

Neoliberalism as nihilism? A commentary on educational accountability, teacher education, and school reform

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Abstract

In this article, the author discusses neoliberalism as an extension of settler colonialism. The article provides commentary on five recent articles on teacher education and the neoliberal agenda. The article presents an analysis of neoliberalism as despair, and as a form of nihilism. The author discusses an indigenous model of school reform and teacher education that contrasts neoliberal models. The article closes with a call to remember and reclaim other axes of thought and meaning, instead of a neoliberal spectrum which is an unworkable framework for school reform and teacher education.

Key words: Neoliberalism, teacher education, nihilism, Indigenous critiques of neoliberalism, despair, life-seeking models of education

The defining feature of US school and teacher education reform since the 1990s has been the relentless pursuit of accountability. In my empirical work—participatory action research with New York City youth—I have examined the relationships between accountability education policies,

neoliberal ideology (the logic that prizes accountability) the misuse of the General Educational Development (GED®) credential, and school pushout (Tuck, 2012)¹. I have sought to understand how federal policies like No Child Left Behind, state policies such as mandatory exit exams, and local policies that prevent multiple routes to graduation directly contribute to school pushout. I have traced the ways in which neoliberal policies, including educational accountability policies, serve those who seek to diminish the size and role of the public sphere. Further, I have utilized indigenous and decolonizing theories of dispossession in my analysis of school pushout.

In this critical commentary, I will provide an analysis of neoliberalism as nihilistic, as death-seeking, which has emerged from my empirical and theoretical work. Part of my analysis will address the arguments presented in the articles comprising this special issue on the neoliberal agenda apropos teacher education.

Neoliberalism and settler colonialism

Epistemology, economic strategy, and moral code rolled into one, neoliberalism refers to the reliance on market-based relationships to explain how the world works, or how it should work. It treasures both individual self-responsibility and social efficiency, aligning the purposes of public institutions to the primacy of the market. Though many scholars position neoliberalism as recent or emergent paradigm, Indigenous and anti-colonial scholars recognize neoliberalism as only the latest configuration of colonial imperialism. Indeed, neoliberalism is an extension of/ the most recent iteration of (settler) colonialism (Bargh, 2007; See also Postero & Zamosc, 2006; Bhavani, Foran, Kurian &

Munshi, 2009). Often overlooked by non-Indigenous scholars, indigenous decolonizing theory is a rich resource for theorizing neoliberalism and dispossession (Tuck, 2012).

In settler colonial societies such as the United States, rights of property and occupation rely upon discovery narratives. Settler colonies were/are not primarily established to extract surplus value from indigenous labor, but from land, which required/requires displacing Indigenous peoples from their homelands (Wolfe, 1999, p. 1). Settler colonization is not a fixed event in time, but a structure that continues to contour the lives of Indigenous people, settlers, and all other subjects of the settler colonial nation-state. Because settler colonialism has not only shaped how the US nation-state has managed Indigenous people, but all peoples on presumably valuable land (recast as “property”), indigenous theories of settler colonialism and contestations of that structure are especially relevant to the theorizing of urban space and urban schooling. Settler colonialism is the context of the dispossession and erasure of poor youth and youth of color in urban public schools, and Indigenous responses to settler colonialism provide salient insights for urban school reform.

My empirical work has been on how neoliberal logic *produces* the conditions of school pushout, but an important recurrent theme is how neoliberalization (the insertion of market values into non-market sectors of human activity) has worked defund the public sphere and increase the size and influence of private sectors. Neoliberal restructuring has focused on building a seamless global market, at the same time diminishing the public sphere in ways that make everyday people more politically and economically vulnerable, more fully exposed to the dips and turns of the speculative market, and ultimately, more poor.

Maori scholar Maria Bargh notes the ways in which neoliberalism is balanced upon “assumptions about the individual and the market as having particular natural identities,” (2007, p. 12) assumptions which prop up neoliberal arguments as objective (thus scientific) and humanistic (thus progressive). Neoliberalism represents a

Translation of many older colonial beliefs, once expressed explicitly, now expressed implicitly, into language and practices which are far more covert about their civilizing mission... A key feature of neoliberal policies is this conflict between not wanting to be or appear paternalistic, wanting to be seen to allow people the ‘freedom’ and ‘empowerment to govern themselves, but at the same time distrusting the abilities of some peoples, particularly indigenous peoples, to do so. (p. 13 & 14)

Indigenous theories engage neoliberal logic and neoliberalization as part of a very particular trajectory of human thinking (not inevitable) and as reflective of shared aims with logics of settler colonialism and manifest destiny.

The multiple but constrained expressions of neoliberal ideology

In my work as a teacher educator, I encourage current and future teachers to understand neoliberalism as a set of responses to real and perceived crises in the public sphere. Though some scholars attribute the banner of neoliberalism only to those approaches that promote the primacy of the market alongside the retrenchment of the public sphere (Lipman, 2003; Harvey, 2005; Davies & Bansel, 2007), one might also describe neoliberal logic as fixed on a spectrum, with big (involved) government on one side, and big (unfettered) market on the other side (Apple, 2001).

Like the turn of a dial, when faced with a problem, the neoliberal response is limited to either increasing the role of the state by diminishing the freedom of the market, or to increasing the freedom of the market by diminishing the influence of the state. Neoliberal logic can be characterized as *being caught between these two binaries*, with no sources for solutions outside the spectrum. To seek solutions to social problems that lay beyond this spectrum is seen as unrealistic and irrational. As *impossible*. “The usage of the term ‘rational’ by neoliberals can be seen as ‘a propaganda coup of the highest order... It carries the implication that any criticisms of it, or any alternatives put forward, are by definition irrational, and hence not worthy of serious contemplation,’” (Bargh, 2007, p. 14, quoting Ormerod, 199, pp. 111-112).

The articles in this special issue attend to multiple expressions of neoliberal logic as they are applied and propagated in teacher education in several international contexts. The articles examine the influence and transfer of neoliberal imperatives in the work of preparing classroom educators, and the role of neoliberal discourse in shaping what is valued, replicated, exported, and vilified in public education. The authors warn that neoliberal frameworks undermine the public sphere, and contribute to an “annihilation of [public] space” (Samoukovic) vis- a-vis modes of *isolation* (Thomas; Vassallo) by simultaneously inserting a sense of crisis, and mechanisms of measuring the responses to crisis—often with needed resources tethered to compliance to measurement mechanisms.

Neoliberal school reform models and approaches to teacher accountability and education rely on standardized tests, often high-stakes tests because of consequences for poor performance, to measure indicators of academic achievement and improvement, to protect the

investment of tax dollars in public schools. The Obama administration's Race to the Top (RTTT) initiative has reinvigorated efforts to directly calibrate teacher salaries to student test scores; RTTT incentivizes states to affix teacher pay to increases in test scores. Further, US Secretary of Education Arne Duncan has advocated that teacher education programs be evaluated and accredited on the basis of the test scores of students taught by graduates of their programs. Test-based accountability, *in theory*, holds teacher education programs and school personnel responsible for increasing student learning, as demonstrated in rising scores (see Nichols and Berliner, 2008, for an analysis of why test-based accountability has been so easily embraced in the United States). What amounts is a school reform movement in which,

The surveillance of students, and now the surveillance of teachers (and ultimately of all citizens of a corporate state), is not covert, but in plain view in the form of tests, that allow that surveillance to be disembodied from those students and teachers—and thus appearing to be impersonal—and examined as if objective and a reflection of merit. (Thomas, 2013, p. 215)

Thus, test-based accountability, *in practice*, is a rationale for the divestment of public schools—a narrative for the withdrawal of funds to schools that don't demonstrate upward moving scores—and a narrowing of the activities of schooling, to what can be measurable. Such a narrowing renders teaching and learning as technological tasks, because “when the focus is on measurement, we are forced to substitute small, static, additive units for events which as they are enacted in life are animated, layered, textured, complexly interlaced, and educationally potent,” (Carini, 2001, p. 172).

Ms. Hall, the participant in Vassallo's (2013) study on one teacher's perspectives on self-regulated learning (SRL) pedagogy, rejected the pedagogy because of its alignment with neoliberalism writ large, and because she felt it interrupted the development of meaningful learning relationships with her students. Commonly thought by many scholars to be unproblematic, SRL relies upon constructs of self-steering, self-modulation, and self-modulation, along with humanistic constructs of self, responsibility, freedom, and choice—all achieved and enacted by the individual. Citing Apple (2006), Vassallo observes that neoliberalism requires a radical re-imagination of the self,

The educational task here is to change people's understanding of themselves as members of collective groups. Instead, to support a market economy we need to encourage everyone to think of themselves as individuals who always act in ways that maximize their own interests. (Apple, 2006, p. 23 as quoted in Vassallo, 2013, p.247)

Ms. Hall refused the adoption of SRL pedagogical approaches in her classroom expressly because of their alignment with neoliberalism, and because neoliberal policies and practices, “increased individualization, encouraged a breakdown in social solidarity, increased alienation from the learning process, and eroded critical awareness, empathetic citizenship, and democratic participation” (Vassallo, 2013, p.259). Ms. Hall rejected the admonitions of administrators and other professional development providers to incorporate SRL into her classroom practice in order to protect her students, their communities, and her pedagogical integrity from a logic geared, in her eyes, toward producing student compliance to unjust pedagogical arrangements (p. 261). Finally, she challenged the meritocratic underpinnings of self-regulation, confident that her students could plainly see the hypocrisy of advocating for self-

propelled success when so much of the inequality they experience is beyond their control (p.271).

Ms. Hall's counter-theorizing of SRL and pedagogical approaches offered in teacher education that are closely aligned with neoliberal logic is inspiring for its complexity and integrity. I almost write that it is brave, but I don't mean this as a signal for that which goes above and beyond the work of a teacher, or as rare. Ms. Hall's discussions with Vassallo give readers extraordinary insight on her choices to refuse neoliberal logic in her teaching, but novice and experienced teachers alike resist neoliberal influences in their classrooms every day; sometimes, as Ms. Hall has, by protecting the space of her classroom and publicly denouncing neoliberal encroachment, other times by encouraging students to critically deconstruct schooling practices, imploring students to pass tests in order to prove doubters wrong, by teaching with the door closed, or even leaving the profession.

Read alongside Books and deVilliers' (2013) discussion of the recruitment of overseas-trained teachers to work in the U.S to compensate for an alleged teacher shortage, Ms. Hall's rejection of neoliberal pedagogical imperatives and public dissent in staff meetings and professional development training may indeed be courageous. The authors describe a litany of unsavory practices and misrepresentations aimed at bringing overseas-trained educators to US schools at reduced salaries, with felt constraints on their freedom to express dissatisfaction. Books and de Villiers locate their analysis of this phenomenon within the context of US teacher layoffs, efforts to discredit and neutralize unions, and the rising prominence of fast-track teacher certification alternatives (even as traditional teacher education programs are ever more heavily

regulated) (p. 109). These are “components of an ideologically driven agenda that is fundamentally redefining what it means to be a teacher in the U.S.” (p. 110).

The analysis of the recruitment of overseas-trained teachers to work in the U.S. presented by Books and de Villiers calls attention to the “double-speak” which simultaneously cries teacher shortage and calls for widespread layoffs (p.92). Both sides of the mouth are accounted for within a neoliberal framing of crises in public education which work to deprive the public sphere of needed resources and then declare it a failed project.

Haugen’s (2013) article explores the congruencies between educational policy recommendations by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and Norway’s (an OECD member) national educational policies. I read this comparative analysis with great interest because it has become quite fashionable in the United States to compare US educational policies and values to Nordic approaches, particularly Finland, but also frequently Norway² (see, for example, Darling-Hammond 2010a, 2010b). Haugen’s article builds upon an earlier (2010) finding that OECD recommendations emphasize discourses of accountability, autonomy, and choice, despite a dearth of evidence that such strategies improve educational equity (Haugen, 2013, p.167). Further, Haugen observes that OECD recommendations promote state subsidized privatization of schooling. Haugen engages Bernstein’s (1977) designations of the old and new middle classes to understand how social control apparatuses have become more invisible and implicit, even while accountability mechanisms have become more visible and pervasive.

Haugen raises several important questions about the relationship between the OECD, international and national rankings, perceived social problems, and the way-paving for the more comprehensive influence of neoliberal logic in Norwegian educational policies. Neoliberal school reforms proffer

A zero-sum game, where, in one way or another, half of the participants will end up with below average results. An effective marketisation of the education system will be easily put into practice once the socialist-alliance government has been replaced by a more conservative/neoliberal government, as tools (like international and national testing and ranking) for marketising through choice and privatisation are already in place. (p.197)

Haugen observes that the undue influence of neoliberal recommendations set forth by the OECD jeopardizes the legitimacy of the socialist-Nordic model of education, which has garnered the comparative envy of so many of those already knee-deep in neoliberal reforms.

Samoukovic's (2013) article points to the ways in which the fetishizing of choice, competition, and accountability within globalized and neoliberal frames has resulted in an almost grotesque pooling of wealth, power, and control. Samoukovic's article explores the invention and perception of educational crises (requiring "triage") and their roles in ushering in policy reforms that restrict the public sphere and deregulate the private sector.

Samoukovic engages the work of John Dewey to trace the roots of opposition to neoliberal interventions in schooling and democracy. The author avails Dewey's (2008) construction of *aims* to highlight the

incompatibility of neoliberal logic for school reform (p.65) Samoukovic interfaces Dewey's work with the work of one of his critics, Saito (2009), who wonders whether Dewey can fully or compellingly appraise democracy (the forest) for the Amerikanization (the trees) (p.108).

Reading Samoukovic, and as a reader of those in critical disability studies, postcolonial studies, and ethnic studies who are critical of Dewey, I wonder about the ways in which Dewey's philosophies—particularly portions that champion democracy, the individual self, and self-monitoring—have served as harbinger for the easy adoption of neoliberal ideology in US schools. I wonder if what might be called a Deweyian hegemony, a prodigious American education philosophy export, actually has afforded the emergence of neoliberal logic, especially as an extension of settler colonial sensibilities.

Thomas' (2013) article reminds readers of the ways in which recent and forthcoming corporate-involved restructuring of schools and the work of teachers have been gaining momentum for decades. Bottom-lining, not commitments to teacher quality, drive investments in Teach for America and other initiatives that de-professionalize teaching. Thomas provides a re-reading of Kurt Vonnegut's *Player Piano* (1952) and *Slapstick* (1976) as works that anticipate the permeating influence of the market, the religiosity of self-reliance, and even the prominence of testing as social sorting. In *Slapstick*, a doctor and testing patron tells a pair of young twins,

In case nobody has told you," she said, "this is the United States of America, where nobody has a right to rely on anybody else—where everybody learns to make his or her own way. "I'm here to test you," she said, "but there's a basic

rule for life I'd like to teach you, too, and you'll thank me for it in years to come." (Vonnegut, 1976, p. 102-3, as quoted in Thomas, 2013, p.220)

The lesson? Paddle your own canoe. Thomas observes that this lesson throbs at the heart of neoliberal school reforms, and dismisses the experiential and empirical knowledge of education scholars and teachers as “anti-reform,” or “using poverty as an excuse,” (p.221).

Thomas addresses the limits to the framing of the debate between teacher quality and teacher accountability, and the reliance on test scores as evidence for both. Value added approaches, the darling of neoliberal reforms though unfounded, are emblematic of what is lost, misinterpreted, or overlooked when teaching is reduced to the quotidian task of measuring the immeasurable (Carini, 2001).

Business models are unworkable for school reform and teacher education

Thomas and the other authors in this special issue describe the proliferation of neoliberal market-based rationales for school and teacher education reform at the same time that most US residents, and most around the globe are still reeling from the impacts of the 2008 financial crisis; the impacts have been long-lasting. A 2011 report by the Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission concluded that the 2008 economic meltdown was an “avoidable” crisis; in it, financial leaders are called to task for not anticipating the pains that would result from risky practices (Chan, 2011). The average US family’s household net worth declined by 20% between 2007 and 2009 (Chiotakis, 2011). Unemployment rates rose from 6% in September, 2008 to 9.2% in March, 2011, exceeding

10.5% in January 2010 (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011). At the same time, Wall Street earnings topped \$19 billion in 2010, and \$20 billion in 2009. Wall Street's five largest banks enjoyed their two most profitable years of investment banking and trading of stocks and bonds in 2009 and 2010 (Winter, 2010). This is because, "In effect, many of the big banks have turned themselves from businesses whose profits rose and fell with the capital-raising needs of their clients into immense trading houses whose fortunes depend on their ability to exploit day-to-day movements in the markets," (Cassidy, 2010). Wall Street and Wall Street Banks have enjoyed surges in earnings because they have linked profits to betting on (and against) the economic activities of everyday people.

Hi ho, indeed, Mr. Vonnegut. Neoliberalism, which aims to extract the philosophies of the market and apply them to non-market entities, does not disclose that the business practices regularly held up as models for school and teacher education reform no longer reflect the real business practices of heavy-hitting corporations. The espoused practices claim to link the well-being of the company with the well-being of the consumers. However, the real practices (such as the practice of repackaging subprime mortgages by investment banks) make it possible for companies to benefit by the fortunes *and* misfortunes (and the oscillation between) of everyday people. It is under these conditions that America's wealthiest 1 percent enjoy 23 percent of the nation's income, nearly triple the 8 percent share they enjoyed in 1980 (Reich, 2011).

It is perverse to advocate for the primacy of business models in the reform of schooling and teacher education in the face of profit-driven practices that have resulted in the abject dispossession of the citizenry—at the same time that profits continued to grow. A decade ago, Wall

Street analysts described the K-12 education market as “sluggish;” now, federal, state, and local accountability policies have created the conditions for an explosive growth of the K-12 market (Burch, 2009). Education policy is entwined with the market, and education policy has worked to bring logics of accountability to the mainstream discourse to serve as the new rationality. Though it is ludicrous that current business practices and ethics would be the model for any sector, advocates of neoliberal school reform and market-based accountability continue to insist that they have the answers. I contend that we can draw some direct parallels to the scenario of repackaging of subprime mortgages and role of raters in concealing the toxicity of the bad loans to the scenario seen around the United States in which one company provides school districts with curriculum, benchmark assessments, teacher training, and the tests upon which everything hangs in the balance. The opacity of such scenarios is disturbing, both because conflicts of interest are masked, and because for-profit companies are responsible to owners and shareholders in a way that requires them to withdraw from unprofitable ventures. Further, the inherent isomorphism of educational management organizations, alternate track certification companies, and private specialty providers make it more likely that the services and modes of certification they provide are really just outdated and ineffective practices repackaged as innovations, aggrandized to districts as high quality and low risk investments. The real practices of the market—hunting trends, short-term visions, betting against the success of everyday people, opaque products and services, large fees to fill the gaps of poor choices—are far different from the beacon of rationality and efficiency purportedly offered to communities via neoliberal education accountability policies. Yet, what communities are likely to actually get are unsustainable, cynical, unworkable solutions, disguised as industry innovations.

Neoliberalism as despair, as nihilism

As I help my students to understand, neoliberalism assumes that solutions to contemporary crises can be found on the binary spectrum of the state vs. the private sector. This assumption precludes other possible solutions based on logics outside of a market-based logic. Neoliberalism can be characterized as involving a limited range of possibility, with the sense of futility that accompanies such limitations. Thus, neoliberal logic can be understood as a kind of despairing cynicism, a mix of anguish and desperation generated by fixing the range of possibilities for well-being upon a continuum between government and private business.

Neoliberalism, a type of functional despondency or misery, elides potential solutions found on other spectrums. This is not to say that neoliberalism produces despair, but that it is despair. In an interview with the Broken Power Lines Blog, political theorist Wendy Brown explores the relationship between neoliberalization (the dissemination of market values into every sphere of human activity), despair, and quotidian nihilism:

I wish [I could say that neoliberalization produces despair] but I am not convinced that it does. I think that the process that some of us have called neoliberalization actually seizes on something that is just a little to one side of despair that I might call something like a quotidian nihilism. By quotidian, I mean it is a nihilism that is not lived as despair; it is a nihilism that is not lived as an occasion for deep anxiety or misery about the vanishing of meaning from the human world. Instead, what neoliberalism is able to seize upon is the extent to which human beings experience a kind of directionlessness and pointlessness to life that neoliberalism in an odd way provides. It tells you what you should do: you should understand yourself as a spec of human capital, which needs to appreciate its own value by making

proper choices and investing in proper things. Those things can range from choice of a mate, to choice of an educational institution, to choice of a job, to choice of actual monetary investments – but neoliberalism without providing meaning provides direction. In a sad way it is seizing upon a certain directionlessness and meaninglessness in late modernity. (Brown as quoted in *Broken Power Lines*, 2010)

Despairing cynicism and quotidian nihilism run rampant in the aforementioned isomorphism (the repackaging of outdated and ineffective approaches as innovations) and the unsustainability of many corporate practices, practices that have come to define the private sector. Most notable of these practices is the widespread prioritizing of profits over human, community, and ecological well-being, resulting in the destruction of habitats, cultures, land, and water.

Remembering and reclaiming other axes of thought and meaning

Neoliberalism, because of its nihilism, is an unworkable logic for teacher education and schooling. Both the real practices and imagined/espoused business models peddled to districts and communities are inappropriate frames for the work of meaningful teaching and learning. Precisely because neoliberalization elides other potentials, other axes of thought, the teacher education conundrum caused by a perceived schooling crisis is configured as unsolvable. The project of fully preparing professional and competent (and motivational and smart and generous and kind!) teachers for public schooling is erroneously cast as impossible; no need to pursue (or invest in) the project any longer. However, once we take on the task of *disbelieving* neoliberal logic, we can remember that there *are* other axes of thought, other spectrums of possibility that can interrupt the continuum of government vs. private business; there are other

frameworks that can guide the remaking of public schools and the preparation of fabulous educators.

For such frameworks/interruptions to be viable, they must counter the deep-seated flaws of neoliberal thinking: profit-driven decision making, unsustainable practices and reckless squandering of land and water, and a colonial theory of change that locates itself as an evolved higher (and more worthy) way of life. Many scholars have described a multiplicity of viable counter-neoliberal frameworks, including Endarkened (Dillard, 2008) Mestizaje (Anzaldua, 1987; Saavedra and Nymark, 2008) Red (Grande, 2004) Islamic (Stonebanks, 2008) Queer (Adams and Jones, 2008) and Feminist (Lather, 1991) epistemologies.

Many frameworks that arise from indigenous epistemologies look to nature for models of success.

Native science is a people's science, a people's ecology. People come to know and understand their relationships to the physical environment in which they work by what they do to live in that environment...
Mimicking the processes observed in nature, community involved learning how to be responsible in relationships. (Cajete, 2000, p. 101)

Cajete describes the Native garden as an example of a deep understanding of "practiced" relationships. Native gardens were "mythic-spiritual-cultural-aesthetic expressions of tribal participation and relationship" (2000, p. 131). Dimensions of the practiced relationship included the technology of farming, responsibility of care for the food plants, the cultivation of an attitude of appreciation and reverence for the food plants, reflection, planning, communication, negotiation, addressing

missteps, and celebration (*ibid.*, p. 132). Such models are “life-seeking” (*ibid.*, p. 118-9). The Native garden is a far more productive and appropriate metaphor for public schooling than the factory metaphor that typified schooling in the industrial era (still evident in school structures) or the investment banking model that undergirds contemporary neoliberal school reform.

Summary

Neoliberal ideology, which shapes schooling in the United States, is often theorized as a new logic that emerged in the late 1970s, yet Indigenous scholars argue that neoliberalism is a contemporary expression and extension of colonialism. Whilst settler colonialism (as a structure and not an event [Wolfe, 1999]) is primarily concerned with the dispossession and erasure of Indigenous peoples, neoliberalism as an extension of colonialism is concerned with the dispossession and erasure of the unworthy subject. Educational accountability policies fall under the rare category of allowable interventions of the neoliberal nation-state into the lives of individuals and families: ensuring the viability of a service-based economy that thrives on consumerism and credit. Communities call upon school and government leaders for more accountability for the quality of their teachers and schools, the state responds with more and more accountability measures aimed at appraising the use of dollars spent, measures that do nothing to secure schooling as desired by communities, and in fact, undermine the potential for schools as sites of meaning-making. Educational accountability policies are not accountable to poor and low-income families, urban communities, migrant and immigrant communities, and disenfranchised peoples. Accountability policies are accountable to those who advocate for them, in order to keep a tight rein

on how tax dollars are spent and/or to close out those who display any sort of dependence on the state.

There *are* other theories of change outside the binary spectrum of government vs. private that characterizes neoliberalism. There are other axes upon which we might find inspiration and solutions for change. Indigenous theory, because it has existed and persisted alongside colonial models for so long, is just one example of a source for alternative theories of change that have been concealed by the circular logic of neoliberalism. It may take some imagination and flexibility to determine other useable frameworks, but there are many, many other logics or perspectives that can provide far more fruitful models for change in teacher education and schools than neoliberalism.

Notes

¹ The term school pushout describes the experiences of youth who have been pressured to leave school by factors inside school. An elaborated discussion on many of the points made in this article can be found in Tuck, 2012.

² As an aside, it is interesting to read the comments on online articles pertaining to Finnish schooling from a United States perspective, to see the ease and frequency with which commenters deem Finland and Norway as practically interchangeable!

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Education reform is the name given to the goal of changing public education. Historically, reforms have taken different forms because the motivations of reformers have differed. However, since the 1980s, education reform has been focused on changing the existing system from one focused on inputs to one focused on outputs (i.e., student achievement). In the United States, education reform acknowledges and encourages public education as the primary source of K-12 education for American youth. Education