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Neoliberalism in Websites of Public Canadian and American University-based Schools of Education and Teacher Education Programs

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This study analyzes websites of university-based Schools of Education and Teacher Education Programs, and points to the (intentional or unintentional) active role these institutions play in maintaining and supporting neoliberal ideology. The study uses a qualitative method to examine websites of 30 public universities, 15 American and 15 Canadian. Using a grounded theory approach, five neoliberal-related features are identified: marketing, business terminology, employability, economic orientation, and outcome-based approach. The latter two features were found only in the American websites. The paper discusses implications for each of the features, as well as for the differences between American and Canadian institutions. Teacher educators are encouraged to take the findings seriously as there is a concern that neoliberal trends and practices will continue to seep more deeply into Teacher Education Programs.

Cette étude analyse les sites Web de programmes universitaires de formation des enseignants et fait ressortir le rôle actif (intentionnel ou non) que jouent ces institutions dans le maintien et l'appui du néolibéralisme. L'étude emploie une méthode qualitative pour examiner les sites Web de 30 universités publiques, dont 15 américaines et 15 canadiennes. Une approche théorique à base empirique a permis d'identifier cinq éléments liés au néolibéralisme : le marketing, le vocabulaire commercial, l'employabilité, l'orientation économique et une approche axée sur les résultats. Les deux derniers éléments étaient présents seulement dans les sites Web américains. L'article discute des retombées de chacun des éléments et évoque les différences entre les institutions américaines et canadiennes. On encourage les formateurs d'enseignants de prendre ces résultats au sérieux car on craint que les tendances et les pratiques néolibérales continueront à s'infiltrer de plus en plus dans les programmes de formation des enseignants.

The assumptions that underlie neoliberalism as an ideological, political, and economic framework are mostly invisible—but yet, we feel their impact (Harvey, 2005; Lahann & Reagan, 2011). This is true particularly in the context of education where neoliberal reforms, policies, and practices do not reveal the assumptions and worldview behind them. Perhaps this is because, unlike classic liberalism that professes freedom (within ethical boundaries), in neoliberalism, individuals and organizations are not free to act for their own gain. Rather, neoliberalism seeks the state's active support in policies that create competitive entrepreneurs, and as a result individuals and organizations are forced to play a game with rules that benefit the

markets and capital (Harvey, 2005). In neoliberalism, "faith in the market process [is] valued over commitment to social outcomes" (Lahann & Reagan, 2011, p. 9). Neoliberal ideology is advocated by conservative and (mostly right-wing) political powers that support a lesser governmental involvement, in favor of a laissez-faire economic system and free-market capitalism that allow extended freedom of individuals. Neoliberal ideology contends that such an economic system results in greater financial capital to individuals and to society as a whole.

Most of the research about neoliberalism and Schools of Education and Teacher Education Programs (hereafter SOEs and TEPs, respectively) documents the impact of neoliberalism through the lens of the passive role of these institutions, that is, the attack of neoliberalism on them; SOEs and TEPs are presented as a subject that is on the receiving end of the influence of neoliberalism. This study, however, examines a more active role of these institutions: the appearance of neoliberal features on the websites of SOEs and TEPs. Revealing and characterizing this active role is crucial in order to address it, as part of the broader mission of addressing the neoliberal attack on education and TEPs. As Sleeter (2008) argued,

> Teacher educators must become much more aware of what neoliberalism is and how it is impacting on a range of social institutions, in order to mount what Weiner (2007) refers to as 'a political defense of teacher education's value as a public good.' Generally teacher educators have only a vague idea (or no idea) of what neoliberalism is, not recognizing it as project for restoring class power by dismantling public services. (p. 1955)

This study shows that facing neoliberalism has to happen also at home—in SOEs and TEPs—at least as neoliberalism is demonstrated through the institutions' websites.

Websites suggest an active role of the institution in its operation since their design and content is almost entirely under the control of their respective institutions (or their proxies), and as such they reflect more directly and explicitly the voluntary behavior (if not the ideological stance) of the institution. In addition, taking a comparative approach, this study also examines differences between Canadian and American institutions' websites. A grounded theory approach is used in order to examine the actual appearance of neoliberal features (not just demonstrations of already documented features in the literature) in the studied institutions, and to identify variances—if they exist—between Canadian and American institutions. The findings do show differences: American SOEs and TEPs websites demonstrate more neoliberal features.

The Influence of Neoliberalism on Schools of Education and Teacher Education Programs

For the past few decades, scholars have discovered many aspects of the influence of neoliberalism on education in general and on teacher education in particular (Giroux & McLaren, 1989; Lakes & Carter, 2011).[1] This critique is clear about the dangerous threats this ideology poses to education. In the late 1980s, although without using the term "neoliberalism," Henry Giroux and Peter McLaren (1989) argued against the logic of conservative reforms in education and particularly a problematic (if not deceiving) notion of "excellence" that is separated from equity. This separation means that "schools serve to multiply injustice under the banner of excellence," since it is less likely "that excellence will be equated with the development of pedagogical practices designed to foster critical intelligence and public conscience" (p. xvi). Thus, excellence "is reduced to a code word for legitimating the interests and values of the rich

and the privileged" (p. xvi). Giroux and McLaren pointed to a "teacher-proofed" curriculum that led to "deskilling of teachers" and rendering them "technicians or state-sponsored functionaries" (p. xvi). This deskilling suggests undermining teachers' professionalism and preventing them authority over their own practice.

More recent critiques explicitly mention the neoliberal ideology that lies behind educational reform by name (Baltodano, 2012). Under neoliberalism, institutionalized mass education is governed by an ideology of privatization, has become a commodity, and is operated in a mechanistic manner. Education is under attack from market interests that severely limit opportunities for equity and justice (Barber, 2004; Picower, 2011). Kuntz and Petrovic (2011) summarized central characteristics of neoliberal influence on education:

> Contemporarily, the legitimate frame is neoliberalism, which grants little virtue to multidimensionality, supporting, instead, a flattening out of educational practice that foregrounds issues of efficiency and predefined accountability. Further, this frame compels educational formations that privilege rigidly standardized mechanisms for defining student and institutional success, economic substantiations for educational meaning, and a conflation of democracy with capitalism. A neoliberal frame asserts conceptual metaphors of, for example, production and the corporate mentality of measurable inputs and outputs that hail education as generating a set of skills useful in the production of work. (p. 181)

SOEs and TEPs are also under assault by a neoliberal ideology (Bullough Jr., 2014; Weiner, 2007). In the US, TEPs compete with alternative fast-track teacher preparation programs such as Teach for America that offer a way to by-pass university-based teacher education entirely (Sleeter, 2008). As a result, central tenets of SOEs and TEPs are being eroded. As Baltodano (2012) argued, "the tenets of American liberal teacher education represented in a vision of rigorous content knowledge, democratic schooling, and social justice have been distorted and appropriated by the corporate goals of education" (p. 487). Sleeter (2008) asserted that neoliberal pressures on teacher education in the US cause three trends: "(1) away from explicit equity-oriented teacher preparation, and toward preparing teachers as technicians; (2) away from defining teacher quality in terms of professional knowledge, and toward defining it terms testable content knowledge; and (3) toward shortening university-based teacher education or by-passing it altogether" (p. 1947). In addition, Rodriguez and Magill (2016) maintained that "in the societal turn toward neoliberalism, and to some degree as jobs declined in sectors of the economy, teacher education programs have been admitting students less selectively because of drops in enrolment" (p. 10), although they do not specify in what ways this less selective admission occur.

In light of the pressure on university-based SOEs and TEPs to compete for students against other teacher preparation programs (in the US, both university-based and alternative programs), a question arises with regard to how they face the challenge of attracting prospective students while keeping an image of institutions that provide quality academic and professional teacher preparation. In particular, in order to further study the impact of neoliberalism on these institutions, it is important to examine how they present themselves publicly. Since the Internet is a significant means of public self-presentation that is aimed at both the wider public and prospective students, and because websites serve as a major showcase for organizations, this study sets to examine neoliberal features in SOEs and TEPs websites. We argue that the appearance of neoliberal features on these websites constitutes significant evidence that

neoliberal tendencies govern the ideological core of SOEs and TEPs. If neoliberalism in education, as the literature portrays it, has a bad reputation for those who cherish equitable, humanistic, critical, and non-technical public education then neoliberalism still appears on SOEs and TEPs websites, this suggests that these institutions, implicitly or explicitly, adopt the tenets of neoliberalism. In light of our educational and academic work in Canada, we have a special interest in the impact of neoliberalism on Canadian SOEs and TEPs. Since phenomena in the United States have the potential to influence educational trends north of the border, this study also aims to compare the websites of American and Canadian institutions.

Following a review of some of the literature on neoliberalism, we define neoliberal features as those that, intentionally or unintentionally, contribute to financial capital. This contribution might be direct or indirect. In addition, the financial capital can be of the studied institutions or it could be of other entities (e.g. TEPs students, the state).

Therefore, this study poses two research questions:

1. What, if any, neoliberal features exist in SOEs and TEPs websites?
2. How do Canadian SOEs and TEPs websites compare to American SOEs and TEPs websites with regard to neoliberal features?

Method

In order to uncover neoliberal features of university-based SOE and TEP websites, we examine the visions, mission statements, and strategic plans and other textual, visual, and audio elements. Since SOEs in general are involved in the study (and not just their TEPs), we include both undergraduate and graduate programs as relevant for revealing neoliberal features.

The literature increasingly recognizes the importance of looking at the Internet and analyzing webpages as a source for studying social objects (Jun, 2011; Pauwels, 2012). SOE and TEP websites are considered process-generated data, that is, data that were not produced specifically for scientific research but are the result or by-product of social processes, in contrast, for example, to interviews and surveys (Baumgarten & Grauel, 2009; Baur & Lahusen, 2005). In this study, the websites are studied through a snapshot approach (Pauwels, 2012); this means the websites are examined as they are published at one specific time. The period of time during which the websites were examined was between December 2017 and January 2018.

Sampling

The study examines the websites of SOEs that also include TEPs, as well as the websites of the TEPs. *School of Education* is equivalent in this study to any unit in the higher education institution that is dedicated to the field of education, such as College of Education or Department of Education, and includes a teacher education program. In this study we sampled only SOEs in public universities, since American public universities are the higher education institutions that most align with the Canadian higher education system, and as such they are the most suitable for comparison.[2]

We used a purposeful sampling to ensure diversity within the sample in terms of location, total student enrolment, and ranking. There were 15 American and 15 Canadian public universities that were spread out geographically. These institutions vary in their total student enrolment which ranges between less than 2,500 to more than 70,000. The institutions' ranking

spans from top-10 universities in QS World University Rankings ("QS World University Rankings," 2018) to universities that do not appear in this listing. Such a sampling does not constitute a problem in terms of validity since the purpose of the study is not to generalize findings (e.g., to what extent neoliberal features are demonstrated in websites) but rather to identify and characterize a phenomenon (that is, what, if any, neoliberal features are demonstrated in websites). Table 1 details the institutions with additional information, and Figure 1 presents the geographical spread.

Table 1

List of universities in the sample with information on type of institution, location, ranking, central Education unit and its Internet address

No	Institution	Type of university	Location (State/Province)	Total enrollment*	Ranking**	Education Unit and website
			Canadian institutions			
1.	Memorial University of Newfoundland	Comprehensive	Newfoundland and Labrador	18,204 ("Memorial University of Newfoundland," 2019)	G 701-750 E X	Faculty of Education http://www.mun.ca/educ/home/
2.	Mount Saint Vincent University	Comprehensive	Nova Scotia	2,433 ("Mount Saint Vincent University," 2019)	G X E X	Faculty of Education http://www.msvu.ca/en/home/programsdepartments/education/default.aspx
3.	Nipissing University	Undergraduate	Ontario	5000 ("Nipissing University," 2019)	G X E X	Schulich School of Education http://www.nipissingu.ca/academics/faculties/schulich-school-of-education/Pages/default.aspx
4.	Queen's University	Research	Ontario	28,272 ("Queen's University," 2019)	G 224 E 201-250	Faculty of Education http://educ.queensu.ca/
5.	Simon Fraser University	Research	British Columbia	34,990 ("Simon Fraser University," 2019)	G 245 E 151-200	Faculty of Education http://www.sfu.ca/education.html
6.	University of Alberta	Research	Alberta	38,311 ("University of Alberta: FACTS 2017-2018," 2018)	G 90 E 49	Faculty of Education https://www.ualberta.ca/education
7.	University of British Columbia	Research	British Columbia	64,900 ("University of British Columbia," 2019)	G 51 E 19	Faculty of Education http://educ.ubc.ca/
8.	University of Calgary	Research	Alberta	31,905 ("University of Calgary," 2019)	G 217E 151-200	Werklund School of Education http://werklund.ucalgary.ca/

No	Institution	Type of university	Location (State/Province)	Total enrollment*	Ranking**	Education Unit and website
9.	University of New Brunswick	Comprehensive	New Brunswick	8,303 ("University of New Brunswick," 2019)	G X E X	Faculty of Education http://www.unb.ca/fredericton/education/
10.	University of Ottawa	Research	Ontario	41,749 ("University of Ottawa," 2019)	G 289E 151-200	Faculty of Education https://education.uottawa.ca/en
11.	University of Regina	Research	Saskatchewan	15,276 ("University of Regina," 2019)	G XE X	Faculty of Education https://www.uregina.ca/education/
12.	University of Saskatchewan	Research	Saskatchewan	23, 691 ("University of Saskatchewan," 2019)	G 451-460E X	College of Education https://www.usask.ca/education/
13.	University of Toronto	Research	Ontario	61, 339 ("University of Toronto," 2019)	G 31E 10	The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/oise/Home/index.html
14.	University of Winnipeg	Undergraduate	Manitoba	10,317 ("UWinnipeg fast facts," 2019)	G X E X	Faculty of Education https://www.uwinnipeg.ca/education/
15.	Wilfrid Laurier University	Comprehensive	Ontario	19,946 ("Laurier fact sheet," 2019)	G X E X	Faculty of Education https://www.wlu.ca/academics/faculties/faculty-of-education/index.html
			American institutions			
16.	Arizona State University	Research	Arizona	71,946 ("Arizona State University enrollment figures," 2019)	G 209 E 51-100	Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College https://education.asu.edu/
17.	California State University, East Bay	Four-year, Co-ed,	California	15,855 ("California State University, East Bay," 2019)	G X E X	College of Education and Allied Studies http://www.csueastbay.edu/ceas/
18.	Delta State University	Regional	Mississippi	3,784 ("Delta State University," 2019)	G X E X	College of Education and Human Sciences http://www.deltastate.edu/education-and-human-sciences/
19.	North Carolina State University	Research	North Carolina	35, 479 ("North Carolina State University," 2019)	G 263 E 151-200	College of Education https://ced.ncsu.edu/
20.	San Diego State University	Research	California	34,828 ("San Diego State University," 2019)	G 801-1000 E 151-200	College of Education http://go.sdsu.edu/education/

No	Institution	Type of university	Location (State/Province)	Total enrollment*	Ranking**	Education Unit and website
21.	Southern Connecticut State University	State, Co-ed	Connecticut	11,769 ("Southern Connecticut State University," 2019)	G X E X	School of Education https://www.southernct.edu/academics/schools/education/
22.	University of Arkansas	Research	Arkansas	27,558 ("University of Arkansas," 2019)	G 801-1000 E X	College of Education and Health Professions https://coehp.uark.edu/
23.	University of California, Los Angeles	Research	California	44,947 ("University of California, Los Angeles," 2019)	G 33 E 9	Department of Education https://gseis.ucla.edu/education/
24.	University of Colorado Boulder	Research	Colorado	33,246 ("University of Colorado Boulder," 2019)	G 182 E 51-100	School of Education https://www.colorado.edu/education/
25.	University of Michigan	Research	Michigan	46,002 ("University of Michigan," 2019)	G 21 E 16	School of Education http://www.soe.umich.edu/
26.	University of Mississippi	Research	Mississippi	23,258 ("University of Mississippi," 2019)	G 801-1000 E X	School of Education http://education.olemiss.edu/
27.	University of North Carolina Wilmington	Co-ed	North Carolina	16,886 ("University of North Carolina at Wilmington," 2019)	G X E X	Watson College of Education https://uncw.edu/ed/
28.	University of Texas at Austin	Research	Texas	51,525 ("University of Texas at Austin," 2019)	G 67 E 41	College of Education https://education.utexas.edu/
29.	University of Wisconsin-La Crosse	Comprehensive, four-year	Wisconsin	10,679 ("University of Wisconsin: La Crosse," 2019)	G X E X	School of Education, Professional & Continuing Education https://www.uwlax.edu/soe/
30.	Wright State University	Research	Ohio	15,558 ("Wright State University: Quick facts," 2019)	G X E X	College of Education and Human Services https://education-human-services.wright.edu/

* Total enrollment is based on information found on the institutions' websites or their Wikipedia webpages. List of these webpages is compiled together and appears in Appendix B.
** Ranking is adopted from QS World University Rankings. "G" represents the 2018 overall ranking ("QS World University Rankings," 2018). "E" represents the 2017 ranking in education ("QS World University Rankings: Education" 2018). "X" symbolizes that the specific institution (university or School of Education) does not appear in the ranking.

Figure 1. Geographical spread of the 30 universities in the sample. Canadian institutions are marked in purple. American institutions are marked in blue. Created using Google Maps.

Data Analysis

The unit of analysis was the individual SOEs or TEPs website at three levels deep from the main page of a website and then two links or clicks into the website. This is a common procedure in studying websites because it limits the amount of content for analysis (Williams & Brunner, 2010). Such a procedure allows for examination of the homepage and additional nearby relevant material such as mission statements and strategic plans.

Data were qualitatively analyzed using a grounded theory approach and categorization techniques (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990), according to which categories are identified from the findings with attention to the literature.[3] In analysing the websites, we used elements of Pauwels' (2012) multimodal framework for analyzing websites as cultural expressions. This framework is useful for two reasons. First, it is designated particularly for the unique dynamic textual characteristics of websites. Second, it considers the socio-cultural aspect of websites with respect to "how to decode/disclose the cultural information that resides both in the form and content" (Pauwels, 2012, p. 248). Such a framework is especially suitable for the kind of analysis pursued in the current study, as it is aimed to uncover social-political undertones of neoliberalism. This framework, as explained by Pauwels (2012) is composed of six phases:

1. "Preservation of first impressions and reactions" (p. 253);
2. "Inventory of salient features and topics" (p. 253);
3. "In-depth analysis of content and stylistic features" (p. 253);
4. "Embedded point(s) of view or 'voice' implied audience(s) and purposes" (p. 256);
5. "Analysis of dynamic information organization and spatial priming strategies" (p. 258); and
6. "Contextual analysis, provenance and inference" (p. 258).

In our study we used parts of the framework that we consider most relevant for conveying neoliberal tendencies. We used phases one and two, parts of three, as well as four and six. In phase three we kept five elements: (a) intra-modal analysis (fixed/static and moving/dynamic elements), (b) visual representational types and signifiers, (c) sonic types and signifiers, (d) analysis of cross-modal interplay, and e) in-depth "inverted" analysis, significantly missing or incomplete content, arguments, and formal choices.

The two co-authors independently coded and analyzed all the sample websites during the months of December 2017 and January 2018, creating two sets of categories. The analysis was based on Marshall and Rossman's (1995) four stages: organizing data; generating categories, themes, and patterns; testing any emergent hypothesis; and searching for alternative explanations. Such analysis strives to identify categories in the data, find recurrent experiences, and link different categories to form central themes. Comparison and discussion of the two sets of categories obtained from the websites (Marshall & Rossman, 1995) followed. Differences and disagreements were resolved through dialogue, leading to agreements between the independent researchers (Olesen et al., 1994).

Findings

Examination and analysis of the 30 websites revealed six features that relate to neoliberalism. Three of them appeared only on the American websites. Table 2 presents an overview of the findings.

Marketing

In the context of this study, marketing means advertising and promotion, and is beyond sharing information about the SOEs or the TEPs such as the details of programs and the operation of centers. Marketing is demonstrated by emphasizing the competitive features of the institution that testify to its quality.[4] A central component in this regard is the use of marketing or "selling" terminology that presents the institution as "ahead of" or unique in comparison to others. A key element here is using statements about the institution's ranking or using glorifying adjectives. For example, the Interim Dean of University of Texas at Austin's College of Education said in his message, "Founded in 1891, we are proud to be consistently ranked among the top-ten programs in the country by *U.S. News & World Report*" ("Dean's Office," 2018, para. 3).[5] The University of Michigan's School of Education homepage ("University of Michigan: School of Education,"

Table 2

Appearance of neoliberal features in websites of American and Canadian SOEs and TEPs

Features	United States	Canada
Marketing	✓	✓
Business terminology	✓	✓
Employability	✓	✓
Economic orientation	✓	✗
Outcome-based approach	✓	✗

Figure 2. Visual on University of Michigan's School of Education homepage. Retrieved 2018, January 22 from http://soe.umich.edu/. Reprinted with permission.

Figure 3. Visual on University of Colorado Boulder's School of Education homepage. Retrieved 2018, January 22 from https://www.colorado.edu/education/. Reprinted with permission.

2018) used visuals in presenting its ranks, as demonstrated in Figure 2.

Likewise, on University of Michigan's School of Education "Rankings & Demographics" page, a more detailed list of rankings is presented, under the title "2018 U.S. News & World Report Rankings" ("Rankings & Demographics," 2018). University of Colorado Boulder's School of Education homepage also used graphics to show rankings ("University of Colorado Boulder: School of Education," 2018), which is shown in Figure 3.

The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), at the University of Toronto, stated, with a link to the ranking company

> OISE is widely recognized as one of the leading centres in education in the world. Ranked #1 in Canada by the 2017 QS world Rankings, OISE affords students with the opportunity to study at a centre of excellence with world-class professors dedicated to supporting your educational goals [emphasis in original] ("Future Students," 2018, para. 1).

SOEs and TEPs also specify unique traits about themselves that differentiate them from other institutions. It is not the traits themselves that harbour neoliberal tendencies, but rather it is highlighting them in order to gain a competitive edge over others that illustrates these tendencies. For example, the Teacher Education Program at the University of British Columbia stated,

> The University of British Columbia's Faculty of Education offers BC's largest and most comprehensive teacher preparation program, the only one that includes all teachable subjects for secondary education, along with an elementary & middle years option. We are also proud to be Canada's only International Baccalaureate-recognized teacher education program. ("About the Teacher Education Program," 2018, para. 1)

Likewise, North Carolina State University's Elementary Education program stated

> Unique among undergraduate teacher education programs, this degree creates teacher-leaders with deep content knowledge in all elementary disciplines with a special emphasis on science, technology, engineering and mathematics for a strong STEM-focused instruction ("Bachelor of Science: Elementary Education," 2018, para. 1).

A few TEPs also emphasize the short duration of their programs. The University of Calgary's Undergraduate Programs in Education website, after clicking on "NOT A DEGREE HOLDER?", stated, "Do you want to get one degree in four years, and take the fastest path to a teaching career? Then, the 4-Year BEd is for you!" ("What BEd program pathway is right for you?," 2018, para. 2). Similarly, the Memorial University of Newfoundland's Bachelor of Education (Primary/Elementary) program on its Grenfell Campus stated, "upon completion you'll be prepared to deliver a wide range of K-6 classroom subjects—everything from math and science to music and art, in just 16 months" ("Viewbook," 2018, para. 2).

SOEs and TEPs also embed in their websites positive and endearing promotional videos in order to market their programs. Several of the institutions we examined included promotional videos in their websites.

A more indirect mode of marketing that we found on the websites was the use of a second person grammar to address potential student teachers. We will refer to this mode of attracting prospective students as individualism. Although individualism does not necessarily explicitly specify the institution's qualities, it still carries aspects of advertisement and promotion since it alludes to meeting the prospective student's interests or fulfilling their wishes. For example, the Bachelor of Education program at Mount Saint Vincent University's Faculty of Education noted, "In this program, you will develop a wide range of skills, knowledge and dispositions … The degree will prepare you to recognize and value teaching and learning" ("Program Highlights," 2018, para. 1). OISE even went as far as using a first-person language in its slogan "With OISE I Can" ("OISE," 2018, para. 1), which is demonstrated in Figure 4.

Business Terminology

We refer to business terminology as the use of business-oriented terms on the SOEs and TEPs websites. We found examples of two such terms. The first term is *clients* (or *client*), referring to those who SOEs or TEPs serve.[6] Southern Connecticut State University's School of Education declared in its conceptual framework, under the guiding principle "LEADING FOR

Figure 4. Visual on OISE's webpage. Retrieved 15 January 2018 from https://www.oise.utoronto.ca/oise/Home/index.html. Reprinted with permission.

EXCELLENCE," that "Faculty, administrators, staff, and students lead for excellence by advocating and engaging in actions that help guide children, clients, patients, other professionals, and the broader community" ("School of Education Conceptual Framework," 2018, para. 4). San Diego State University's College of Education website stated: "The SDSU College of Education is committed… to provide the highest quality learning environments *to ensure student and client success and achievement* through our teaching, research, and service" [emphasis in original] ("Advance your Career," 2019, para. 1).

Another business-oriented term is *innovation*, which is used by SOEs and TEPs to characterize their aspirations and mode of operation. For example, the University of North Carolina Wilmington's Watson College of Education specified "Innovation" as one of its values, stating that "Generating and adopting innovations is imperative to meet the changing needs of society" ("WCE Mission Statement," 2018, para.7). As well, the Dean of University of Winnipeg's Faculty of Education stated, "In the Faculty of Education, we urge our faculty, staff, and students to be innovative, take risks, and make a difference in our community and beyond" ("Welcome from the Dean," 2018, para. 2). Lastly, the University of Saskatchewan's College of Education declared, "It is through our innovative programming and the increasingly practical nature of our programs that our education students are trained to succeed" ("College of Education: University of Saskatchewan," 2018, para. 1).

Employability

Employability refers to not only to equipping teacher education students with certification that enables finding an entry-level job as a teacher, but also to purchasing a broader identity of being employable, in terms of place, time, and sector (or social sphere). As such, employability suggests acquiring a capital and cultural status that exceeds the traditional image of the schoolroom teacher.

Many TEPs highlight positive prospects for finding a job once students complete their studies. For example, University of North Carolina Wilmington's Watson College of Education stated in its "About" page, under the title "Solid Pathway to Your Future Career," "Our graduates have a strong track record for securing jobs and are highly rated by principals and other employers" ("Welcome to the Watson College of Education!," 2018, para. 6). Some universities in our sample specified an employment rate of their graduates, suggesting a high chance of finding a job. One illustration of this is North Carolina State University's Department of Teacher Education and Learning Sciences, which is outlined in Figure 5 ("Teacher Education and Learning Sciences," 2018).

TEPs also stress the usability of the certification beyond the local jurisdiction. The University of New Brunswick's Faculty of Education stated that "The New Brunswick Teacher's License is widely-recognized throughout public schools across North America and beyond" ("Faculty of Education: UNB Fredericton," 2018, para.1). Similarly, the Bachelor of Education program at Mount Saint Vincent University's Faculty of Education stated that "The B.Ed. degree and your Nova Scotia teacher certification allows you to apply for a teaching certification in the other provinces and territories in Canada" ("Program Highlights," 2018, para. 7). Likewise, Simon Fraser University's Teacher Education program stated, "A teaching certificate from BC is acceptable in most countries around the world" ("Simon Fraser University: Teacher Education," 2018, para. 1).

Figure 5. Visual on North Carolina State University's Department of Teacher Education and Learning Sciences webpage. Retrieved 22 January 2018 from https://ced.ncsu.edu/tels/. Reprinted with permission.

The Bachelor of Education program in the University of Saskatchewan's College of Education even argued for a broad versatility of its studies beyond education. Under the title "Careers" readers are told that "Just a few of the careers our graduates pursue include" and the list details, among others, Community program coordinator, Politician, Educational administrator, Artist, Musician, Business/management, Communications, and Health and recreation ("College of Education: University of Saskatchewan," 2018, para. 3).

Some SOEs offer active assistance in finding a job. For example, the College of Education at the University of Texas at Austin ("See Yourself Here," 2018) operates an Education's Career Services office, and that stated that it "serves as a bridge between undergraduate students and potential employers" ("Career Services," 2018, para. 9).

An interesting aspect of employability was found in the form of partnership between TEPs and the Teach For America alternative certification program. The partnership is designed to benefit the TEP and the local Teach For America branch. Such a partnership existed at Arizona State University's Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College ("ASU—Teach For America Partnership," 2018), and at University of Michigan's School of Education ("Alternate route to teacher certification," 2018).

While the above three features have been identified in both American and Canadian institutions, the next two—economic orientation and outcome-based approach—have been found, in an explicit manner, only in the American universities.

Economic Orientation

We define *economic orientation* as setting a goal for the SOEs or the TEPs to contribute to the economy, directly or indirectly, whether only locally (e.g., the institution's close region, province or state) or more broadly (e.g., the nation or more globally). For example, the College of Education and Human Services at Wright State University declared in its 2013-2016 Strategic Plan that one of its goals is "Community and Economic Development," and that the corresponded Core Strategy is to "Contribute to and engage in the economic development of our region, state, and beyond" ("2013-2016 Strategic Plan," 2018, para. 6). Comparably, the University of Arkansas' Department of Education Reform, in the College of Education and Health Professions, declared "The mission of the Department of Education Reform is to advance education and economic development by focusing on the improvement of academic achievement in elementary and secondary schools" ("Education Reform," 2018, para. 2). The department website also stated that among their goals was the aim to "Improve the quality of education

provided to Arkansas children who will eventually join the state's work force" and to "Enhance a positive perception of education quality in Arkansas thus contributing to the ability of the state to attract new business and a highly qualified work force" ("Education Reform," 2018, para. 3).

Outcome-Based Approach

Outcome-based approach means valuing tangible and detectible results as part of assessing the educational work in the SOE, the TEP, or the K-12 school. Following Giroux and McLaren's (1989) work as well as that of other scholars who critique the neoliberal focus on achievement targets (e.g., Hargreaves & Shirley, 2012; Weiner, 2007), as well as Biesta's (2010) critique of the focus on learners and the "language of learning" that governs educational discourse (see in the Discussion section, below), this feature is characterized by the use of terms such as "measurable outcomes," "achievement," "excellence," and "success," particularly in reference to learning. For example, Southern Connecticut State University's School of Education declared in its conceptual framework, under the guiding principle "APPLYING SKILLS TO IMPACT LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT," that "Faculty and students demonstrate the ability and willingness to: engage in effective planning; develop measurable outcomes … interpret data accurately and use findings in decision-making" ("School of Education Conceptual Framework," 2018, para. 3). California State University's (East Bay) College of Education and Allied Studies, correspondingly declared that "Several of our programs focus on improving the achievement outcomes for students in K-12 schools" ("Communities we serve," 2018, para. 1). The School of Education at University of Wisconsin-La Crosse stated in its Teacher Education Conceptual Framework that

> The globally responsive teacher believes that all learners can learn at high levels and persists in helping all learners achieve success. The teacher appreciates and values human diversity, shows respect for learners' varied talents and perspectives, and commits to the pursuit of excellence for all learners. ("Teacher Education Conceptual Framework," 2018, para. 3)

Discussion

This section discusses each of the neoliberal features found in the studied websites as well as the differences between the Canadian and the American websites.

Marketing

SOEs and TEPs market themselves on their websites through multiple modalities of communication: textual, visual, and audio. Some promotional videos combine all of these modalities. Thus, the websites serve as a platform to advertise the institutions and their programs, using a mix of words, colors, signs, shapes, and sounds; we speculate that the same promotional videos are probably used also in other media such as TV. The apparent indications of marketing—and not just technical information about the programs—signal that leaders of SOEs and TEPs feel that their institutions compete against other institutions in a race for prospective students, who are considered potential consumers. This renders the granted degrees and teaching certifications a product offered in a market to be purchased, which is touted by its supplier. Although the price for this product—tuition fees—is usually not highlighted and is less

apparent than the marketing indications, as is usually the case in a market—it is clear that SOEs and TEPs seek to win prospective students' money.[7] Since the institutions not only seek to meet programs' quota but also compete over quality prospective students, Baltodano's (2012) argument about the financial importance of TEPs for their institutions is relevant here: "As the 'cash cows' of most universities, schools of education are also pressured to increase student enrollment and to compete with all the purveyors of public and private education" (p. 499). Therefore, SOEs and TEPs make significant efforts (and probably invest significant resources) "to become more marketable" (Baltodano, 2012, p. 499).

The individualism that appears in several websites—as part of marketing—suggests a personal and direct address to the prospective student who visits a website, and as such a closer attention to them. However, we argue that this component also suggests highlighting and focusing on the individual's benefits and goals at the expense of blurring broad social goals that can be promoted by a professional educator who earns a certification or a degree in education. This notion of acquiring certification or a degree in education for one's own benefit when the potential contribution to others is only ambiguous is perhaps best illustrated in OISE's slogan "With OISE I Can"; with OISE I can what? Even if we were to add "shape my future" to the slogan, it does not eliminate the sense of pursuing personal success. The same slogan, mutatis mutandis, can be operationalized effectively in a number of different educational programs it can serve a business program, carpentry training program, or cooking school. But more importantly, such a slogan entirely ignores social tenets and goals of education and turns education into a collection of sporadic individual actions that can weaken the ethical aspect of education.

Business Terminology

By using business terminology, SOEs and TEPs actually adopt (with necessary adjustments) business-like norms and models. Thus, while marketing treats prospective students as consumers and adopts consumerism norms, business terminology adds the layer of clientele: SOEs and TEPs regard potential beneficiaries as clients,[8] and declare their offered goods as innovative in order to draw in prospective students. Moreover, these prospective students also become part of these goods—a product—as argued below in the analysis of the outcome-based approach.

One particular problem with regarding beneficiaries of SOEs and TEPs as clients is that this term constitutes a different kind of relationship than the one that is usually regarded between an educator (or an education institution) and the person (or group) being educated. Namely, instead of a transformative relationship in which SOEs and TEPs offer a social and ethical service to students, schools, communities—and by extension, society—the term "clients" suggests a more transactional (as well as individualistic and competitive) relationship in which each side expects something in return. Thus, the notion of education as a commodity—even in the context of public, rather than private, education—is sanctioned.

This notion of education as a commodity is further strengthened by announcing innovations on the websites. On the face of it, this might seem unproblematic; after all, innovation in education might suggest novel approaches for addressing educational issues and is associated with a moral imperative to prepare teachers to best meet the needs of their students. But in the context of business terminology the emphasis on innovation also suggests that the leaders of (or other functionaries in) SOEs and TEPs perceive their institutions as a business. We saw that

education programs are marketed as products and prospective students are viewed as consumers. SOEs and TEPs are viewed as institutions that market and sell the products; therefore, SOEs and TEPs become a business. But it is vital—even crucial—for a business in a competitive market—and indeed SOEs and TEPs operate in such a market—to embody and demonstrate innovation as an inherent character in order to beat rivals, survive, and profit (see, for example, Christensen, 2013). Consequently, innovation is displayed and stressed on websites of SOEs and TEPs in order to project worth of the institution and worth of the programs. Thus, by using the term "innovation" SOEs and TEPs actually seek to emulate the commercial culture of introducing new products as a business technique, that is, that part of the quality of a product is inherent exactly in being different or new. This argument is supported by the fact that innovation on its own is regarded as a quality on some of the SOEs and TEPs websites, as described in the findings: in one case "innovation" is regarded as a value; and in another, faculty, staff, and students are urged "to be innovative," without particular rationale or educational goal that is associated to the innovation itself.[9]

Employability

The emphasis on employability on some websites raises a concern with regard to the focus of TEPs. These programs are not employment agencies; their formal role is not to find jobs for graduates but—among others—to cultivate professional educators. The emphasis on employability conveys the message "Here, we will find you a job," and probably matches the interests of many prospective teacher candidates. The active efforts by some TEPs in securing a job (through job fairs) only strengthen this message. If indeed this is the case, the notion of employability aligns with a marketing principle of providing the consumers with what they want. But what prospective teacher candidates want is not necessarily—and in many cases is certainly not—what just, equitable, and democratic education requires or what disadvantaged K-12 students need (point made also by Nygreen et al., 2015).

The notion of employability is also problematic with regard to usability in terms of place and position. TEPs stress the usability of their teaching certification for securing a teaching job in other jurisdictions—some even claiming this can occur in other countries. This transferability across borders suggests that being a teacher is similar in different places, regardless of contextual factors such as culture (let alone language). Thus, the transferability conveys an implied message to potential students: "If you know how to teach here, so you know how to teach everywhere that validates our program." As such, teaching is actually considered a technical and mechanical role: this argument is made by Giroux and McLaren (1989) with regard to the 1980s conservative education reforms, and more recently by Sleeter (2008), particularly as a critique of neoliberal pressures on teacher education in the US.

Moreover, the versatility of using teaching certification (either within the educational domain and more importantly beyond education), promoted by some TEPs suggests that this certification opens the doors to a variety of positions both in and beyond education. As such, TEPs that promote this versatility convey the message that what is studied in education in order to be a teacher is relevant and transferable to other areas. Recall, for example, the note by TEP on the pursuit of other non-educational careers: politician, artist, business/management, communications, health and recreation. However, we argue that this claim for versatility dilutes the meaning of being an educator in general and a teacher in particular. For, if education to be a teacher prepares you (at least to some degree) also to be, for example, educational

administrator, youth worker, politician, or an artist, or to work in business/management, communications, or health and recreation, this suggests that typical "end-user" beneficiaries of SOEs and TEPs are not just K-12 students and that the educational degrees and certifications can also be used outside the educational domain.

One can offer a counter argument, based on a TEP-friendly interpretation, wherein the TEP and their website that demonstrate employability features—especially in terms of usability and versatility as discussed above—actually do the important work of preparing students for the world in general, and particularly to a broad range of professional opportunities where they can contribute important social and educational skills. In a sense, employability information even empowers prospective students to make a difference in a variety of arenas. Although this counter argument is appealing, we believe it undermines the central role of TEPs: preparing teachers to be educators in schools. While employing tendencies and skills acquired in TEP in areas other than K-12 education is a welcomed result for these areas, stressing the transferability of tendencies and skills acquired in TEP renders the teaching certificate another professional indication of the certificate holder's disposal, or another item on a curriculum vitae, instead of being an hallmark of educational professionalism. The uniqueness of the sought teaching certificate is then downgraded and the certificate becomes an item in a set of items that the individual purchases as part of their professional development, items such as computer skills or languages. Stressing what other opportunities a prospective student can pursue, or how a teaching certificate can be a stepping-stone for another profession or career, is especially problematic in light of the distinctive and complex ethical identity of the teacher and the distinctive ethical responsibilities and challenges teachers face; these are professional components that are undermined when a TEP is presented as a key for multiple doors, as fascinating as the arenas beyond these doors as they might be.

Finally, we have a special concern regarding the finding of partnerships in the United States that involve cooperation between SOEs and TEPs, on the one hand, and Teach For America, on the other. This cooperation might exacerbate an already troublesome integration of Teach For America corps within the American public education system (Kretchmar, 2014; Thomas, 2018; Thomas & Lefebvre, 2017; White, 2016). Several scholars point to the neoliberal logic inherent in Teach For America, especially advancement of privatized education and the dangers that accompany the involvement of Teach For America in education. For example, Anderson argued that this organization "perpetuates structures of inequality in the existing social order" (2013a, p. 684) and that it "is not necessarily the answer to the structures of inequality that persist in this country's schools; rather, it works to perpetuate these structures through its adoption of harmful deficit models" (2013b, p. 28). Lefebvre and Thomas (2017), report on placement of Teach For America corps in charter schools, concluded that

> Even at its best, the close partnership between TFA and charters can create a mutually reinforcing educational subculture that is isolated from broader educational discourses and practices. At its worst, this partnership can result in the ill-advised 'propping up' of under-funded, mismanaged, ill-equipped charters that might otherwise struggle to find adequate staffing and, consequently, close. (p. 357)

The literature provides evidence that university-based TEPs are already pressed to compete with alternative fast-track teacher preparation programs such as Teach For America (Lahann & Reagan, 2011; Nygreen et al., 2015). Our findings suggest a worrisome development of the

integration of Teach For America within the university-based teacher education system. It might be that the cooperation with Teach For America by SOEs and TEPs signals a mentality of "if you can't beat them, join them." This is a situation in which SOEs and TEPs may be acknowledging that Teach For America is here to stay, and as a result, prefer not to compete with this organization but rather to collaborate with it and secure gains from this collaboration. While it might be argued that this kind of collaboration intends to upgrade Teach For America corps and improve their educational professional foundation, we argue that (a) such partnerships legitimize alternative teaching certification programs, (b) in the long run weaken university-based TEPs, and (c) intensify already identified damages to public education, as mentioned above. We recommend that Canadian teacher education leaders consider this concern in case similar alternative teaching certification programs emerge in their jurisdictions.

Economic Orientation

While other features, such as an outcome-based approach, might indirectly erode the meaning and goals of education, a goal of contributing to the economy clearly does not align well with the classic and humane goals of education such as epistemic goals that relate to rationality, autonomy, and truth, as well as moral and political goals (see Siegel, 2009, chapters 1-3; Portelli & Menashy, 2010). Rather, the goal of contributing to the economy directly and explicitly renders SOEs and TEPs institutions that work for the economy. This is especially worrisome when it is several SOEs and TEPs (all in the US) websites that announce on their loyalty to the economy through goals of "economic development" and attracting "new business and a highly qualified work force," as we described in the findings.

Commitment to contribute to the economy suggests the adoption of human capital theory (Schultz, 1989); that is, a strong and competitive economy requires and necessitates training children to be productive workers. This way of thinking renders K-12 students, in turn, as a type of human capital that needs to be developed (Brighouse, 2006). Several scholars critique this approach. For example, Apple (2006) criticizes the neoliberal position that treats students as human capital:

> Underpinning this [neoliberal] position is a vision of students as human capital. The world is intensely competitive economically, and students—as future workers—must be given the requisite skills and dispositions to compete efficiently and effectively. Furthermore, any money spent on schools that is not directly related to these economic goals is suspect. (p. 32)

As Hyslop-Margison and Sears (2006) observed "public education in the neo-liberal order, then, is simply one component of a larger economic system, and the focus of education policy and curriculum development is directed accordingly" (p. 13). Moreover, when SOEs and TEPs declare a goal of contributing to the economy, they take an active role in the service of the corporate state that protects markets. To the extent that this goal is adopted by individuals—for example, student teachers—SOEs and TEPs promote governmentality of neoliberalism, that is, internalization of and following forms of knowledge and power structures that underlie neoliberalism (Lambeir & Ramaekers, 2008; Peters, 2002; Sleeter, 2008). This leads to more efficient forms of social control, as knowledge enables individuals to govern themselves; individuals are regulated from "inside" (Peters, 2002).[10] Thus, SOEs and TEPs that see themselves as part of contributing to the economy become agents of the neoliberal agenda.

Outcome-Based Approach

Outcome-based goals or statements were found only on American SOEs and TEPs' websites. These goals and statements are problematic to the identity and work of the institutions since they are linked to the quality and outcome of learning without paying serious attention to the content of that learning. As a result, using terms such as "achievement," "excellence," and "success" (whether in SOEs, TEPs, or K-12 schools) weaken or replace a serious discussion on issues such as the merit of certain pieces of the curriculum, what it means to be a teacher, and goals of education. Giroux and McLaren (1989) noted on this terminology

> By separating equity from excellence, conservatives have managed to criticize radical and progressive reformers for linking academic achievement to the principles of social justice and equality while simultaneously redefining public schooling in relation to the imperatives of the economy and the marketplace. Consequently, when the Reagan administration trumpeted the term excellence as its clarion call for school reform, it usually meant that public schools should offer more rigorous science and math curricula. (p. xvii)

Thus, the language of "achievement" and "excellence" stresses a "job skills" curriculum.

Biesta (2010) also criticized the focus on "learners" and the "tendency to replace a language of education with a language that only talks about education in terms of learning," since "language of learning makes it particularly difficult to grapple with questions of purpose—and also with questions of content and relationships" (p. 5). Biesta explained that one of the reasons for the new language of learning is "the erosion of the welfare state and the subsequent rise of neoliberal policies in which individuals are positioned as responsible for their own (lifelong) learning" (p. 18). He points to two problematic aspects of the new language of learning that indicate how learning is different from education. First, learning (including life-long learning) is

> basically an *individualistic* concept. It refers to what people, as individuals, do—even if it is couched in such notions as collaborative or cooperative learning. This stands in stark contrast to the concept of 'education' that always implies a *relationship* (p. 18, emphasis in original).

Secondly, unlike the normative character of education, learning "is basically a process term. It denotes processes and activities but is open—if not empty—with regard to content and direction" (Biesta, 2010, p. 18). Thus, the outcome-based approach stresses the notion of learning (and learners) and blurs the social aspect in education as well as the normative aspect of education.

Furthermore, the combination of an outcome-based approach (a feature found only on American websites) with marketing, business terminology, and employability (especially, but not solely, the collaboration with Teach For America), brings us to argue that TEPs increasingly see schools and school districts as significant clients who "consume" their "products," namely, newly certified teachers. This means that prospective and current teacher candidates become, in a sense, raw material to be shaped and delivered to schools; therefore, teacher candidates, while in teacher education programs, at the same time as having the status of consumer, also become commodified as a product. This is, of course, an unconventional—if not radical—claim. But the literature on alternative teacher education certifications does provide some indication that it can happen. For example, Nygreen et al. (2015) argued that

> Boot camp teacher education programs supply high-poverty schools with ample numbers of young, inexperienced, low-paid, and compliant teachers. This is attractive for schools that are undergoing a neoliberal assault of standards and accountability based reforms. Under neoliberal education reform, districts and schools are increasingly reorganized to confirm to the business model: teachers are positioned as deliverers of curriculum who carry out orders from above. They are expected to follow pacing guides, deliver canned curriculum, raise test scores, and comply with mandates of all kinds regardless of whether or not these conform to their own professional judgment or sense of ethics … [the new teachers] are more likely to take on very long work hours and a heavier workload, and then leave the profession before their salaries become too costly or they start to collect pensions … Boot camp programs … are responding brilliantly to neoliberal imperatives—even if, or *especially* if, most of these teachers leave the profession within a few years. (p. 108)

Nygreen et al.'s analysis demonstrates several neoliberal features that are identified in this study, especially business terminology ("business model") and even more explicitly outcome-based approach ("standards," "deliverers of curriculum," "deliver canned curriculum, raise test scores"). We argue that although Nygreen et al. explicitly refer to a very different context—fast-track programs—their analysis is increasingly relevant to American TEPs: the deepening of neoliberal trends, policies, and practices in university-based TEPs leads to a situation in which the "feeding pipeline" attitude toward teacher candidates Nygreen et al. portray could become a serious concern across the board in American TEPs. Collaboration of TEPs with Teach For America—an element found as part of the employability feature—exacerbates the concern about a feeding pipeline. But even without this collaboration, the danger that teacher candidates are treated as a product to be supplied to schools and school districts becomes evident when we consider the outcome-based approach together with the three neoliberal features of marketing, business terminology, and employability. For instance, the promotion and competition aspects in marketing turn prospective teacher education students into a valued resource (or input) to be sought after and then processed, in a factory-model manner, by the business-like norms implied by business terminology. This notion of factory (or a production line) is supported by the element of securing a job in employability.[11]

Moreover, when the three features of marketing, business terminology, and employability are coupled with an outcome-based approach, the product—the certified teacher—also aligns with certain neoliberal requirements of efficiency and optimization. If this analysis is valid, that means that what we used to consider a problem of teaching workforce retention and burnout is actually regarded as an accepted (if not welcomed) phenomenon—although not as a systematically planned strategy—exploited by schools and school districts in order to address neoliberal pressures.

Canada-US Comparison

In our sample, the websites of SOEs and TEPs in Canadian public universities show part of the neoliberal-related features that were found in the American institutions. Out of five features, three appear both in American and Canadian institutions: marketing, business terminology, and employability. Two features appear only in the American websites: economic orientation and outcome-based approach. Nevertheless, we should remember that the features in this study were found on websites and not in the actual work of the institutions themselves. Additional research is needed in order to examine actual practices, norms, and tendencies in both Canadian and American institutions. For example, we believe that an important aspect in studying

neoliberal influence on TEPs is the coursework assignments required of teacher candidates and the way these assignments are evaluated and marked, including the feedback given by faculty. Research on the actual work in SOEs and TEPs might reveal other interpretations of neoliberal features or new features altogether, or, alternatively, a lesser demonstration of neoliberalism with fewer features.

It is important to note that the American institutions examined in this study share several critical characteristics with the Canadian ones: they are public universities, face similar crises (see, e.g., Collini, 2012; Coté & Allahar, 2007; Readings, 1996), and they operate in a capitalist economy. Granted, the Canadian and American institutions operate in different political and social climates; the literature shows how neoliberal policies and rationale play a role in Canada in different educational settings and jurisdictions (Basu, 2004; Davidson-Harden et al., 2009; Joshee, 2008). In light of this, there are good reasons to believe that TEPs both in Canada and the US are susceptible to neoliberal influence.

Conclusion

This study points to the (intentional or unintentional) active role university-based SOEs and TEPs play in promoting—and thus supporting—neoliberal features. While this active role does not necessarily render these institutions willful culprits in promoting or encouraging a neoliberal worldview, it does suggest that they are part of sustaining neoliberal influence in teacher education. And since neoliberalism undermines democratic principles (Apple, 2011; Baltodano, 2012; Sleeter, 2008), the stakes of not resisting neoliberalism in SOEs and TEPs—and moreover, providing it a fertile ground to grow in—are high. We can say that if SOEs and TEPs do not strongly oppose neoliberalism they are at risk of betraying their democratic mission, whatever democratic and social values are declared on their websites. We urge both Canadian and American teacher educators to take the findings as a warning of how deep and wide-reaching neoliberal trends and practices might spread.

One might suggest, in response to the findings of this study, that university-based SOEs and TEPs have no choice; neoliberal pressures and economic struggles to survive in times of a large and increasing supply of teacher education programs force SOEs and TEPs to play the marketing game, design programs that fit prospective students' availability, adopt business norms, and create partnerships with private organizations. However, although it can be argued that financial gain may be made by particular neoliberal features (especially marketing), education as a whole suffers immensely. While we acknowledge there are no simple solutions to the financial difficulties SOEs and TEPs face, we strongly urge leaders of these institutions not to succumb to the temptations of neoliberal tendencies. As institutions that nurture future educators and teachers, and in light of the neoliberal attack on education in general and on SOEs and TEPs in particular, we believe that SOEs and TEPs must take a strong stand in the fight against neoliberalism, both with regard to their own programs and consequently what happens in K-12 schools. We can even say that in light of what is expected from SOEs and TEPs by neoliberal policies—that is, to serve a neoliberal agenda—these institutions have a subversive role in the fight against neoliberalism. While their websites are currently part of the neoliberal problem, ironically, they can also be part of the solution by taking a stand against neoliberal features.

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Notes

1 Although most of the literature focuses on the influence of neoliberalism on education in the United States, we do not attempt here to discern in the literature differences between different countries, including between Canada and the US. The review in this section aims at providing key components of the critique of the influence of neoliberalism on education, as a general support for the method and analysis that follows.
2 In addition, if it is assumed that in comparison to other higher education institutions, public universities are less in need of using neoliberal features, so if neoliberal characteristics are found in public universities' SOEs and TEPs websites, it is reasonable to conclude that neoliberalism is demonstrated in SOEs and TEPs of academic institutions in general. Although there might be reasons to justify the assumption above, we do not rely here on such reasoning, since we are not arguing for generalization.
3 We are aware of the critique of grounded theory approach (e.g. Dey, 1999; Haig, 1995; Thomas & James, 2006), and following Layder (1993) we made sure that the analysis is more guided by the data than limited by it.
4 The competition that university-based SOEs and TEPs face is, of course, part of the broader competitive atmosphere in higher education, in which institutions use public representations in order to promote themselves. Drori (2013) draws parallels between universities and corporations in this regard: "A sense of fierce, global competition over resources, students, and faculty is driving universities worldwide to launch strategic exercises and branding initiatives" (p. 3).
5 List of SOEs and TEPs analyzed webpages is compiled together and appears in Appendix A.
6 We are explicitly referring here to the use of the term 'client' solely on webpages that are supposed to be limited to the educational context (SOE and TEPs), and not on webpages that represent a broader context (e.g., webpages of Colleges that include both education departments and other departments such as health and recreation). In addition, it is worth noticing that we did not find cases where teacher candidates themselves are referred as 'clients'; perhaps TEPs do not wish to go that far as to their relationships with their students, at least not on their websites.
7 Of course, the institutions do not seek only students' money, as they also pursue other goods that accompany promising students, such as prestige, creating vibrant communities, and grants. However, these goods can also serve as a means to attract future students who bring money with them.
8 We are aware that the term "client" is now also used in other non-commercial sectors, such as social work. Still, referring to those who gain from the work of SOEs and TEPs (and their graduates) as "clients" indicates, for us, adopting business way of thinking that originates from neoliberal influence on education.
9 Compare this example to the use of the notion of innovation as part of rejecting or challenging the neoliberal agenda, as it is done by the Faculty of Education at the University of Regina, which stated on its

Mission Statement webpage that "The Faculty of Education aspires to be a leader in innovative and anti-oppressive undergraduate and graduate research, scholarship, teaching, learning and service." ("Faculty of Education: Mission Statement," 2018).

10 This form of individual control is especially intensified by employability and notions such as "innovators," "innovator teachers," or "educational innovators" that are part of the business terminology. The emphasis on teaching certification that provides a job—and moreover, a career—together with the emphasis on and encouragement of being innovative and individual self-regulation in the form of governmentality, suggests that SOEs and TOPs aim at educators—and probably especially teachers—that are "entrepreneurial actors" (see Brown, 2009; Davies & Bansel, 2007; Peters, 2002). Applied to the context of education, prospective teachers are "responsibilized individuals" who see TEPs as a personal investment toward realizing freedom and self-management, but this is mostly an illusion since in TEPs and later in schools, they actually follow policies that limit their agency. Thus, SOEs and TEPs send in their websites mix messages of both empowering and controlling future teachers, or, perhaps more accurately, controlling in guise of empowering.

11 Indeed, in this case the product has an interest in being shipped.

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Appendix A: Websites of Analyzed Institutions

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Appendix B: Enrollment Websites

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