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Branded: International education and 21st-century Canadian immigration, education policy, and the welfare state

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Abstract
Over the past two decades there has been a shift in Canadian education policy from a focus on education as a public good to education as a commodity, with policy language increasingly infused with the strategies of business. Branded 'Education au/in Canada', complementary immigration and education policies accommodate seamless entry, renewal, employment opportunities and finally citizenship for the best and the brightest of students abroad. Using a theoretical lens of neo-liberalism and post-colonialism, this article analyses the close intersectionality between immigration and education policy in Canada, illustrates how Canada actively recruits and maintains international students for its nation-building, and discusses the impact on the Canadian welfare state.

Keywords
Education policy, globalization, immigration policy, international students, neoliberalism, post-colonialism, welfare state and Canada

Traditionally public education in Canada has been viewed as part of the public good, part of egalitarianism and part of social welfare. Public education contributed to social democracy by building a society of literate and informed citizens. Through mobilizing equality of opportunity, any person could access free public education, learn job-related skills and experience upward mobility. The Keynesian welfare state envisioned full employment with a universal social safety net founded on education as the social foundation for a democratic state and a successful economy (Gidney, 2002).

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However, in Canada's largest immigrant-receiving province, Ontario, during the 1990s, a conservative government imposed deep cuts on the education system. Since the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1988, 20 percent of manufacturing jobs had been lost and high unemployment, federally imposed high interest rates and reduced federal transfer payments resulted in widespread anxiety about the province's economic prospects (Ralph et al., 1997). Ontario's conservative Premier promised a return to 'the good old days' and marketed his program of cuts to social services including education as home-grown 'common sense'. However, the changes he enacted in education were consistent with global trends and patterns that went far beyond the 'home-grown' issues of Ontario in the 1990s.

Using the international student as our research focus, we argue that: 1) there has been a significant shift in education from a position as a public good to education as a commodity; 2) the local and state-wide changes in education policy are closely tied to global changes; and that 3) social services and access issues among international students and other marginalized students should be put in the context of a reduced social welfare system, all of which appear to be governed by post-colonial neoliberalism. When we trace patterns of migration for education in late 20th-century Canada, what is noteworthy is the changing education policies in relation to global neoliberal trends. Traditional provincial jurisdiction of education has expanded to Federal Government partnership with immigration services, resulting in a Canada-wide program designed to increase the international student market. In turn, these Federal government partnerships are networked with policy-makers beyond the nation, including international organizations such as Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and supranational groups such as the European Union (EU), which has resulted in a new global education policy community (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010b).

Immigration has been a part of nation-building in Canada since confederation, used as a means to build infrastructure, settle new territory, and provide labor in natural resource industries. Currently, a new form of migration promotes Canadian nation-building, that of education migration. Migrating for education in Canada has increased over the last four decades (CIC, 2009, 2010). Complementary immigration services have streamlined seamless student entry and renewal of stay. Lucrative international school fees and living costs supplement depleted school budgets and contribute to the Canadian Gross National Product (GNP), while the new 2008 Canadian Experience Class Immigration Act facilitates the retention of the best foreign students. This neo-imperial pattern of moving human resources from non-Western economies into Western knowledge economies, is often masked under an explanation of globalization and economic forces that are beyond national determination. Using Ontario as an example, we illustrate how the conservative government introduced many changes in the name of cost-cutting efficiency that in fact commodified education and positioned Canada for global competition, while decimating the Canadian welfare state with the crisis of underfunding and structural changes which deepen inequality and oppression.

While Canadian literature on education has focused on pedagogy, learning, social issues, and public policies, a relatively new field of scholarship now considers the impact of global capitalism and neoliberalism on national and international education (Connell et al., 2009; Kwak, 2008; Lynch, 2006; Rizvi and Lingard, 2010a; Majhanovich, 2006, 2008b; Schweisfurth, 2006; Waters, 2006). Still less well documented, is using a critical frame to consider trends in international education through a postcolonial lens (Coloma, 2009; Connell, 2007). As a white settler society, Canada is not commonly associated with imperialism. However, we agree with critical scholars such as Todd Gordon (2010) who argue that Canada is part of a new imperialism and the examination of international education in Canada is a good example to highlight this point. We thus apply this framework to a consideration of the growth of an international education industry in Canada.

A post-colonial perspective

Public policies were originally framed within a national setting but from the early 1990s, began to be located in a global network. This did not mean that national governments lost national authority but rather there was a shift in the nature of this authority as it became increasingly imperative to attend to global political relations (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010a). Stephen Ball (2009) suggests that there has been a switch from national government to national governance, meaning that the challenge of globalization has necessitated states engaging in new ways of coordinating between not just local, provincial and federal interests but also global demands while remaining accountable to national suffrage. The new economic significance of international education as a source of revenue has led to a shift in education policy production from the provincial to the national domain with attention to global competition.

By assuming that values are always present in policy, either explicitly or implicitly, policy can be regarded as a form of political activity rather than an unbiased and rational means of problem-solving. We adopt such a perspective and consider critical questions concerning whose interests are served by specific educational policies. We use Bourdieu's notion of *fields* to consider the interrelationship and flow between the local policy field, the national policy field and the global policy field. Each field has their own logic of practice and there is a connecting field of power linked to economics. These fields encourage certain dispositions or *habitus* among agents and involve contestation over various resources or capitals which are valued in various ways within the field (Bourdieu, 1989; Rizvi and Lingard, 2010b). Of specific interests are how the global education field intersects with local education field and how the wealth and capital inequities of former colonial relations between the Western and non-Western worlds are replicated through the international education industry. Critical reflexivity in regards to policy analysis requires looking beyond the immediate context in a temporal sense and in terms of immediate location (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010b). In considering the historical and political origins of these policies we ask who were the groups involved in establishing the policy agenda and the policies? In order to tease this out further we consider who has advocated and promoted these policies and why? We consider what policy networks have been involved in the process of policy production. We look at what international agencies participated in its promotion and whether the links are acknowledged or invoked as a rationale for the policy.

Globalization has become an accepted tradition in our lives, often invoked as an explanation of social, public, political and economic policy decisions as well as an explanation of inexplicable current events. Elusive and difficult to define, it has become a topic of study as the context, the process, and the cause of social change. Rizvi (2009) suggests that 'globalization is accepted as something that exists rather than being seen as part of a politics of naming' (p. 47). When it is reified as something unchangeable, then the response choices become that you are either for it or against it and this polarity is evident in the literature on globalization. For example, joining several definitions, Steger (2003) defines globalization as 'a multidimensional set of social processes that create, multiply, stretch and intensify worldwide social interdependencies and exchanges while at the same time fostering in people a growing awareness of deepening connections between the local and the distant' (p. 13). While this definition captures the commonly understood domains of the concept, it does not situate the phenomenon in history or explain the conditions of origin or ideological affiliations. It simply presents globalization as what is, with an assumption that there is nothing further to be known about it.

A postcolonial perspective recognizes globalization as historically specific, serving the interests of the transnational, corporate and financial elite, with roots in Western projects of imperialism and colonialism, and highlights the hegemonic role globalization has taken in furthering Western

perspectives and Western power bases (Rizvi, 2009). Neoimperialism assumes that the global order today is still defined by imperialism with a system of global inequalities and domination whereby wealth is drained from the labor and resources of the non-Western world for the benefit of the Western world. And it is not limited to relations between Western and non-Western countries but also operates within settler states such as Canada, where the same pattern of exploitation can be seen between colonizer and indigenous people (Gordon, 2010). Conquest is achieved through the market, exploiting poorer countries through the application of principles of neoliberal globalization. In the search for new markets, Western countries achieve unequal power domination through extending credit, establishing multinational corporations, undercutting local industry and establishing debt peonage (Gordon, 2010). An alliance of core capitalist nations have an international economic regime through the institutions of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the forerunner of the World Trade Organization (WTO), and these nations collectively insure the conditions necessary for the expansion of capital (Gordon, 2010). Imperialism is traditionally about civilizing those who are less well developed than ourselves. As Razack (2004) puts it 'empire is a structure of feeling, a deeply held belief in the need to and the right to dominate others *for their own good*, others who are expected to be grateful' (p.10, italics in the original). Education was deeply implicated in this process. Missionary schools, Aboriginal residential schools and colonial schooling were all based in the Western canon and sought to enlighten the uncivilized other (Shewell, 2004). Tikly (2009) examines how this civilizing goal was used by 'developed' countries to educate 'undeveloped' countries, to promote economic growth and reduce poverty. Colonial schooling 'colonized the mind' perpetuating the Western episteme, expanding global citizenship and establishing the ground for the spread of global governmentality (Tikly, 2009). Mirroring the Age of Empire, competing Western economies recruit international students from Asian, Middle Eastern and African countries, to purchase Western education, while creating a lucrative industry for the host countries, and a source of 'free' top graduates for permanent citizenship (e.g. the 2008 Canadian Experience Class Immigration Act). This exchange contributes to Western nation-building and hegemony while reducing the capacity of the sending countries to build their own knowledge economy.

Globalizing education policy in Canada

The aftermath of the Second World War saw an internationalization of education with students travelling from non-Western countries to Western countries in search of educational capital. Reflecting old colonial patterns of power, the host countries were Britain, France and the United States (Mazzarol and Sim Yaw Seng, 2003; Trilokekar, 2010). In Canada, international academic policy centered on development and international co-operation, and a diplomatic position as a non-colonial middle power produced programs such as 'Canadian Studies Abroad' and 'Government of Canada Awards' (Trilokekar, 2010). However, since the 1990s there has been a shift in Canada's policy from a pursuit of world peace and social justice to the imperial 'center and periphery' dichotomy that characterizes neocolonial globalization with monopolies of wealth, knowledge and power (Trilokekar, 2010; Valiani, 2012).

Historically education in Canada was administered provincially. The British North America Act (1867) and later the Constitution Act (1982) gave provincial governments the exclusive right to education law-making, with funding from property taxes and provincial government grants (Gidney, 2002). Some federal policies override provincial authority such as the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982), which protects the education rights of individuals and minority groups without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, sex or mental or physical disability (Livingstone, 1989).

More recently, there has been increasing Federal involvement in education policy, not legislated, but through the formation of networks and alliances between the provinces and global organizations. In 1967 the Council of Ministers of Education in Canada (CMEC) appeared. This is an intergovernmental body founded collectively by the provincial Ministers of Education to provide pan-Canadian and international leadership in Canadian education (CMEC, 2011b). On their website are numerous links to international global organizations which elaborate education global policies. For example, the 2006 UNESCO report *Towards Knowledge Societies*, describes lifelong education as a response to employment instability (UNESCO, 2006) positioning unemployment as an individual problem unrelated to competitive capital labor conditions. Education as a private good is praised as an equalizing tool giving potential employees a competitive employment edge (Rizvi and Lingard, 2010a).

Released in 2008, 'Learn Canada 2020' declared the CMEC commitment to this lifespan education and identified three international education goals, namely the representation (i.e. branding) of Canadian education, the dissemination of Canadian education research, and support for international learning assessment and performance indicators (CMEC, 2011b). In order to make Canadian education marketable and increase its dissemination in a competitive international education market, constructing its representation by branding is an inevitable next step. Like a 'BigMac' in McDonalds, branding brings standardization to its presentation and consumer expectation in the international market. Branding has become an indispensable part of marketing in a consumer economy. As James Twitchell (2004) puts it, branding is 'the new Esperanto, the currency of exchange, the meaning of *habitus*, the intersection of self and other. We cluster around them as we used to cluster around sacred relics; we are loyal to them in the way we are loyal to symbols such as the flag' (p. 101). Branding Canadian education thus shapes a series of changes in Canadian education policy toward the standardization inside the state (e.g. standard curriculum and testing to increase the comparability for international education consumers) thus facilitating smooth international global networking.

The CMEC are deeply networked with global educational organizations, which include OECD, UNESCO and Commonwealth of Learning (COL). Canada was an original member when the OECD was formed in 1960, along with the United States and 18 European countries, a joint Western hegemony, all committed to global development. Since then membership has expanded to 34, by invitation from the existing members, and they boast more than 70 global partners. While the mandate of this organization is broad, we are interested in their investment in education. They developed a Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), a standardized measure of student success applied to the principal industrialized countries. Focused on reading, mathematics and science performance, test scores are published every three years in a comparative document, which is widely available online (OECD, 2012). Prospective shoppers in the international education market can then make an informed decision as to where to invest for their children's education.

Even more comprehensive is the OECD annual publication, *Education at a Glance*, with comparative quantitative indicators providing ready comparison for policy-makers and teachers. Quality of learning outcomes, policy levers, contextual factors, and the private and social benefits of investment in education are displayed. A global comparative analysis requires national co-operation from member states. The 2011 foreword states that they 'search for effective policies that enhance individual's social and economic prospects, provide incentives for greater efficiency in schooling, and help to mobilize resources to meet rising demands' (OECD, 2011). Social prospects are bracketed with economic prospects in the opening phrase reflecting a marketplace focus while neoliberal New Managerialism is reflected in the attention to cost, time and resource efficiency. The editorial states:

> in an increasingly global economy, in which the benchmark for educational success is no longer improvement by national standards alone, but the best performing education systems internationally, the role of the OECD has become central, providing indicators of educational performance that not only evaluate but help shape public policy. (OECD, 2011)

This magisterial statement claims global expertise in educational assessment, over-riding national expertise and assuming a position of world leadership in not only evaluating and comparing national performance but also in shaping public policy. This hegemonic position omits mention of the value system on which it is premised.

In their publication *The Knowledge-Based Economy*, the OECD promotes knowledge and technology as drivers of productivity and economic growth (OECD, 1996). By shrinking education to visible, measurable and economic benefits, their report supports operational fields such as engineering, reducing education to employment preparation. Social, critical and contextual knowledge as well as values of social justice and equity in the welfare state are absent in this formula for market-based technocratic and instrumental knowledge.

The shrinking of education in Ontario: A story of commodification

In 1995, the provincial conservative party in Ontario promised economic recovery by balancing the budget and boosting international confidence in the Ontario economy (Gidney, 2002). However, the succession of provincial cuts in education not only contributed to reducing costs but also tailored education to become *globally marketable* by putting a series of policies in place to standardize education practice to be competitive in the global education market. Neoliberalism introduced New Public Management (NPM) approaches into the social service sector, with a focus on output or product rather than input or process.

The new provincial policies were introduced as local responses but in fact demanded that education be governed by the rules of the market with quality and accountability as key indicators (Majhanovich, 2008b). In 1995, Bill 34 introduced a standards-based curriculum. The Ontario Curriculum replaced the Common Curriculum for grades 1–8, and established a core curriculum with four broad subject areas. This new approach was based on outcome-testing and pushed teachers to rigorously conform, promising that equity would result from teacher accountability for student achievement. Teacher latitude to assess student learning needs and develop individualized responses was stymied. Province-wide standardized testing was introduced making teaching more structured and uniform with less room for creativity and multicultural inclusiveness (Schweisfurth, 2006). In 1996 Bill 30 institutionalized quality assurance with the Education Quality and Accountability Office, mandated to oversee the new testing regime, and reported across the province through a standardized report card. These measures are reminiscent of business approaches where a standardized product or commodity (i.e. branding) is part of the company's guarantee of service and quality assurance programs monitor performance.

Bill 81, The Safe Schools Act, was introduced in 2000 with specific consequences for the zero-tolerance-for-violence approach and lined up with the neoliberal 'get tough on crime' agenda. A code of conduct included explicit standards of behavior and mandatory expulsion for infractions. Standards which are familiar to upper- and middle-class Westernized English speaking children can then discriminate against non-English speaking and/or immigrated, impoverished, and marginalized children. There was a dramatic increase in suspensions and allegations claimed that minority students were being targeted by school personnel. This resulted in an investigation by the Ontario Human Rights Commission which reported that disproportionate numbers of racialized students and students with disabilities were being subject to the disciplinary measures (Anderson and Jaafar, 2007; Gidney, 2002). The Safe Schools Act embodying the conservative government's 'tough on

crime' agenda with the intention of anti-violence has brought the tension of systemic violence against already marginalized children.

In 1997 the Fewer School Boards Act reduced the number of school boards and trustees and capped salaries which served to reduce costs and diminish their own capacity to practice and implement education policy. This was followed later in the same year with the Bill 160 Education Quality Improvement Act which centralized government control over funding, further placing the control of standardization in the hands of the state. An amendment to the Education Act made it illegal to have a deficit budget, which served to eliminate supportive services such as special education, ESL instruction, computer lab, after-school care, and housing guidance counselors and school social workers (Anderson and Jaafar, 2007). In 2000 Bill 74 Education Accountability Act increased teacher instructional time mandating teacher involvement in extra-curricular activity, which has long been used as a bargaining tool by teachers who would withdraw from this as a work-to-rule tactic. In 2001 the Teacher Testing Program, the Stability and Excellence in Education Act brought in new credentialing requirements for teachers to be administered by the Ontario College of Teachers.

Neoliberal emphasis on labor market flexibility has increased part-time contract labor and put pressure on unions to roll back entitlements. The New Public Management approach rewards management performance with bonuses and percentage pay increases, which widens the wealth disparity between contract and permanent labor (Connell et al., 2009). Despite a gender-neutral rhetoric, neoliberal changes in the workforce are having a much greater impact on women. Nurses, teachers, social workers and librarians, all female dominated occupations in the public sector face shrinking career opportunities while the private sector which is male dominated, is expanding (Connell et al., 2009).

It is a neoliberal claim that greater efficiency can be achieved through the private sector delivery of social services (Connell et al., 2009). The application of these principles to education, health and social welfare are evident in Canada. A neoliberal rhetoric of cutting taxes has resulted in a shift from direct to indirect taxation through fees and service costs, resulting in a reduction of taxes on wealth. Extracurricular activities, school supplies, tutoring, special education, equipment such as, computers are increasingly shifted to parents thus creating a more regressive tax system. The continuing increase in tuition fees for higher education reflects the same principle creating access barriers for lower and middle income students and increasing student debt levels (MacKenzie, 2007).

The 2003 elections returned the liberal party to the provincial government, which triggered a program of placation. Education funding was increased with a new contract with the Teacher Federations and the School Boards Associations. However, the amendments to the Education Act that supported global policies were retained. The liberals returned some autonomy to teachers, increased teacher jobs and support services, but they left the neoliberal agenda intact. The new standardized curriculum, accompanied by standardized testing and a four-year secondary school program, tighter regulation and centralized control continued. No longer had a public good education continued to be a commodity for the global market.

Next we closely look into how this neoliberal claim on our national education policy becomes the foundation for globalizing Canadian education and how this impacts on our welfare state and social work practice.

Branded: A new alliance bringing Canadian Education to the world

The Premier of Ontario announced in his throne speech in 2010 that 'Australia's third largest industry is international education – it creates jobs. So why don't we get serious about competing for international students. We could use the funds to expand our schools for our kids' (Benzie, 2010). Toronto is the largest city in Ontario, Canada, receiving half of all immigrants in Canada. The Toronto District School Board (TDSB) announced in 2009 'Vision of Hope', 'Our plan for

increasing the marketing efforts is to achieve a net gain in [international] students of about 150 or about $2 million in increased tuition fees of which about 60% or $1.2 million would contribute to the Board's bottom line' (Spence, 2009). In 2010 TDSB hired a full-time Director of Marketing to recruit international students. The chairman of the finance committee announced that 'The Board's more than 1000 international students provide a financial boon to the budget. Elementary school children pay $11, 500 in tuition and secondary students $13,000' (Ghosh, 2004). The public school tuition, related school fees and health insurance, which are free to students who are Canadian residents, are mandatory for international students. In the year 2008, education migrant families spent 6.5 billion dollars to support their education and living costs in Canada (Roslyn Kunin and Associates, 2009). In 2011, the Council of Ministers of Education in Canada (CMEC) aligned with the Federal Ministers of Immigration to work on seamless connection between education and immigration. In the executive summary of their education marketing plan 'Bringing Education in Canada to the World, Bringing the World to Canada', it states:

> In recognition of the benefits that international students bring to Canada, provincial and territorial Premiers, through the Council of the Federation, directed ministers of education to work with provincial and territorial ministers of immigration to further develop an international education marketing action plan by June 2011 that identifies areas for investment and opportunities for federal-provincial collaboration on marketing. (CMEC, 2011a)

In this document their joint plan is not only to increase Canada's share in the international student market but also to ensure that more international students choose to remain in Canada. The marketing plan supports international education and immigration as well as economic recovery and development for Canada. Echoing the strategies of OECD to collate educational statistics globally, CMEC commits to maintain a pan-Canadian survey of international students, reported annually through the Pan-Canadian Education Indicators Program (PCEIP), thus providing information on quality assurance throughout the Canadian education system. Reflecting a business ethos (e.g. Nike as a brand name), their newly developed brand name for education in Canada, Education au/in Canada, is designed to promote a global identity in key foreign markets and complement the individual campaigns of provincial jurisdictions and educational institutions. The CMEC marketing committee states that:

> The brand promotes a unique cultural experience in safe, diverse, and beautiful surroundings. The brand promises students that their Canadian credentials will be recognized worldwide. (p. 15)

Committed to efficient entry immigration processes they also retain international students with The Provincial Nominee Program and the Canadian Experience Class (CMEC, 2011a) which permits international students to compete for Canadian employment without leaving the country. Graduating students can move seamlessly into employment and be rewarded with better points for citizenship. Canada gains high skill labor trained and educated at the students' expense or the expense of a sending country. Furthermore, the source country loses bright and innovative workers and thinkers from their next generation.

Implications for social work

From a shrinking welfare state towards building an alliance

Paradoxically, at the same time as a series of new policies demanded that education be governed by the rules of the market with quality and accountability as key indicators, a multicultural approach and Ethno-Cultural Equity were being introduced in the classroom (Majhanovich,

2008a). The Multicultural Act of 1988 signaled a directive to change from the assimilation policy in education to one which honored diversity and difference and embraced the multitude of different groups which make up modern Canada (Ghosh, 2004). In its initial implementation this multicultural approach was, however, depoliticized and criticized as ignoring racism and discrimination. In 1993, guidelines were developed for Antiracism and Ethno-Cultural Equity in School Boards, and the curriculum was again revised with mandated teacher training (Ghosh, 2004). A glance at the Toronto District School Board website reveals an extensive listing of links and resources operationalizing the Board's commitment to equitable and inclusive schools. Heritage days representing specific cultures are assigned for the school year along with teaching human rights policies and procedures, anti-sexism, anti-homophobia, anti-classism, and anti-racism (TDSB, 2011). This projected educational environment may appeal to international students who come from vastly different cultural backgrounds and may shape their perceptions and experiences in Canadian schools. This paradox has brought significant tensions between what we claim to provide in welfare services and what clients can in reality access. The neoliberal shift in education limited additional resources which might have enhanced educational quality and the implementation of the new multicultural directives (Majhanovich, 2008a, 2008b).

While the TDSB website advertises Newcomer Reception Centres, Literacy Enrichment Programs, and ESL Programs and Settlement Services, the links reveal that the services are more limited than they at first appear. Cutbacks and under-funded school boards have resulted in fewer experienced ESL teachers and special education teachers. ESL training is an elective in teacher training, so many teachers may be ill-equipped to deal with the needs of the rising numbers of education migrants (Majhanovich, 2008a, 2008b). The settlement services are linked to Canadian Immigration Centre services but there are gaps in service. For example, although brochures and information advertise their availability in multiple languages, on the website itself availability is only in Canada's bilingual options of French and English (TDSB, 2011).

Settlement services have a time-limitation depending on the period of settlement. There are two categories in Canadian immigration policy – temporary visitors and permanent residents, and international students and their accompanying families are categorized as temporary visitors, so access to immigrant settlement services is correspondingly limited. For example, the program called Settlement Workers in School (SWIS) is a school-based outreach program in Ontario to provide settlement services for newcomer students and their families, targeting landing immigrants. This service is supported by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) and available for a limited time period after arrival focusing on orienting students and families to school and community resources (SWIS, 2004).

As such, there is a large gap in the services available to international students and their families. This can result in students seeking services in programs for which they are not eligible which presents a dilemma to social workers. Social workers might feel conflicted about providing needed services which serve to mask the negative effects of neoliberalism. In the social work literature on international students, there have been many studies that identify psychological barriers to accessing social and health services such as inadequate coping strategies and cultural issues such as self-concealment of psychological stress and mental health problems (Yeh and Inose, 2002). These studies highlight the importance of developing and delivering culturally sensitive practice approaches. Additionally, our review puts the service access issues experienced by this population in a structural context and sheds light on how institutional and systemic changes are required. Increasingly, the service gap is being addressed by private fee-based services, consistent with the neoliberal agenda. It is absurd to see a very limited social service access for international students since the education and immigration policy proactively recruit them and later absorb them as high skilled labor immigrants into permanent resident status.

As an initial effort to assist social workers in addressing the service gap and access issues, we would like to propose ways in which we could critically understand and address the phenomenon of international education and its impact on the people we serve. Neoliberal globalization has decimated the social welfare systems in Canada and deepened inequality and oppression that social workers care deeply about. From a postcolonial world view, our intention is to raise awareness of the scope of the problem and the continuing imperial inequities that this process perpetrates. Raising awareness or exposing implicit masked agendas is the first step in decolonizing research methodologies as well as in the implementation of structural and anti-oppressive social work approaches. As Tuhiwai Smith (2006) notes, while deconstruction provides an awareness of the problem, more than insight is required to bring about change. Recognition and a critical awareness of the problem should be followed with action or empowerment strategies (Lundy, 2004). Leslie Brown and Susan Strega (2005) articulate with vivid examples in their book *Research as Resistance* that research and writing are ways of not only fostering awareness but can also be used as a way to take action. Through this article we not only attempt to increase the recognition and awareness of the multiple layers of international education issues but also seek to promote and take part in knowledge production that makes use of a critical viewpoint as a way to understand and influence international issues. Neoliberal global forces are powerful, but local networks can also exert agency and influence change. While acknowledging the significance of various social work services at a micro-level, work in the social policy field such as building research-based briefs and making recommendations based on an awareness of global, national and local intersections can raise awareness of disparities and gaps in service and thus contribute to critical knowledge production.

Other forms of social activism include involvement in existing social movements or groups such as labor unions and protests as well as forming groups or developing coalitions of stakeholders (Mullaly, 1997). Building an alliance is an essential component of action and involves an empathic and informed understanding of the genealogy of the problem and a commitment to social justice and action. This process is explored in depth by Anne Bishop in her book *Becoming an Ally* (2002). We feel strongly about the significance of building an alliance among social workers, educators, activists, and labor unions since neoliberal global force inserts its power and privilege in various *fields* (Bourdieu, 1989). For example, the field of education is being shaped by a neoliberal emphasis on recruiting international students causing education to be commodified as a business product. Immigration policy has been co-opted to assist with this goal. In addition the neoliberal promotion of a temporary precarious labor market threatens the permanent job security of social workers and other female dominated professions in education, social and health services. This diminishment of professional standards and continuity of service in turn reduces the effectiveness of these professionals responding to the complexity of international student issues. Finally, the neoliberal emphasis on private service provision has eroded the national social welfare provision which creates class access issues as well as serious service attrition.

Discussion

In 1995 the ‘common sense revolution’ in Ontario declared that deep cuts in education were necessary for economic recovery and efficient management of resources. The cuts were linked to local conditions and neoliberal strategies of New Public Management were used to reconfigure the structure of education in the Province. On closer examination, however a striking parallel exists between the changes introduced into education in Ontario and the policies recommended by global educational organizations. The OECD publication *Education at a Glance*, reports comparative testing outcomes in subjects reflecting an instrumental curriculum of ‘useful’ subjects such as the sciences, mathematics, reading and English with the Western host countries in the forefront. This

reflects the new curriculums which the common sense revolution introduced along with an accountability office, a new standardized testing regime and a standard report card. With these outcome measures in place, it is but a small step away from gathering this information from across the nation to keep OECD statistically up to date. When there was a change in government, the new Minister introduced a number of placatory measures which smoothed the path for negotiating a settlement with outraged teacher unions and displaced school boards, but which actually continued to maintain the new global directions in education policy set in place by the previous conservative government.

In the introduction to the marketing plan for international education that CMEC produced they cite an Australian report which estimates that by 2025, the number of students studying abroad will have increased from 1.8 million to 7.2 million (CMEC, 2011a). This global demand for education and the predicted intensification of competition for international students is the rationale for their marketing plan. What they don't elaborate on is that this global demand is not equally dispersed and the competition is not among all countries in the globe. There is a distinctly east–west weighting to this competition with the West continuing to be the host countries and the East continuing to be the source countries. If this were not the case then there would be some problems in the industry as if the current 'consuming' countries were educationally independent, then the host countries would not have this revenue in international school fees and associated living costs to bolster the cutbacks in their own education systems. Moreover, they would have lost a significant source of national income and a challenge to the dominance of English as the language of commerce and industry. Currently, the world's primary education hosts are the colonizing countries and the offshoot white settler societies from the 19th-century age of imperialism, namely Britain, other European countries, United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Education is a major means of transmitting cultural ideas and traditions. By maintaining a monopoly of Western education this is also a way that Western ideas maintain a hegemonic position in the world. This exchange contributes to Western nation-building and reduces the capacity of source countries to build their own knowledge economy with research and education based on their own resources and power. In a marriage with neoliberal ideas, this exchange decimates national social welfare systems, thus increasing wealth disparities, inequality, and the oppression of marginalized populations (such as newcomers, racialized, disabled and gendered groups) while fostering private purchase of social services (e.g. education brokers, tutoring, and counseling).

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