaver is related to the following Professor of the 21st Century Teaching Competency:

7. Designing Courses and Programs.

General Education Course Checklist

Within the Program of Study does each general education course...

- ☐ Include 45 hours of instruction?
- ☐ Contribute to learning that is clearly distinct from specific vocational skills?
- ☐ Enable college learners to meet more effectively the societal challenges that face them as they take their place in community, family, and contemporary life?
- ☐ Focus on content that is sufficiently broad to be of value to students regardless of their vocational interests?
- ☐ Deal with issues and values raised by the subject matter, and not just with mastery of the subject matter?
- ☐ Give learners opportunities to explore questions related to issues and values associated with the subject matter that cover at least two of the following three items:
  - Historical context
  - Theoretical bases
  - Ethics
- ☐ Include discussion of, demonstration of, or practice in the modes of inquiry used in this field. (For example, analysis, modeling, experimentation, assessments, inventories, critical thinking.)
- ☐ Include learning requirements and embedded knowledge & skills that reflect items 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6, 7 above?
- ☐ Incorporate assignments, evaluation tools, and teaching and learning methods that ensure general education outcomes (2, 3, 4, 5 6, 7 & 8 above) are met.
- ☐ Identify on the course outline which of the 5 themes is met?

Appendix E: Interview Guide

FILE NO 100842 (Rich and Surman)
INTERVIEW GUIDE as of December 10, 2015

The following questions will form the basis for the one-hour interviews being conducted a part of the research on the Minister's Binding Policy Directive for the Framework for Programs of Instruction as revised in 2005, specifically, Appendix C as it rearticulates the requirement for General Education courses. This research is being conducted by Kerry Surman under the supervision of Dr. Sharon Rich as a requirement of Kerry's degree requirements for a PhD in Education through Nipissing University.

The responses that are provided by the participants as a result of being asked these questions will be expanded upon through the use of probes. This semi-structured interview technique is commonly used as part of the institutional ethnography methodology being followed in this study.

1. From your perspective, describe the General Education policy.

2. Describe your role in relation to this policy.

3. Describe the documents that you use in this role that relate to this policy.

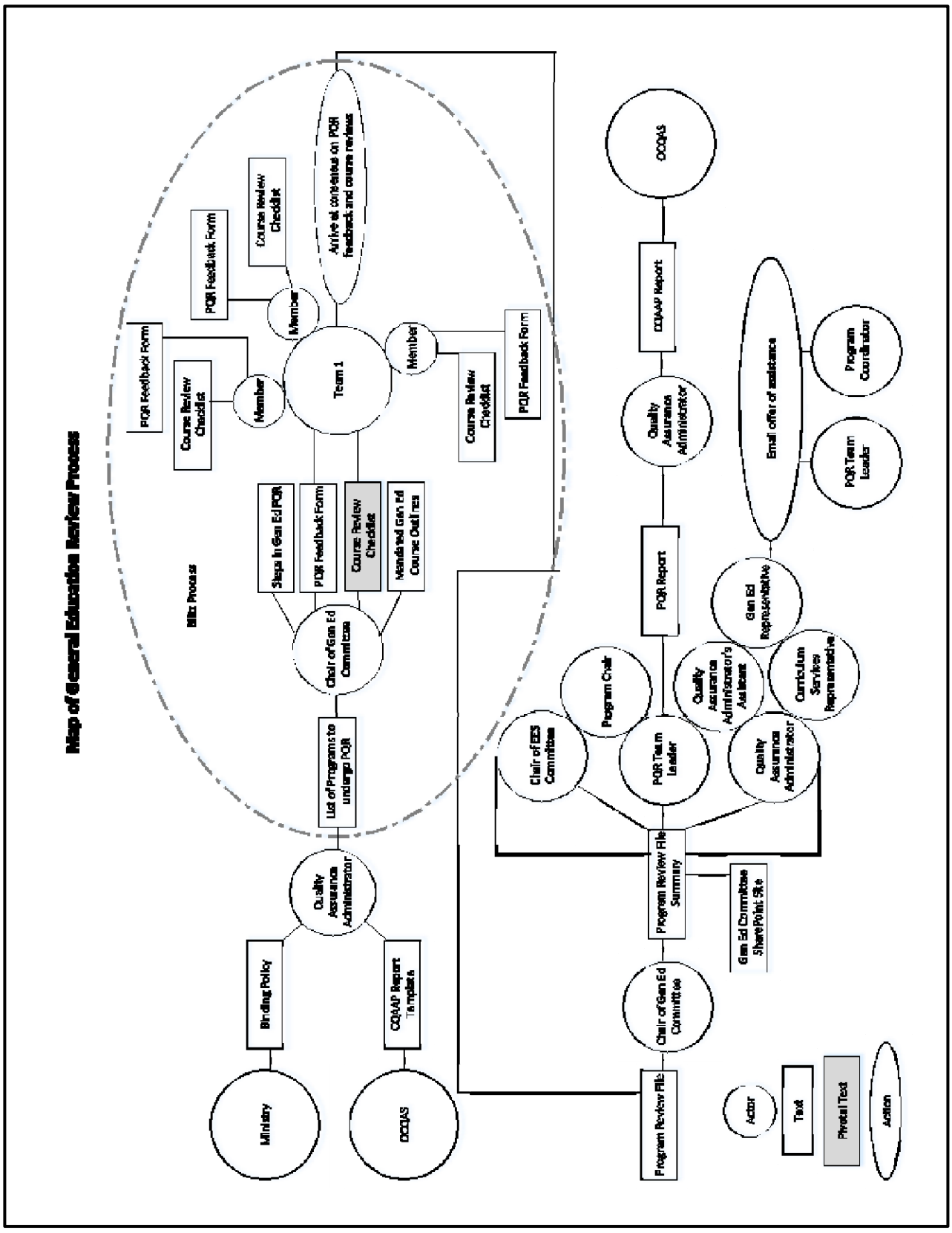
4. From your perspective, describe the review process for General Education course outlines that relates to this policy.

5. Describe any other processes for General Education course outlines in which you are involved.

Appendix F: Interview Schedule

1. February 10, 2016: B1
2. February 11, 2016: B2
3. February 18, 2016: A1
4. February 22, 2016: A2
5. February 25, 2016: M1
6. February 26, 2016: A3
7. February 26, 2016: A4
8. March 1, 2016: M2
9. March 3, 2016: A5
10. March 7, 2016: B3
11. March 9, 2016: B4
12. March 10, 2016: B5
13. March 14, 2016: B6
14. March 14, 2016: B7
15. April 19, 2016: second interview of clarification with M2

Appendix G: Map of Blitz Process



Appendix H: Fontanel's General Education Course Review Checklist

General Education – Course Review Checklist

(To be completed by General Education Committee reviewers)

Course Number:		*Date:*	
Title:		*Reviewers:*	General Education Committee
Theme #:		*Name of Theme:*	
Date of Last Review:		*Other Programs Course Appears In:*	

Does this general education course include the following?		**Yes** ✓	**No** x	**Comments**
1	45 hours of instruction			
2	Does the Course Description provide a student-focused description of the purpose, key topics, and major learning activities of the course?			
3	Does it reflect the General Education theme?			
4	Do EESs reflect General Education outcomes rather than Vocational Skills?			
5	Do CLRs and EKSs begin with active verbs and clearly describe measurable and realistic course learning and objectives?			
6	Do CLRs and EKSs reflect societal challenges in community, family, or contemporary life? Is there clear value beyond vocational interests?			
7	Does the course explore questions related to issues and values that cover at least **two** of the following: ◦ Historical context ◦ Theoretical bases ◦ Ethics			
8	Are Learning Resources reasonable and appropriate? Have open online resources been considered?			
9	Are Learning Activities clearly described, varied, and appropriate? Are there opportunities for collaboration? For self-reflection?			
10	Are Evaluation/Earning Credit strategies clear and detailed for students? Do they provide variety and opportunities for collaboration and self-reflection?			

11	Do Evaluation/Earning Credit strategies support CLRs, EKSs and EESs?			
12	Are opportunities for PLAR clearly outlined?			

Comments:

APPROVED	
APPROVED WITH RECOMMENDED CHANGES	
RESUBMIT WITH CHANGES FOR FURTHER REVIEW	
NOT APPROVED	

_____ _____

Chair Signature – Acknowledging Review Date

_____

Date/Academic Year – Course Recommendation(s) Implementation

(Indicate the semester or academic year by which the changes will be actioned for course delivery and, if applicable reflected within the Annual Curriculum Review Process)

N.B. Please return a scan of the signed General Education PQR Feedback form to the Chair, General Education Committee (genedchair@fontanelcollege.com) within two weeks of receipt.

Appendix I: Fontanel's Outline of the Steps in the General Education PQR Process

Steps in the Gen Ed PQR Process

Revised February 10, 2016

Please follow these steps carefully to ensure that the Gen Ed Committee reports are accurate.

Mandated General Education Course Reviews

1. Login to Gen Ed SharePoint site.
    a. Go to **Libraries / PQR Reviews (Current) / 2015-16 / Winter 2016 / Programs** / folder and select the name of the program you are reviewing.
    b. Open the document identified by the program name. This contains the Gen Ed map for each program as found in GeneSIS.
2. Login to Fontanel's Online Curriculum System.
    a. Click on "Generate Reports" button in left-hand column.
    b. For the **Report** drop-down box, select "General Education Map."
    c. Make sure **Academic Year** is set to "2015-16."
    d. For the **Department**, select the code for the department offering the program under review.
    e. For the **Program**, highlight the code for the program under review.
    f. Select "Run Report" button.
3. Compare the COMMS report with the Program of Study (POS) in the listing in the document from Step #1.
    a. GeneSIS is the authority so COMMS should match it.
    b. If they don't match, please note the discrepancies.
4. Return to the Gen Ed SharePoint site.
    a. Go to **Libraries / PQR Reviews (Current) / 2015-16 / Winter 2016 / Resources** and open the "Gen Ed Electives 2015-16" document.
5. Compare the GeneSIS and COMMS versions of the POS with the Gen Ed Electives List.
    a. Note any omissions or conflicts with the Gen Ed courses in the program.
6. Return to the Gen Ed SharePoint site.
    a. Go to **Libraries / PQR Reviews (Current)** / **2015-16 / Winter 2016 / Resources** and open the "PQR Feedback Form-Nov 2015" document.

7. Save the file as Program Code + Title (e.g., "####x-ArchitecturalTechnician-Fontanel.docx").
8. Record the details of your review of the program's Gen Eds in the PQR Feedback Form.
    a. Please include your review of, and comments on, the maps, the number of courses, themes, hours and whether they are compliant or not.
9. Review the individual course outlines for program-mandated Gen Ed courses.
    a. Go to **Libraries / PQR Reviews (Current)** / **2015-16 / Winter 2016 / Programs** and open the folders for the program(s) you are reviewing. All associated pdf files for each mandated Gen Ed are inside the program folder.
    b. Use the "Gen Ed Checklist-Nov 2015" document for the course reviews. It is in the **Libraries / PQR Reviews (Current)** / **2015-16 / Winter 2016 / Resources** folder.
    c. If course outlines are not available on COMMS, make a note of this fact.
    d. *Note: We are not required to review drafts, but we may offer feedback to help developers when they redraft their outlines.*
10. When your program review file is complete, please email it to the Gen Ed Chair (genedchair@fontanelcollege.com).
11. I will review it, post it to the Gen Ed SharePoint site, and send it out to the PQR team leader, the school's Academic Chair, as well as the Program Quality Assurance Administrator.

Elective General Education Course Reviews

You will likely have noticed a folder in Programs called General Education Electives. This contains the five electives the Committee needs to review this semester.

1. Please open this folder and select the course outline pdf for the course you are to review.
2. Use the "Gen Ed Checklist – Nov 2015" in the **Resources** folder to guide your review.
3. Rename the document using the course code and title you have reviewed (i.e. DSN2001 – History of Design.docx).
4. Email this elective review to the Gen Ed Chair (genedchair@fontanelcollege.com), along with your program reviews.

Appendix J: Fontanel's Form for General Education PQR Feedback

GENERAL EDUCATION PQR FEEDBACK

Program Name:	
Program of Study Version (Academic Year):	2015/2016
Program Code:	
School:	
Date of Report:	

Level	General Education Courses CODE + TITLE	Normative Hours	Choice		Theme #
			Yes	No	
1					
2					
3					
4					

Collectively, do the general education courses in this Program of Study (POS)…				
A	provide learners with choice appropriate to the credential level? Ontario College Certificate - No choice Ontario College Diploma - One choice Ontario College Advanced Diploma - Two choices	Credential Level:		**Compliant/ Non-Compliant**
B	ensure learners have successfully completed study in the required number of theme areas? ° Ontario College Certificate - One theme ° Ontario College Diploma - Two themes ° Ontario College Advanced Diploma - Two themes	Number of themes by end of POS:		**Compliant/ Non-Compliant**
C	incorporate the required number of general education courses? ° Ontario College Certificate - One 45-hour course ° Ontario College Diploma - Three 45-hour courses ° Ontario College Advanced Diploma - Five 45-hour courses	Number of Gen Ed courses in POS:		**Compliant/ Non-Compliant**
D	include only course outlines that have been approved by the General Education Committee? ***Please see attached course outline reviews***	Yes/No		**Compliant/ Non-Compliant**

COMMENTS:

_____ _____

Chair Signature – Acknowledging Review Date

_____

Date/Academic Year – Course Recommendation(s) Implementation

(Indicate the semester or academic year by which the changes will be actioned for course delivery and, if applicable reflected within the Annual Curriculum Review Process)

N.B. Please return a scan of the signed General Education PQR Feedback form to the Chair, General Education Committee (genedchair@fontanelcollege.com) within two weeks of receipt.