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Internationalization Policies of Public Schooling and Neoliberal Discourses in Canada: A Stephen Ball Informed Analysis

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**Internationalization Policies of Public Schooling and Neoliberal Discourses in Canada:
A Stephen Ball Informed Analysis
Politiques d'internationalisation de l'enseignement public et discours néolibéraux au
Canada :
Analyse informée par les écrits de Stephen Ball**

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Abstract

This article examines the neoliberal underpinnings of current internationalization policies of public schooling in Canadian contexts. It goes beyond the existing institutional practices and approaches to internationalize K–12 public schooling and focuses more on the federal and provincial international education policies and strategies that govern the institutional practices. The article pays more attention to the neoliberal developmental contexts of these governmental policies. It employs Stephen Ball's writings, particularly his views of *policy as text* and *policy as discourse*, to analyze the ways in which global neoliberalism and its public discourses on public education marketization, privatization, and expansion of policy communities relate to the development of current internationalization policies of K–12 public schooling as texts and as discourses in Canada. The analysis suggests that the global neoliberal ideology and its public discourses are the contexts that promote and legitimize the development of current market-oriented internationalization policy texts and discourses. These neoliberal discourses view public education as an internationally tradable commodity that the private sector may provide for international students and contribute to its policy development. In that context, current international education policies pay more attention to the recruitment of fee-paying K–12 international students with an increased role for the private sector in this process.

Résumé

Cet article examine les fondements néolibéraux des politiques actuelles d'internationalisation de l'enseignement public dans des contextes canadiens. Il dépasse les pratiques institutionnelles existantes et les approches d'internationalisation de l'enseignement public de la maternelle à la 12^e année pour se concentrer plus particulièrement sur les politiques et les stratégies d'enseignement international provinciales qui gouvernent les pratiques institutionnelles. Cet article prête plus attention aux contextes de développement néolibéraux de ces politiques gouvernementales. Il se sert des écrits de Stephen Ball, en particulier de son opinion de la *politique comme texte* et de la *politique comme discours* pour analyser les façons dont le néolibéralisme mondial et ses discours publics sur la marchandisation de l'enseignement public, la privatisation et l'expansion des communautés de politique sont reliées au développement des politiques d'internationalisation actuelles de l'enseignement public de la maternelle à la 12^{ème} année comme textes et comme discours au Canada. L'analyse suggère que l'idéologie néolibérale mondiale et ses discours publics sont les contextes qui promeuvent et légitiment l'élaboration actuelle des textes et des discours de politique d'internationalisation orientés vers le marché. Ces discours néolibéraux envisagent l'enseignement public comme un bien commercialisable international que le secteur privé peut fournir pour les étudiants internationaux et contribuer à sa politique de développement. Dans ce contexte, les politiques d'enseignement internationales actuelles accordent plus d'attention au recrutement des élèves internationaux qui payent ce qui accroît le rôle du secteur privé.

Keywords: Internationalization of education, internationalization policies, public schooling, neoliberalism, neoliberal discourses

Mots-clés: Internationalisation de l'enseignement, politiques d'internationalisation, enseignement public, néolibéralisme, discours néolibéraux

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Introduction

In Canada, during the last two decades, there have been intense discussions and debates revolving around the internationalization of K–12 and postsecondary education systems at both federal and provincial levels. Governments at these levels have issued a variety of international education strategies and policy documents that support different activities in that area. For instance, in recent years, three federal and pan-Canadian international education strategies were separately issued by the Government of Canada, the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), and the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE). These strategies, together, build on previous efforts in order to map out the international education sector for a 6-year period from 2019 to 2025. They suggest that the internationalization of Canadian education at K–12 and postsecondary levels is a key component of a broader federal economic development strategy, despite the fact that, constitutionally, education is a provincial/territorial jurisdiction (CBIE, 2019; CMEC, 2019; Government of Canada, 2019).

While recognizing the economic motivation driving the current internationalization policies and practices within a neoliberal context, Bamberger et al. (2019) note that “little research has explored how neoliberalism and internationalisation are intertwined, the effects of this entanglement, or examined the usefulness of scholarship that increasingly internalises neoliberal categories and assumptions to explain internationalisation on a global scale” (p. 204). One of the scholars who has extensively analyzed the relationship between global neoliberalism and different education policies, in Britain and in other jurisdictions, is Stephen Ball. Ball’s works have been prominent in the area of education policy analysis. A key aspect of his analysis is viewing different education policies from a discourse perspective. Although Ball pays more attention to the British educational reforms, his approach also considers the development of neoliberal policy trends in other jurisdictions (Lingard & Sellar, 2013, p. 276; Wang, 2011, p. 143; Young & Diem, 2017, p. 3).

As Elnagar and Young (2021, p. 80) noted, most of the academic writings in that area focus on the internationalization of postsecondary, or higher, education institutions in Canada (e.g., Anderson, 2015; Chen, 2008; Garson, 2016; Guo & Guo, 2017; Larsen, 2015; Viczko & Tascón, 2016). The present article, however, pays attention to the internationalization of K–12 public schooling systems. Rather than examining different institutional practices and approaches to internationalization of public schooling (e.g., provision of international student programs in public schools and having overseas affiliated schools), the article focuses on the federal and provincial internationalization policies and strategies that frame and govern those practices and pays a specific attention to the neoliberal developmental contexts of these policies. The article employs Stephen Ball’s writings to analyze how global neoliberalism and its public discourses on public education marketization, privatization, and expansion of policy communities relate to the development of current internationalization policies of K–12 public schooling.

Conceptual Outline

The analysis of the relationship between neoliberal discourses and internationalization policies of public schooling institutions developed in this article builds on three concepts, or notions, each of which appears to be used differently in literature. These are: neoliberalism and neoliberalization; international education and internationalization of education; and internationalization policy as text and as discourse.

Neoliberalism and Neoliberalization

Neoliberalism has been widely viewed as a market-driven, political, and economic ideology (Giroux, 2004, p. 495; Saltman, 2014, p. 64) that has been historically developed through three different, but interdependent, stages since the 1950s. These stages are *proto-neoliberalism*, or the theoretical model framed by Hayek and other economists, which was critical of the Keynesian welfare state and represented an alternative to it; *roll-back neoliberalism*, or the motivated dismantling of Keynesian state model and its social-welfare institutions; and, *roll-out neoliberalism*, or the intentional establishment of neoliberal state institutions, governance styles, and regulations (Ball, 2012, pp. 3–4). Peck et al. (2012) suggested that after the deterioration of the economic systems that had flourished after World War II, neoliberalism appeared as a prevailing “process of regulatory restructuring.” In that context, they described *neoliberalization*, not *neoliberalism*, as a “historically specific, unevenly developed, hybrid, patterned tendency of market-disciplinary regulatory restructuring” (p. 269). As Peck et al. (2012) noted, neoliberalization, as a market-driven reform process, has been viewed as a “commodification” and “marketization” process that expands commodified and market-oriented social relationships. It is usually linked to certain policies such as privatization, deregulation, and trade liberalization.

Highlighting more the view of neoliberalism as a *process*, Springer (2012) suggested a “discourse” approach to conceptualize neoliberalism as “a mutable, inconsistent, and variegated *process* that circulates through the discourses it constructs, justifies, and defends” (p. 135). Springer (2012, p. 143) argued that viewing neoliberalism as a “discourse” offers a comprehensive analytical approach that focuses on social interactions more than simple talks. In line with this *discourse* approach to view neoliberalism, Stephen Ball adopted Shamir’s (2008) description of neoliberalism, according to which it is

A complex, often incoherent, unstable and even contradictory set of practices that are organized around a certain imagination of the ‘market’ as a basis for the universalization of social relations, with the corresponding incursion of such relations into almost every single aspect of our lives (Ball, 2012, p. 3; Ball, 2016a, p. 1047).

Expanding this procedural view, Ball argued that neoliberalism is more than a privatization, or a state attenuation process. Although these are key components, neoliberalism operates “on” and “in” the state and its public institutions. In that context, the state remains as a regulator and a market developer. In this way, neoliberalism becomes existent within, and circulated by quasi-markets, Public Private Partnerships (P3s), more independent state institutions, and endeavours of charitable and voluntary organizations (Ball, 2012, p. 15).

International Education and Internationalization

From a historical perspective, international education appears more as a learning driven concept that relates to practices designed to promote understanding, coexistence, and peacemaking amongst different nations (Elnagar, 2019, p. 65; Elnagar & Young, 2021, p. 82). From that perspective, James (2005) defined international education as a concept that encompasses “all educative efforts that aim at fostering an international orientation in knowledge and attitudes and seek to build bridges between countries” (p. 315). However, because of the changing rationale of international education and the expansion of its practices and stakeholders, Knight (2004) argued that this concept could be updated to reflect those developments occurring at national, local, and institutional levels. In that context, Knight (2004) proposed her revised definition of internationalization, not international education, as “the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary

education” (pp. 10-11). As the definition states, it applies more to internationalization activities at postsecondary educational institutions.

While the terms *international education* and *internationalization of education* are often used interchangeably in current academic writings (e.g., CBIE, 2013; CBIE, 2018; Cover, 2016; Tamtik, 2018; Trilokekar & Tamtik, 2020), for some authors they have distinct meanings and implications. Elnagar and Young (2021, p. 82) suggested that the increased use of the term “internationalization” in the last 20 years reflects a significant change in the practices associated with the traditional concept of international education. The internationalization of education, in general, reflects specific market-driven interests in offering educational services as internationally tradable commodities for national economic development purposes. It pays particular attention to the recruitment of K–12 fee-paying international students and, especially in Canada, retaining them through immigration as skilled workers and future citizens.

Internationalization Policy as Text and as Discourse

While the focus of this analysis is on the use of Ball’s ideas of “policy as text” and “policy as discourse” to help understand the relationship between global neoliberalism, its public discourses, and the development of current public education internationalization policies in Canada, the ideas of discourse and its analysis are worthy of mention.

Discourse and Discourse Analysis. According to Powers (2007), *discourse* can be defined as “a group of ideas or patterned way of thinking which can be identified in textual and verbal communications, and can also be located in wider social structures” (p. 18). Rogers (2011) also suggested that *discourse* can be viewed as a “multimodal social practice” (p. 1). That is, discourses reflect and construct the social worlds through a variety of different meaning systems. As these systems of meaning are embedded in cultural, social, racial, political, economic, and religious structures that are associated with specific social actions and imply more or less social status, discourses cannot be viewed as neutral (Rogers, 2011, p. 1).

Bhatia et al. (2008) argued that *discourse analysis* has been historically considered as a linguistics’ research area. However, it is currently viewed as an interdisciplinary area of study. This area of study is usually defined as “the analysis of linguistic behavior, written and spoken, beyond the limits of individual sentences, focusing primarily on the meaning constructed and interpreted as language is used in particular social contexts” (Bhatia et al., 2008, p. 1). This view implies two key ideas. First, the language could be analyzed, not just as words, clauses, or sentences, but also as “text.” Second, the language should not be analyzed just as notional guidelines, but as an instrument for social practice. Thus, current approaches to discourse analysis pay much attention to the “language in use” and have been employed by scholars in different disciplines including sociology, law, marketing, and organizational studies (Bhatia et al., 2008, p. 1).

Gee (2011, p. 28) distinguished between non-critical and critical discourse analyses and suggested that non-critical approaches to discourse analysis tend to focus more on texts or human conversations and view social practices just as types of social relationships, like how language is used in common daily life situations. Critical approaches, however, do not view social practices solely as social interactions but also focus more on their implications for social status and distribution of power and other social goods in the society. According to McHoul and Grace (2002, p. 26), Michel Foucault (1926–1984) is one of the scholars who thought of discourses from a critical perspective as structures of knowledge. Foucault’s view differs from the use of language and is similar to the idea of discipline, including academic disciplines and disciplinary systems. Foucault’s view of discourse essentially reflects the unique historical relations between both (i) the

different branches of knowledge (e.g., sociology, medicine, and law) and (ii) the different forms of social control (e.g., schools, hospitals, and prisons). McHoul and Grace (2002) also suggested that, from Foucault's critical perspective, the idea of discourse does not refer to the use of language or social interactions but to "relatively well-bounded areas of social knowledge" (p. 31). That is, in different historical times we can think, speak, and write about specific social objects or practices only in specific precise ways. Then, a discourse means whatever constrains, or enables, our thinking, speaking, and writing within these specific historical boundaries (McHoul & Grace, 2002, p. 31).

Policy as Text and as Discourse. Drawing on the sociology of education literature, Stephen Ball (2006a) suggested an approach to conceptualize different education policies. As Ball suggested, a policy has two conceptualizations, "policy as text" and "policy as discourse." Each conceptualization partially defines the meaning of a policy, and both complement one another, as each one is included in the other. According to Ball's conception, "policy discourses ... produce frameworks of sense and obviousness with which policy is thought, talked and written about. Policy texts are set within these frameworks which constrain but never determine all of the possibilities for action" (p. 44). As Ball (2006a, p. 48) suggested, viewing policy as "text" signals a high level of individual agency and desirability. Policy actors develop meanings, contest with others, develop responses, and handle contradictions.

Elaborating his view on "policy as discourse," Ball (2006a) suggested that discourses are not just "about what can be said, and thought, but also about who can speak, when, where and with what authority. Discourses embody the meaning and use of propositions and words. Thus, certain possibilities for thought are constructed" (p. 48). As Ball (2007, p. 2) suggested, reform "discourses" offer compelling understandings of dominant economic and political orders, and public policy problems. Consequently, they appear and manifest to policymakers as acceptable and rational policy problem solutions. According to Ball (2006a, pp. 49-50), in modern societies, we are surrounded by different, inconsistent, and competing discourses and their impacts on policy development are unavoidable. When analyzing education policies, we need to acknowledge the presence of those compelling discourses, such as neoliberalism, and examine their governing knowledge structures.

In relation to the analysis of internationalization policy as discourse, it is worth mentioning Torgerson's (2010, pp. 2-5) helpful distinction between "policy discourses" and other broader "public discourses." For Torgerson, policy discourses are located in "administrative spheres" that are mostly controlled by an administrative form of modern bureaucracy. Public discourses, however, are located in "public spheres" that allow for critical debates. When compared to "administrative spheres," "public spheres" are dialogical and their public discourses are more situated in civil societies that include different, but socially interconnected movements, and where individuals can interact, not based on predetermined norms, but in light of cultural standards of reciprocal communication in the society. Contrary to the diverse and dialogical public discourses, Torgerson continued to argue, policy discourses reflect a setting for monologue. In many cases, public discourses present opinions that may influence administrative systems by legitimizing, or delegitimizing, their policy discourses.

In terms of internationalization of education policies, Hénard et al. (2012, p. 10) suggested that, although they could be similar in their global discourses, their texts may differ from country to country. The focus of those policies is often on regulating study visas, security concerns, and employment of international students. Some countries have well-developed national or federal international education policies, while others have no such policies, or are still developing them.

Institutions, particularly at the postsecondary level, develop their own internationalization plans, apart from those of their governments. Such plans usually focus on recruitment of international students. In some cases, there might be a disagreement between state and institutional strategies about study visas and immigration rules, which might limit institutional capacities to bring in international students.

Analytical Approach

The conceptual discussion above suggests that Ball (2006a) employs the notion of discourse with two different meanings: (i) as an output, and (ii) as a context. First, when he conceptualizes policy in general “as text and ... as discourse” (p. 44), here, the notion of discourse, or policy “as discourse,” appears more as an output of a political, or a policymaking, system. The span of policy discourses is usually narrow and prevails more amongst influential policymakers, or the “administrative sphere” that was suggested by Torgerson (2010) when talking about “policy discourses.” Second, when Ball talks about “the existence of ‘dominant’ discourses, regimes of truths ... like neo-liberalism” (p. 50), here, the notion of discourse appears more as a broader context that offers policymakers specific options when developing education policies. The span of those contextual discourses is usually wider than the span of the developed policy “discourse” and prevails more amongst the interested public, or the “public sphere” that was suggested by Torgerson (2010) when talking about “public discourses.” When a policy is developed as discourse and as text, it is assumed to reflect and manifest its surrounding and dominant “public discourses,” such as neoliberalism. That is, the two types of policy and public discourses may overlap, or intersect, when a policy discourse (e.g., internationalization policy) reflects and aligns with contextual public discourses (e.g., neoliberal discourses).

Using the conceptual outline, and informed by Ball’s writings, this article analyzes the ways in which neoliberalism relates to the development of internationalization policies of public schooling in Canadian contexts. Specifically, the article analyzes how neoliberalism as an ideology relates to internationalization policy texts, and the ways in which neoliberal public discourses on public education marketization, privatization, and expansion of policy communities relate to the development of internationalization policy discourses. To this end, the article examines two key points: first, the neoliberal ideological foundations of public schooling internationalization; and second, the neoliberal contextual discourses of public schooling internationalization, where attention will be paid to Ball’s views on those public discourses and the ways in which they relate to the development of internationalization policy discourses.

Neoliberal Foundations of Public Schooling Internationalization

In Canadian contexts, Henley and Young (2008, p. 4) argued that the debates on public schooling during the second half of the 20th century highlight three basic ideals that help understand the essence of “public” and the objectives of “the public school curriculum.” First, the “public accessibility and equality,” which implies that each child must have an equal access to quality schooling opportunities, regardless of her/his gender, location, or socioeconomic background. Second, the “public funding,” which means that the cost of public schooling must be provided from public revenues and shared fairly across all segments of society. Third, the “public control,” which implies that key educational decisions are to be made through public participation in decision-making bodies. In cases like the Canadian province of Manitoba, Young and O’Leary (2017, p. 1) suggested that different provincial governments have been committed to the idea of “public schooling as a public good,” or the assumption that quality public schooling is the key ingredient of democracy in the society, as it equips the young for citizenship. It implies that public schooling

is not a private interest, or a tradable product to consuming students. As a public good, public schooling systems must be publicly accessed, funded, and governed.

As Johnstone and Lee (2014, pp. 209-210) suggested, for most of that period, Canadian public schooling has been considered as a “public good” and a responsibility of the egalitarian welfare state. Guided by a Keynesian economic model, public school systems promoted “social democracy” and prepared societies of informed citizens. However, by end of the 20th century, many Canadian jurisdictions have implemented a variety of education policy reforms in light of the prevailing global neoliberal discourses. These changes, Johnstone and Lee suggested, have been shifting the essence of public schooling from a “public good” to a “tradable commodity.”

Neoliberal Governance and Commodification of Public Schooling

In the analysis of the role of international actors in the development of national education policies, specific attention has been paid to the role of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the relevant international and multilateral agreements, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which was renamed in 2018 as The United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement, as global governing bodies. These bodies have had the effect of restricting the power of national governments to independently make public policies that meet their particular demands and interests (Jeannotte, 2010, p. 304). In that context, the role of the WTO, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), as international makers of national education policies, has been examined by a variety of studies (Moutsios, 2009, p. 467; Zheng, 2010, p. 222). These studies suggest that the international bodies develop policy initiatives that deeply impact on current practices in different national education systems, including internationalization practices.

As Moutsios (2009, p. 472) argued, the policies of the IMF, the World Bank, and the WTO are generally determined by, and reflect, what has been called the *Washington Consensus*. It is a term that signals the development of “neoliberal economic agendas” that imply three key public policies: (i) liberalization of international investments and trade; (ii) privatization of the public sector; and (iii) deregulation of national economies and financial markets. Neoliberal agendas view the role of the welfare states as disruptive to market operations and that their interventions must be limited. Steger and Roy (2010, p. 14) suggested that other neoliberal policies may focus on reduced taxes for businesses and investors, minimizing social programs and welfare services, downsizing bureaucracy, and, most importantly, development of new sociopolitical institutions that reproduce neoliberalism.

According to Rizvi and Lingard (2010, pp. 117–18), contemporary literature on governance speaks to this shift in the structure and the way in which governments operate. This shift began during the 1980s with the emergence of neoliberalism in the capitalist world, especially in the United Kingdom and in the United States. Governance, in this sense, describes a shift from governmental structures, usually directed by political parties and coalitions, to ones that are more responsive to global impacts. In the case of Canada, Evans and Shields (2010, p. 308) suggested that the 1970s global economic crisis had led to questioning the existing Keynesian economic model. By the 1990s, elements of a neoliberal governance model had become well-developed in several provinces. For instance, in 1994, as Henley and Young (2009, pp. 3–4) noted, an *Agreement on Internal Trade* (AIT) was approved by federal and provincial/territorial governments. For clear economic development goals, the AIT proposed to significantly enhance the mobility of commodities, services, and the workforce between the Canadian provinces and territories. Further to strengthening the federal economic cohesion, the AIT reflected the commitment of Canadian governments to international trade agreements and their neoliberal agendas at the expense of

provincial autonomy. When examining the impacts of the AIT on teacher certification and public education policies in Canada in general, Henley and Young (2009) concluded that

By viewing everything included in the *Agreement* as a trade issue, teacher certification, and by association public education becomes commodified—“traded in”—first and foremost a matter of economic policy before it is a matter of social policy concerned with the well-being of individuals and the well-being of society (p. 21).

In order to commodify public education as an internationally tradable service, Fallon and Poole (2016, pp. 1–2) noted that the neoliberal market-driven education policies have been reflected in increased educational choice, standardized tests, more accountability measures, and increased competitiveness. Such policies constructed specific definitions for public education policy problems that justify the involvement of the private sector in the provision of public education, either independently or jointly with public education institutions, as an acceptable solution to policy problems. Adopting private business practices and instruments was, Fallon and Poole suggested, depicted as a key to tackling reduced funding, labour market demands, and equity concerns, which opened the doors to privatize public education in several ways.

Neoliberal Ideology and Internationalization Policy Texts

During the last two decades, federal and provincial governments in Canada have paid increased attention to international education at all levels, viewed from an economic perspective. A variety of policy documents/texts have been issued by these different-level governments. Although the analysis of the content of these policy documents is beyond the focus of this article, it is worth mentioning their focus. At the federal level, the first *International Education Strategy* of the Government of Canada (2014, pp. 7–9) suggests that international students at all levels coming to Canada make a prompt and significant contribution to the local and provincial economies. After graduation, if students remain in Canada, they help to meet the challenge of the increasing need for skilled labour, due to aging demographics, and empower Canada’s long-term innovative capacity that is critical for its future prosperity. In 2019, the Government of Canada released its updated federal *International Education Strategy 2019–2024*. It builds on the initial efforts and aims to: (i) motivating Canadian students to obtain new skills by studying and working abroad; (ii) increasing the number of the source countries of international students coming to study in Canada and diversifying their areas and levels of study; and (iii) expanding the support for Canadian institutions to increase their exports of educational services and explore new target markets (Government of Canada, 2019, p. 7).

Consistent with these federal interests, and reflecting the global neoliberal policy drifts, different provincial governments have paid increasing attention to the internationalization of their K–12 public schooling institutions and developed provincial policies and strategies in this regard. In July of 2013, British Columbia has released its *K–12 International Education* policy document that confirmed the provincial government’s recognition of the growing importance of the internationalization of public education to the provincial education and economic systems (Government of British Colombia, 2013, p. 1). Later in 2013, Manitoba took a more regulatory step by enacting the first *International Education Act* (IEA) in Canada. The Act applied to all K–12 and postsecondary institutions that offer international education/student programs and sought to ensure that international students are both properly recruited and treated (Government of Manitoba, 2015, p. 2). In 2015, Ontario issued its *Strategy for K–12 International Education* through which the provincial government proposed to clearly link the recruitment of K–12 international students to the completion of postsecondary education, permanent residency, and

employability in the province (Government of Ontario, 2015, p. 5). Although describing different approaches to internationalization, it is clear that these policy documents invariably pay most attention to promoting Canadian education systems, recruiting fee-paying K–12 international students, and retaining them to continue their postsecondary education in Canada, which align with the global neoliberal drifts to commodification of public education services.

In these federal and provincial policy contexts, the provision of K–12 international education programs and the recruitment of fee-paying K–12 international students have attracted increased attention from local public schooling institutions (Elnagar & Young, 2021, p. 87). Currently, there are more than 130 public school divisions/districts/boards that offer international education programs to more than 45,000 international students, either for short or long terms. These fee-paying students are primarily admitted to junior and senior high public schools to obtain internationally recognized secondary education diplomas (Canadian Association of Public Schools-International (CAPS-I) (2021, p. 4).

In terms of how neoliberal values and principles, particularly commodification of public education, get embedded and reproduced in current internationalization policy texts, Ball (1998, p. 122) described what has been called “the new orthodoxy,” or the policy changes that have been happening in developed nations, in the relationship between governments and education. Ball described five main aspects of these changes: (i) promoting state economies by strengthening the relationship between education, labour market, production, and trade; (ii) improving student achievement of job-related knowledge and skills; (iii) exercising more central oversight over delivered contents and evaluation methods; (iv) minimizing public spending on education; and (v) maximizing community participation in educational decision-making and increasing parental choice. The underlying premise of these policy changes is neoliberalism, or market ideology, that facilitates the development of spontaneous and unplanned responses to market mechanisms. Ball (1998, p. 127) argued that these new doctrines of educational policy may be adopted by, and achieved within, different sociocultural contexts, while also being impacted by those contexts. Explaining how such neoliberal principles are often “localized” and “recontextualized” in different jurisdictions, Ball (1998) argued that

While it may well be possible to discern a set of principles or a theoretical model underlying policy—neoliberalism, new institutional economics, public choice theory or whatever—these rarely if ever translate into policy texts or practice in direct or pristine form. National policy making is inevitably a process of bricolage: a matter of borrowing and copying bits and pieces of ideas from elsewhere, drawing upon and amending locally tried and tested approaches, cannibalising theories, research, trends and fashions (p. 126).

That is, the process through which different jurisdictions develop public education policy texts that reflect global neoliberal, market values, and principles is a gradual process to align different and contested ideas, or values, together in education policy documents.

Neoliberal Discourses of Public Schooling Internationalization

As Rizvi and Lingard (2010, p. 2) noted, from an international perspective, there was a significant change in policymaking that has emanated from, and fostered, globalized capitalism and the prominence of a neoliberal doctrine. This change has reframed the processes through which public policies are made. Previously, those policies were primarily made within national contexts but, now, are far more exposed to global impacts. While national regimes continue to have a final authority to make their national policies, the essence of this authority has altered. It has become deeply impacted by the conditions of the global economy and political landscape. In that context,

as Young and Diem (2017, p. 3) suggested, an increasing number of education policy scholars had started to focus more on critical approaches to analyze education policies and practices. The writings of Stephen Ball have been particularly significant. He, and others, questioned the traditional approaches to studying education policymaking, clarified impacts of power and ideology on policymaking, and boosted a new critical trend in educational policy studies.

Stephen Ball and the Sociology of Education Policy

One way to introduce Stephen Ball to this analysis might be through highlighting his contributions to the development of “policy sociology in education.” According to Gunter (2013, p. 219), for more than three decades, Ball has offered an important collection of empirical, conceptual, methodological, and guiding writings that have analyzed different education policies related to school systems, organizations, curricula, as well as how markets and social classes interact. As a result, he has clearly contributed to the establishment of an academic area focused on the critical study of education policies. As Lingard and Sellar (2013, p. 267) noted, in three of his early studies on: *Politics and Policy Making in Education* (1990); *Reforming Education and Changing Schools* (Jointly with Bowe & Gold, 1992); and *Education Reform: A Critical and Post-structural Approach* (1994), Ball with others have established the basis of “policy sociology in education,” which was viewed as an academic field that employs social science theories and approaches to study education policies.

In his analyses, Ball (2006b, pp. 3–4) has paid attention to the practical function of theory in his academic works as a conceptual instrument for analysis and as an approach to reflexivity. Ball explained how he was impacted in general by some influential theorists in the way he undertook research. Two French theorists were most fruitful, provoking, and useful to him: Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu. In his interview with Serpieri and Grimaldi (2014, p. 92), Ball acknowledged that both scholars have impacted on his understanding of how knowledge is changing, interactive, and experience-based. Ball viewed Foucault in terms of how his ideas have shifted and developed from time to time, and how he persistently reconsidered and reinterpreted his previous writings. Bourdieu was also viewed in terms of his changing thoughts on the nature of social reality and the attention he paid to reflexivity.

Zantena and Kosunen (2013, p. 241) suggested that, although Ball’s writings have assimilated different perspectives of other scholars, his theoretical standing reflects more the impacts of Foucault and Bourdieu. Ball’s approach to social research, however, is still unique. It is usually theory-oriented, ethnographic/field-based, and aware of differences in personal tendencies, institutional traditions, and social contexts. That is why Ball (2006b, p. 4) resists being labelled as Foucauldian or Bordieuan. Although it was possible for him to fully adopt their thoughts, what he wanted is to learn from them and to be challenged by their ideas. As Ball (2007) described his approach to academic research, he wanted to “understand rather than rush to judgement” (p. 1). Ball also noted that his previous and current theoretical and conceptual works are more “pragmatic” and “eclectic.” In that context, he uses a variety of different analytical approaches to examine, comprehend and explain social phenomena (Ball, 2007, p. 1).

According to Lingard & Sellar (2013, p. 277), Ball’s writings suggest useful prospects for the “policy sociology in education” in global neoliberal contexts. He directs the attention to the important implications of globalization for methodological approaches to the social sciences. Apple (2013, p. 213) suggested that, in view of a variety of Ball’s writings, particularly about neoliberalism and performativity, and considering his critical examination of the ways in which education policies are developed, it is clear that he personally has essential and justified educational, political, and ethical concerns with the whole neoliberal project. Instead of just

presenting different debates, Ball focuses most of his analysis on relationships among people, positions, organizations, and on mapping out the tangled networks in which all of those parties interact. As Apple (2013, p. 209) noted, Ball's writings on education marketization, privatization, profit-making, and the observable effects of neoliberal agendas on education are necessary to understand the variety of his academic interests.

Neoliberal Public Discourses on Public Education

By reviewing Ball's writings from 1990 until present, it is suggested that there are three major public discourses on public education that have consecutively attracted Ball's attention in his analysis of the ways in which neoliberalism relates to the development of different public education policy texts and discourses. These discourses are on public education marketization, privatization, and expansion of policy communities. While Ball did not pay specific attention to K–12 international education policies in particular, his analyses of these neoliberal discourses can be applied to the market-driven internationalization policies as follows:

Public Education Marketization. Zantena and Kosunen (2013, p. 240) suggested that Ball has dedicated much of his writings to examining education markets. His focus on that area started with the adoption of the 1988 *Education Reform Act* (ERA) that initiated education market reforms in England. Since then, Ball has analyzed the *Act* in several articles and employed the term “markets” in his discussions. In one of his first articles on this topic, Ball (1990, p. 85) examined the ideological roots that led the British government to establish public education markets. In addition to equality and social justice concerns, Ball explored the effects of market mechanisms on the structure of schooling, values of education, teaching profession, and teacher work conditions. In this study, Ball (1990, pp. 88-89) focused on understanding how the ERA created education markets and suggested that education markets include five key components: parental choice, competition, diversity of providers, funding, and organization. Increased parental choice was a key principle of the conservatives' education policy since they assumed power in the United Kingdom in 1979. It implies that parents should be allowed to enroll their children in a school of their choice, not just that in their neighbourhood. The Act permitted all schools to enroll students up to their standard capacity. That is, schools that have low enrollments could now compete to increase student numbers up to their standard levels.

However, from a neoliberal perspective, Ball (1990, p. 90) argued that there is an essential element that is missing in this assumed education market and, consequently, it is not an actual market. For instance, the choices made by parents, or consumers, do not directly relate to returns, or profits, of schools, or education providers. That is, there are no financial deals and true markets are profit-driven. Neoliberal intellectuals have tried to substitute this missing component by advocating for voucher schools built on the idea that parents are granted vouchers for each child with a specific value based on age, which can be exchanged within school systems. Thus, parents may exchange their vouchers to pay the school fees for their children and the state, then, converts these vouchers into cash paid to those usually private schools. As Carnoy (2017, p. 2) noted, the purpose of these voucher schools, existing in countries such as the United States and Chile, was to challenge the state control over public education and extend family choices for the education of their children to include private schools. So, a school voucher is proof of state funding of a specific amount of money that parents may use in any school of their choice.

Continuing this discussion, Ball (1993, p. 3) focused more on issues of education markets, parental choice, and social class. He examined some theoretical underpinnings of education markets and attempted to develop a sociological model to study and analyze those markets. The study raised questions about the different impacts of market mechanisms on schooling and families.

It focused on education markets from theoretical and practical sides. In this study, Ball (1993, p. 4) argued that the adoption of market mechanisms in education is basically a “class strategy” that proposes to re-produce a particular social order and ethnic privilege. As Ball and Youdell (2007, p. 7) suggested, the evolution of what are usually called quasi-markets in education depends basically on the adoption of school choice in public education systems, so that parents can select among different school choices. Choice was made possible by diversifying education providers, together with other measures that include enrollment-based school funding and publishing a variety of local school features and results to help parents select a choice for their children. Associated with the promotion of choice was a reduction of bureaucratic rules in order to promote the active recruitment of students, which stimulated competition among schools. Schools that were poorly performing and did not attract enough numbers of students were closed, or raised their performance standards.

Public Education Privatization. According to Ball et al. (2010, p. 229), during the early 21st century, privatization became a significant aspect of education policies in many jurisdictions. In different forms, privatization has been imbedded in policy shifts in nations that have different political, economic, and social settings. The increased education privatization also corresponds with the growth of multinational capital and its corporations. The rapid expansion of the private business role in public education was stimulated by expanded markets of public education. In different jurisdictions, privatization was viewed as an appealing innovative alternative for public sector reform as it was seen to reduce costs and increase productivity and profitability, especially during times of economic recession.

These jurisdictions adopted different forms of education privatization. Two of these forms were most dominant: First, privatization “in” public education, or “endogenous privatization.” Such initiatives focus on employing private sector values, instruments, and practices to manage public schooling using business perspectives. Second, privatization “of” public education, or “exogenous privatization.” Such initiatives focus on actual engagement of the private sector, for profit-making purposes, to provide, manage, or design public educational services, which ultimately change, amongst other things, the ways in which curricula are designed and student achievement is assessed (Ball, 2016a, p. 1049; Ball & Youdell, 2007, pp. 7–8).

Focusing more on the privatization issue, Ball (2007) published his book *Education plc* that sets out to provide an understanding of the private sector role in public education sector. He employs the concept of the “competition state” to examine the education privatization issues. As suggested, the “competition state ‘aims to secure economic growth within the state’s borders and/or to secure competitive advantages for capitals based within its borders by promoting the economic and extra-economic conditions necessary for competitive success’” (p. 3). As Ball (2007, p. 13) noted, for the state to achieve this goal, there is no public service that should be free from private business contribution. The role of the state is, then, reconceptualized to guarantee, not to provide or fund, public education. In that context, the state is viewed more as a market-developer, or a facilitator. In this work, Ball (2007, p. 114) examined the contributions of business organizations in current forms of education governance through their membership in social networks and policy communities that appear impactful on education policies. In that context, Ball (2009, p. 83) examined in-depth some specific features of public education privatization and analyzed contributions of education businesses to the provision of a wide range of educational services nationally in the United Kingdom and internationally. He further examined some types of privatization “of,” “in,” and “through” education systems and policies.

Expansion of Public Education Policy Communities. As Lingard and Sellar (2013, 276) noted, Ball’s writings suggest that the development of current education policies is no longer solely the duty of state governments. Rather, it has become networked and carried out through a variety

of formal and informal, public and private, processes. Ball (2008, p. 748) focused on this change in education policymaking and argued that a new “experimental” and “strategic” governance model has been strengthened by networking relations amongst new education policy communities. It brings new types of actors into policymaking, endorses “new policy discourses,” and empowers new policy outcomes. This is viewed as a reflection of a new type of state power, individual agency, and social structures. It implies the emergence of new state structures that “govern” through “governance.” Although the network approach to governance does not overrule other types of policy structures, it reflects more an agreement amongst markets, bureaucracies, and networks to adopt specific policies.

In that context, Ball (2008, p. 749) employs the term “network” for analytic and descriptive purposes to highlight a governance type that links and harmonizes markets and bureaucracies and may support or replace other policymaking structures. The term refers to an approach, or an instrument, that highlights public relations in education policy development. The way in which Ball (2008, p. 749) employs the term focuses on a particular type of networking relationship known as *policy community*, which stimulates private businesses to deliver public educational services and circulates new “education policy discourses” over time and places.

According to Ball and Exley (2010, p. 155), although policy communities are partially unstable groupings of positions and institutions, such as think tanks and social businesses, they facilitate the flow of policy ideas and actors. They also reflect “relational processes” and “social structures.” Thus, network members may shift among locations and between private and public organizations, nationally and internationally. Some may have different positions concurrently or consecutively. Policy notions are supported and circulated within and outside of networks by the intellectual efforts of its members. Ball’s (2008, pp. 750-51) analysis of networks focuses also on types of power relations. Such relations, and their influences, are not totally new. What is new is their particularly deep level of involvement with the state public institutions. These actors are usually members of different committees, boards, and councils that are associated with, and represent, the state in its daily businesses and may shift across and within such groups.

As Ball and Exley (2010, p. 163) suggested, networks and their innovative discourse reflect a state reform to exercise a new type of a “smart” governance that implies the adoption of more flexible bureaucracy, dialogue, and creativity. Ball (2008, p. 761) further argued that it is important to highlight the discursive and political role of such networks, through which other actors are given the chance to participate in policy development. Within those networks, discussions on educational policy problems and their solutions are initiated; new relations are developed; and new principles and types of actions are represented and supported.

Neoliberal Public Discourses and Internationalization Policy Discourses

In the context of these global neoliberal public discourses, the internationalization of public education systems became a debatable public policy area that has engaged both federal and provincial governments in Canada, in addition to other stakeholders (Elnagar, 2019; Tamtik et al., 2020). During the last 20 years, international education policy discourses on marketing K–12 public schooling institutions to international students, engaging the private sector in international education, and expanding the international education policy community have prevailed in Canadian contexts.

These policy discourses were reflected as follows: First, in 2011, an *International Education Marketing Action Plan for Provinces and Territories* was developed to promote Canadian education systems, at all levels, to international students. It engaged different actors at federal, provincial, and institutional levels to market Canadian education outside of Canada (The

Council of The Federation, 2011, p. 10). Second, the private sector engagement in international education has become evident in the institutional partnerships with student recruitment agencies. Private recruitment agents have emerged as mediators between educational institutions and potential international students across the globe. Currently, all educational institutions that are involved in international student recruitment, at K–12 and postsecondary levels, work with overseas private recruitment agents (CMEC, 2013, p. 3). Third, the international education policy community has also expanded. The federal and provincial interests in internationalization have meant that departments at both levels of government contribute to the development of internationalization policies, particularly the departments responsible for Immigration and Foreign Affairs. Additionally, the federal associations members of the CCIE, and their affiliate provincial institutions, all developed more interest in internationalization. In 2013, the CCIE represented more than 500 public and private educational institutions at K–12 and postsecondary levels (CBIE, 2012, p. 1; CBIE, 2013, p. 7). Through their meetings and communications, these associations and their member institutions in different jurisdictions circulate different market-driven internationalization policy discourses.

As Cover (2016, p. 174) suggested, current internationalization policies and practices were developed as an influential “discourse” that has been employed for political purposes. As a rational and inescapable solution to challenge global education trends, this discourse has legitimized internationalization practices without much public criticism. That is why, as Tarc et al. (2012, p. 1) noted, the internationalization of public education as a response to global neoliberalism was adopted by ideologically different governments and has been energized by a variety of approaches to internationalize public educational institutions.

Explaining how such neoliberal discourses relate to internationalization policy discourses, Ball (2016b, pp. 557–58) highlights the role of the policy community. As argued, while those groupings interrelate individuals and organizations, they also facilitate the transfer of global neoliberal discourses, practices, and policies related to, for instance, school organization, leadership, assessment, measurement, and blended learning. Educational programs, notions, and concepts transfer through these policy networks, and attain credibility and support while adjusted to local conditions. Ball (2012) also views the significance of “policy transfer” that works as a “diverse ragbag of ideas which attempt to capture and model the ways in which policy knowledge circulates globally” (p. 10). As he argued, it is an “umbrella concept” that is widely employed by different authors to describe different situations that may include cases of pressures exercised by international bodies to adopt particular education policies and structural adjustments in different jurisdictions (Ball, 2012, p. 10).

Conclusion

The discussions above may help explain how global neoliberalism, its market values, principles, and public discourses relate to, and associate with, different public education policies, including internationalization policies, as texts and discourses. As Ball (2015, p. 311) argued, the distinction between “policy as text” and “policy as discourse” focuses the attention on the idea that policies are usually contested, reconciled, and variably presented by different actors in different textual outlines. Meanwhile, policies are developed and framed by underlying discursive values and principles about individuals and society. Considering the wide range of writings on policy analysis, as Ball noted, there is more focus on policy as text than policy as discourse. That is, much attention is usually paid to what is stated or documented, rather than to how those policy texts were formulated and developed.

Matthews and Sidhu (2005, pp. 62-63) suggested that global neoliberalism has introduced the internationalization industry as a widely private commercial industry. In the development of internationalization and other relevant industries, global neoliberal discourses were dominant. To understand how different local, national, and global institutions shape internationalization practices and experiences, Matthews and Sidhu suggested, current methodologies and approaches to examine globalization need to be revised. The development of internationalization policies and practices does not simply relate to the ways in which schools recruit foreign students, deliver curricula, and change their structures. It also relates to the constraints that are increasingly enforced by global neoliberal agendas.

This article offers an analytical framework informed by Stephen Ball's writings to understand the neoliberal underpinnings of different federal and provincial internationalization policies of K–12 public schooling in Canadian contexts. By examining Ball's relevant writings during the last three decades, it appears that there are three major neoliberal public discourses on public education that have consecutively attracted Ball's attention in his analysis of the ways in which neoliberalism relates to the development of different market-driven education policy texts and discourses. These discourses are on public education marketization, privatization, and expansion of policy communities. The analysis suggests that the global neoliberal ideology and its public discourses are the contexts that promote and legitimize the development of current market-oriented internationalization policy texts and discourses. These neoliberal discourses view public education as an internationally tradable commodity that the private sector may provide to international students and can contribute to its policy development. In these contexts, current internationalization policies in Canada pay more attention to the recruitment of fee-paying K–12 international students with an increased role for the private sector in that area, especially in the recruitment process.

In his analysis of policy as text and as discourse, Ball (2006a, p. 49) paid further attention to what he called “policy effects” and suggests that the effect of a policy is essentially discursive when it limits the options that the policymakers may have. Ball (2006a, p. 51) differentiates between “first order” policy effects, that include adjusting structures or practices of institutions, and “second order” policy effects that relate to the impacts of these adjustments on social justice and equal access to opportunities. As the provision of K–12 international education programs and the recruitment of fee-paying K–12 international students to public schooling institutions are viewed as a market-driven phenomenon, it poses questions about the organizational structures of these programs and the financial inequities that result, or may result, from the admission of those students into some public school divisions/districts. Thus, further research that examines these inequities and the extent to which the development of K–12 internationalization policy texts and discourses in different Canadian jurisdictions has been related to global neoliberal market trends is recommended.

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