

# A #selfie meritocracy in educator professional development: Generating complacency through self-reflection

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*Abstract: At the cornerstone of professional development for K-12 teachers, there is an emphasis on practices of self-reflection and reflective practice that turn the professional educator gaze inward towards the self. Self-reflection has emerged through the teacher-as-researcher and the teacher-as-reflective-practitioner identities in professional development. However, this looking inward avoids looking at the larger social structures and the ways in which knowledge of the self is built on social constructions of knowledge and a privileged identity that marginalizes and oppresses Others. I argue that this distraction on/from the self creates a meritocracy in professional development. A focus on the inward self allows perpetuations of systemic racism to remain entrenched and unchallenged in schooling, further pushing anti-racist work to the margins and the ideal of the inclusive classroom unobtainable. This paper explores how teacher professional development, with a focus on self-reflective practices, ignores social structures and systemic forms of racism in schooling.*

*Keywords: Professional Development, Education, Systemic Racism, Power and Privilege*

## Introduction

Educator professional development supports teachers in maintaining current with research and evidence-based strategies and pedagogies to engage with learners in K-12 schools. However, restrictions, such as time, force required components of professional development to align with district and provincial education agendas. This lack of time leaves educators with passions and interests outside of mandated professional learning to explore topics and subjects on their own time and often finances. However, if a school/district does not require educators to engage with learning that challenges the status quo ways of schooling; does this lack of necessity subtly direct where teachers seek their learning? Where might teacher's look for professional learning that seeks to disrupt the everyday practices of schooling that are layered with systemic forms of racism?

This paper will explore practicing educators' professional development as a site of potential for schools to become more equitable and just with a shift from reflection towards critical reflexivity. As Dei (2014) points out, there must be a challenge to the complacency of educators that work in a system that will not be fully inclusive until racism is addressed and Kubota (2014) states that self-reflexivity has the potential to disrupt systemic racism in schools. I will argue that a move towards a more reflexive approach to professional development will allow educators to have a truly inclusive practice, as responding to systemic racism needs to begin with an *awareness* of systemic racism in schooling through a different approach to teacher professional development.

## Self-Reflection

The practice of self-reflection has become a cornerstone of teacher professional development within school boards. Being a reflective practitioner is a valued skill in K-12 education with aims of improving practice and the performance of teaching to improve outcomes for students (Butler, 1996; Day, 1993; Kelchtermans, 2009; Schrum, et al., 2015). Reflective practice requires educators to consider their practice and revise as needed to address issues in the classroom or their pedagogy (Suter, 2012). Educators need to be in a dynamic state of reflection that embodies their everyday practice and interactions with students, curriculum, and community. Professional development models that frame reflective practices have a variety of components but each tends to focus on instrumental tools, performance, content knowledge, innovative/emerging pedagogies (such as Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math [STEM], and technology), and current mandates from school boards and ministries of education (Butler, 1996; Day, 1993; Schrum, et al., 2015). These models and reflective practice drive educators to look inward at how they can effectively deliver content knowledge through innovative pedagogies to reach the diversity of students in their classrooms and inspire learning.

This inward gaze directs the teacher to become even more deeply entrenched and isolated within an individualistic professional culture in schooling that exists in silos. So, then, does this self-reflection lead to societal change (Day, 1993) concerning an anti-racist practice? When teachers look inwards, at the self within the context of their classroom, the focus remains on improving outcomes for students through instrumental concerns (Kelchtermans, 2009; Schrum, et al., 2015), performance (Butler, 1996), and learning new pedagogies (Schrum, et al., 2015). There is little room for community building, dialogue between colleagues, or context from outside mandated professional

development (Apple, 1998; Butler, 1996) and reflection then becomes “another procedure, a method or coping strategy that confirms and continues the status quo” (Kelchtermans, 2009, p. 269). Time spent in self-reflection involves an individualistic inward gaze rather than unpacking the cultural and societal influences that permeate schooling (Cunliffe, 2016; Day, 1993) or considers educators’ own subject-positionality and how this construction informs how they relate to their students (Raby, 2004; Warren, 2011). The pressures of standardized curriculum, high-stakes assessments, the need to meet the learning needs of a diverse group of students all while in a public institution, demand teachers to seek professional development that not only aligns with this public gaze on performance and outcomes, but also for strategies to provide their students with a sense of hope in troubling times through meeting the outcomes of schooling (hooks, 2003; Giroux, 2015a).

### **Whose Professional Development?**

As an educator, I have had limited exposure or opportunities for professional development that challenges a dominant discourse privileging some forms of knowledge while leaving certain forms of knowledge silenced. Forms of knowledge often valued in educator professional development align with divisional agendas to promote certain pedagogies and improve outcomes for students. My other role as an instructor in a pre-service teacher education program differs; we unpack some controversial topics that align with educators building an anti-racist and reflexive practice including how socialization shapes our perceptions of marginalized *Others* – marginalized people, most often visible minorities such as Indigenous Peoples, People of Colour, and people with disabilities are often othered as they do not fit in with a dominant identity (Schick & St. Denis, 2005). Schick and St. Denis (2005) argue that there ought to be an understanding of racism and White supremacist ways of thinking (hooks, 2003) to begin to prepare teachers to disrupt racial inequities in classrooms. As pre-service teachers work their way through a process of unlearning and learning their positionalities, they begin to gain insights into the ways in which the school system is often a source of the inequalities schooling ought to redress, however, practicing educators have little time or opportunity to engage with reflexivity.

The disparity of high school completion rates between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students is one example that demonstrates that educational systems favour those that identify with the dominant narrative. According to Statistics Canada (2015), nearly one-third of Indigenous people between the ages of 24 and 54 have not received a high school diploma compared to just over 10% of non-Indigenous people. Forms of oppression through the education system have been linked to streaming in high school, segregated special programs (languages, sports), segregated special education programs (mental health rooms, exclusion rooms), accessing technology for learning, discipline practices, gender imbalances in teacher staffing and administration all have potential to operate from a racist paradigm if those in the system are not aware of how racism manifests within our schools (Dei & James, 2002; Sinnithamby & Peters, 2010). Discrimination based on race is not the sole example. I recall a conversation a practicing teacher was having with their administrator in a high school, asking for a disabled student to be removed from their physical education class as the student risked disrupting the athletic status of the class. The administrator supported the removal of the student from the class. This form of ableism not only violated the students’ right to participate in and be provided an education, but reinforced a racist ideology held by the teacher and their ability to interject and control another’s pathway. This is but one of many daily examples of exclusion practiced in schooling, however without a reflexive understanding and inward gaze at our practice, educators have limited recognition.

The milieu of schooling and an inward professional development gaze allows for neo-liberal and neo-conservative agendas to thrive (Apple, 1998; Kubota, 2015). Students are commodified and sorted based on their economic potential and professional development trends follow this economic output’s path (Dei, 2014). One trend that can be seen following these ideologies is technology. When computers were first introduced as a tool for student learning and achievement, as well as an emerging industry needing workers, schools became inundated with courses on computer programming and corporations like Apple and Microsoft invested billions of dollars into education through the use of learning management systems (Boorstin, 2017). The current ‘new’ trend in technology has educators focused on teaching students, as early as grade 2, how to code and outcomes can be tracked with the website <https://hourofcode.com/ca> which supports the “Hour for Code” movement in schools, serving 762 074 057 students worldwide and another site, <https://code.org/>, boasts 41 million projects in schools. Therefore, professional development for practicing teachers often follows these same ideological agendas to align with these trends, forcing teachers to seek out opportunities to keep up and for some, highlight their practice such as posting on the above websites as a way to gain status in their respective schools reinforcing a hierarchy among teachers and an individualistic culture. Indeed, this individualism values neo-liberal and neo-conservative competition ideologies and

does little to promote a relational approach to teaching and learning. Individualism also leaves little space for educators to see the disparities created through these pedagogic devices that meet global economic demands and increase school achievement rankings for some, but not all students (Raby, 2004).

### **Whose Agenda?**

Funding for professional development that steps outside of the inward gaze to improve outcomes and the economic capital of students also does not have a place in public institutions as time and funds are limited (Apple, 1998). A push within professional development to reinforce higher standards of learning claims ‘grit’, ‘perseverance’, and ‘resilience’ need to be developed in students through ‘rigorous’ curricular and pedagogic expectations. Professional development outside the prescribed divisional mandates tends to promote a binaristic way of thinking between the relational role of the teacher with their students (Kelchtermans, 2009) and a need for students to ‘pull up their socks’ because the teacher is doing innovative work. This binary is also manifested through the marriage of psychology and education, and while this article is not taking this relationship up, what psychology has brought into the marriage is a deficit way of regarding students that cannot meet outcomes despite the role of inwardly focused professional development with teachers. Prescriptive professional development keeps the focus on the individual within the scope of their practice (Butler, 1996; Kohli, Picower, Martinez, & Ortiz, 2015), develops a fear of the Other, consumerizes and commodifies students, and erodes educator autonomy thus preventing educators from seeing their students as objects of oppression and racism (Apple, 1998; Dei, 2014; Freire, 2000).

The White, patriarchal structure of schooling embodies the space, the people, and the implicit/hidden values of schooling (Dei, 2014; Kubota, 2015). Power and privilege are lived through the curriculum as the victorious conquests of colonizers explicitly teach the physical structures that demand obedience and compliance (Montessori, 2013), the privileging of violent sports (often dominated by males) (Connell, 2005), as well as through the Whiteness of the faculty (hooks, 2003; Sinnithamby & Peters, 2010). The adult bodies that reside in schooling are predominately White with a majority of White males occupying administrative positions of power which reinforces a dominator culture (Ahmed, 2012; hooks, 2003; Sinnithamby & Peters, 2010). Professional development within a neo-liberal and neo-conservative ideology reflect the individuals’ drive to improve and be ‘the best’ within the scope of their practice no matter what the environment they find themselves in (Connell, 2005; Giroux, 2015b; Kubota, 2015). What, then, counts as knowledge for educators to learn through their professional development (Apple, 1998; Day, 1993; Kelchtermans, 2009; Kohli et al., 2015)? Prescriptive professional development with an inward gaze on practice results in limited autonomy and passivity among teachers (Butler, 1996; Kelchtermans, 2009; Freire, 2000; Kubota, 2014) and denies an outward glance towards the influence of social structures (Bourdieu, 1998), “white-supremacist thinking” (hooks, 2003, p. 25), and critical reflexivity on the self that interrogates subject-positionality (Bourdieu, 1998; Kubota, 2014; Lynch, Swartz, & Isaacs, 2017; Warren, 2011).

### **Racism and Schooling**

Schooling is “a stage shaped by the exaltation of particular peoples and ideas, and the historical and ongoing erasure of others” (Dei, 2014, p. 242). The pressure to perform and meet outcomes for students overrides any room for a critical conscious awareness of systemic racism. Within our current educational context, racism and forms of oppression are not only sustained but are reproduced (Bourdieu, 1984; Kubota, 2002). All too often racism is considered an individualistic experience in our classrooms and schools, rather than a systemic process that impacts not only students but teaching and learning (Kubota, 2002). When racial incidents are regarded as mere glitches and the rhetoric that follows is typically along the lines of #notmyAlberta, #notmypresident, #notmy (...) as people speak out against individual incidents of hate and racism. However, what remains missing from the dialogue are the ways in which historical and current forms of oppression are silenced, ignored, and lived out within schooling. Racism does not solely consist of singular acts. Following grounding in critical Whiteness studies, critical race theory, and anti-racist feminist theories, racism is not individualistic, rather, racism includes subtle forms of systemic inequities that privilege certain racialized groups over others (White over Indigenous; Dei, 2014; Kubota, 2002; Sinnithamby & Peters, 2010).

The shifting diversity of learners in schooling is not reflected in policies that govern school spaces, curriculum, or staff (Dei & James, 2002; Kubota, 2014). Racism is often regarded as too controversial to dialogue about, therefore, the ‘powers that be’ predict little interest in professional development that interrogates racism and the ways in which many within schooling benefit from racist ideologies (Kubota, 2014). Counter-narratives, arguing against a lack of

attention to racism, often are presented through the diversity of students 'getting along'. However, when the educators in these spaces remain 80% White and female, there is little opportunity for ways to confront White patriarchal ways of engaging in professional development (Kubota, 2014). Instead, the tokenization of multi-cultural education and a move to Indigenize schooling appears to redress the needs of diverse students (Sinnithamby & Peters, 2010). However, these movements do not decolonize or understand the power relations that impact systemic racism (Dei, 2014; Kubota, 2002).

Race is not a myth, and racism exists in our current education system (Dei, 2014; Kubota, 2015), and as long as professional discussions on racism are neglected and silenced, there can be no real claims to inclusion in our classrooms (Kubota, 2015). Today's educators need to be offered opportunities aimed at not only challenging their positionality but their complacency within a system that consequences and punishes certain bodies and not others (Dei, 2014). The struggle for inclusive classrooms will remain until educators have the opportunity to engage in critical self-reflexivity to reduce inequities and forms of oppression (Dei, 2014; Kubota, 2014; Lynch et al., 2017).

## **Framing Professional Development**

The social structures and stratifications of society are mirrored in schools (Bourdieu, 1998), however, schooling tends to reflect the status quo as a means to benefit and privilege certain ideologies (Ahmed, 2012; Dei 2014). Despite this "miseducation" (Dei, 2014, p. 240), there is much literature focused on those that are marginalized and othered in schools with a means for educators to identify risk factors for youth (Riele, 2006). Professional development, however, largely does not respond to the identity of those who are othered or the social structures/constructs that other. I recently presented sessions at a local city teachers' convention on my research on masculinities studies, a project with a local school board on attendance, as well as a session on implicit bias. The range in interest was vast; nearly thirty teachers attended my session on the boy crisis, while ten attended the attendance presentation, and only two attended the presentation on implicit bias. Other sessions at the convention included professional development on coding, literacy salons, formative assessments, Kindergarten math games, creativity, maker spaces, and flipped classrooms. There were no sessions, other than mine, that asked teachers to look at the broader social patterns that inform and shape our pedagogy, curriculum, and ultimately students.

Looking to school board websites one Alberta School division (<https://www.rockyview.ab.ca/>) categorizes teaching into compartments based on curriculum, blended learning, literacy and numeracy, inquiry and project-based learning, and designing learning for each learner. When designing for learners, this school division incorporates principles from Universal Design for Learning (<http://udlguidelines.cast.org/>) which focuses on activating parts of the brain in students to increase engagement and ultimately provide means for an assessment of learning. There is also a section on the Rocky View Schools website dubbed "making learning visible" which takes people to a blog where certain projects are highlighted as exemplary practice: a real-life example of competition-based pedagogy between teachers similar to the coding websites that promote projects in technology. Other larger school divisions, including Edmonton Public Schools and the Calgary Board of Education have different teaching philosophies for segregated schools of 'choice' including gendered schools, faith-based schools, language-based schools, and 'academic' schools. Each teaching philosophy is supported by professional development to continue to support the individual needs of 'choice' schools which aligns with a voucher system, encouraging school principals to seek out talented students and staff to improve enrollment and market the school (Apple, 2006). The professional development focus in these examples reinforces a neo-liberal and neo-conservative agenda for competition and individualism with no mention of how to begin an anti-racist practice.

The marketization and commodification rises a level from the student to the school itself and support the neo-liberal and neo-conservative agendas leaving no or little room for professional development that looks reflexively at these patterns of systemic racism. To facilitate a shift from reflection and professional development that supports economic trends, I reached out to the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) and a provincial learning consortia to develop and deliver professional development that aligns with an anti-racist framework. I was met with resistance, as this area is not recognized as fruitful or fitting in with their idea of inclusion in education. In addition, a recent and not exhaustive, internet search of the top books for teacher professional development returned inwardly gazed titles such as:

- *Teaching smarter: An unconventional guide to boosting student success*, by Patrick Kelly
- *Most likely to succeed: Preparing our kids for the innovation era*, by Tony Wagner and Ted Dintersmith
- *Teach like a champion 2.0: 62 techniques that put students on the path to college*, by Doug Lemov
- *Teach like a pirate: Increase student engagement, boost your creativity and transform your life as an educator*, by Dave Burgess
- *Teaching with intention: Defining beliefs, aligning practice, taking action, K-5*, by Debbie Miller
- *Whole novels for the whole class: A student-centred approach*, by Ariel Sacks
- *The end of molasses classes: Getting our kids unstuck—101 extraordinary solutions for parents and teachers*, by Ron Clark

The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (2018) offers educators multiple resources for professional development including books, conferences, and online professional development. Some categories for online professional development courses include:

- The Art and Science of Teaching
- Assessment
- Classroom Management
- Common Core
- Curriculum Development
- Learning Theories
- STEM Education
- Technology

A growing surge in professional development responding to diversity among students is evidenced in resources that speak to tokenization of diversity, multicultural education, and culturally responsive teaching (Lynch et al., 2017; Raby, 2004; Sinnithamby & Peters, 2010), however, the majority of the titles and categories in a generic search reinforce self-reflection on practice, instrumentation, pedagogies, and content. As well, from my experience in a K-12 system, there are limited offerings and/or uptake of professional development that centres on socio-cultural contexts even with recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015) that focus on reducing the impacts of colonization in education. Again, as Schick and St. Denis (2005) argue, educators are not interested in engaging in professional development that takes a hard look at socialization, power, privilege, and racism. Similar to Schick and Denis, I have also seen that most pre-service teachers believe that education offers opportunities to all students, yet, these pre-service teachers have differing levels of colour blindness and hold individual triumphs of marginalized people as proof that hard work and perseverance demonstrate that racism is not a systemic issue (Dei, 2014). After taking courses that unpack these forms of racism and White supremacy, a majority of pre-service teachers have experienced an arch in their learnings and begin to question their role in an oppressive system. However, current practicing teachers have limited opportunity or time to engage with this reflexive learning. I would argue that a classroom teacher does not have the time to deeply search for professional development that dives into an anti-racist practice, if it is even available, as this professional development is not seen of value for school districts. As well, schooling is supposed to be a means to promote inclusion and equity. As such, teachers may not feel a need in their professional practice to critically examine systemic racism and look beyond their selves in an 'inclusive' system (Ahmed, 2012; Dei, 2014; Kubota, 2014).

## #Selfie Meritocracy

Selfies are a style of photography in which the photographer is included in the photo, and the camera is held by the photographer when the photo is taken often taken using a mirror, especially mirrors in unphotogenic bathrooms. Bathrooms are a popular location for selfies since so many photographers believe that the worse everything around them looks in the photo, the better they will appear by comparison. Selfies have become a means to invite an audience into the photographer's experience (Zhao & Zappavigna, 2018) through a participatory form of sharing those experiences (Kasra, 2017). As tourists visiting foreign lands, memories with celebrities, or self-portraits reflectively taken in bathroom mirrors, the selfie epitomizes the self and what matters is the one reflected in the image. Recent scholarship on the selfie has identified typologies of the messages as well as examinations of whose perspective is being shared (Kasra, 2017; Zhao & Zappavigna, 2018). Whether literal, symbolic, linguistic (Kasra, 2017) or ideational, interpersonal, textual (Zhao & Zappavigna, 2018), each typology begins with the photographer's idea of

what matters. Thus, underlying the selfie are permeations of narcissism and egocentrism (Giroux, 2015b; Zhao, & Zappavigna, 2018) regardless of whether the gaze is on the photographer or what the photographer is gazing on, as the main theme is always on the self (Zhao & Zappavigna, 2018).

The danger of the selfie in neo-liberal and neo-conservative culture lies with the negation of social responsibility (Giroux, 2015b). The selfie rewards and values individualism and devalues community (Giroux, 2015b). The participatory nature of the selfie within a culture that values and rewards the individual encourages an imaginary relationship with an audience (Giroux, 2015b; Kasra, 2017; Zhao & Zappavigna, 2018). The relationship between the audience and the photographer does not promote a dialogical sense of community but one that narrows the focus to the self—the photographer (Giroux, 2015b). As a pedagogic act, the selfie becomes a tool for educators to demonstrate the ways in which their acts of self-reflection on their practice generate a narrative that shows “false notions of community” (Giroux, 2015b, p. 158) and produce a competition between teachers as they reflect on their practice.

Framing a #selfie meritocracy does not intend to lay blame on educators, but to generate an awareness of the ways self-reflection as professional development has limited educator capacity to engage with learning that moves beyond self-reflection on procedural methods and curricular content towards one that looks at the past, values, and beliefs (Warren, 2011). Self-reflection as professional development resembles the selfie in that the focus remains on the pedagogic acts that propel students towards an economic end and does not respond or acknowledge the layers of racism that linger from colonization (Kubota, 2002; Kubota, 2014; Dei 2014). The person in the selfie identifies themselves as the feature in the photograph or what they value similar to professional development that focuses on improving outcomes for students in an oppressive system that commodifies students. Students become the unphotogenic background to the #selfie meritocracy.

When the gaze is inwards within an institution that is an object itself of a public gaze on the ability to perform and meet outcomes through students, the #selfie meritocracy needs to extend the gaze beyond a binary relationship with students’ progress. This higher level of reflection needs to experience a “rupture” (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 37) with prescriptive forms of educator professional development that currently follow antidialogical methods that force educators to be passive objects in their learning (Freire, 2000). The barriers educators face with respect to accessing reflexive learning often reside with lack of time in the busyness of the system that is commodified, administrators and divisional leaders that do not see any value in unpacking racism in a system that most adults in the system benefit from. Educators do not have the luxury of time or the opportunity to become active learners in their professional development. Education has the potential to disrupt systemic racism, however, only through a dialogical approach that raises awareness of a critical consciousness of racism (Dei, 2014).

## **Reflexive Thinking**

Moving from reflection to reflexivity allows for educators to not only reflect on their practice but what/who informs their practice, thus becoming active and dialogical in their learning (Cunliffe, 2004, 2016; Freire, 2017; May & Perry, 2017; Warren, 2011). Becoming a critically reflexive practitioner challenges educators to question social constructions and their subject-positionality, expose contradictions and policies, and the assumptions that lie beneath all (Cunliffe, 2004, 2016; Kubota, 2014; Warren, 2011). For example, teachers could begin to question why there are gendered responses to mental health concerns. For a few years, I worked in a divisional high school mental health program of which the majority of students enrolled were all female. It was very rare to have a male student in this program. As my research area is focused on boys, I had a conversation with the psychologist attached to the program and we talked about why there were no boys in the space. The issue was not that boys do not have mental health concerns but the response to boys’ manifestations of mental health often resulted in their being suspended or expelled from school, denying them the services they needed. The shift that needed to occur was for the majority of the White, male, high school principals in this school division to regard boys as needing mental health support. Instead, in my experience, these boys are told they need to man-up and get a job resulting in boys being placed in the discipline cycle rather than receiving supports. This shift will not happen without reflexive professional development that critically examines the socio-cultural patterns of discipline in schools.

Social constructions of knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, values, and practices are informed by everyday relational interactions with others, media, and histories; educators need a dialogical community to engage with unpacking the impact(s) on practice (Cunliffe, 2004; Raby, 2017; Warren, 2011). Critical reflexivity needs to be dialogical with others to reveal what may be hidden by an inward gaze and/or silenced by dominator culture (Butler, 1996; Cunliffe,

2014; Dei, 2014; hooks, 2003; Kubota, 2014; Warren, 2011). Educators need to be more critically reflexive with the encounters in their classrooms, and how and why they came to be in this present moment (Kubota, 2014; Raby, 2017; Warren, 2011). As members of an institution that hold positions of power, educators have a moral and ethical obligation to interrogate and unpack their roles, and the role of professional development within these systems of domination and systemic racism (Ahmed, 2012; Bourdieu, 1998; hooks, 2003; Kubota, 2014). Within a #selfie meritocracy, there is little space for dialogical action and community building (Butler, 1996; Giroux, 2015b; Dei, 2014; Kelchtermans, 2009; Zhao & Zappavigna, 2018). A focus on professional development with a critically reflexive lens would examine why there is a desire to protect the girls with mental health concerns and remove the boys with mental health concerns or why there is no room for ableism in a physical education program that seeks to promote wellness. Also, why is there an opportunity gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students that remains dangerously unchanged despite many efforts on professional development towards reconciliation? A critically reflexive educator would, however, have an obligation to interrogate these by looking at power relationships that thrive in the milieu of schooling (Dei & James, 2002; Kubota, 2002). The #selfie meritocracy's focus remains on perceptions of self as an educator and what surrounds them, not the underlying assumptions that brought them there. This inward gaze allows for systemic racism to flourish, unchallenged in educational institutions and professional development.

### **Final Thoughts**

The structural change needed to address systemic racism in educational institutions will not come about through professional development focused on the earlier mentioned categories of learning nor will it come about under a #selfie meritocracy. Having educators engage with anti-racist and reflexive practices through a shift in professional development is needed to dismantle racism (Dei, 2014; Schick & St. Denis, 2005). Neo-liberal and neo-conservative ideologies present a narrow view of racism that focuses on individual acts rather than institutional and systemic racism in institutions (Ahmed, 2012; Apple, 1998; Dei, 2002, 2014; Kubota, 2015; Raby, 2004). A response to this has been through the ideologies of assimilation and accommodation of race-based differences as well as the tokenization of multi-cultural education which does not politicize race or racism (Lynch et al., 2017; Raby, 2004; Schick & St. Denis, 2005; Sinnithamby & Peters, 2010).

A turn towards reflexivity and an anti-racist pedagogy is needed to disrupt current practices in professional development and teacher practice (Bourdieu, 1998; Kubota, 2014; Raby, 2017). This involves learning opportunities for educators that name and acknowledge racism, examine systemic racism, unpack intersectionality and inequities, challenge complicity, and look at the ways in which systemic barriers in education can be dismantled (Ahmed, 2012; Dei, 2014; hooks, 2003; Kubota, 2014; Lynch et al., 2017; Raby, 2017; Schick & St. Denis, 2005). The #selfie meritocracy does not have space for this work as the inward gaze focus does not include a critical interrogation on privilege, take a political stand, or consider the role of the school in racism (Ahmed, 2012; Dei, 2014; Dei & James, 2002; Giroux, 2015b; Kubota, 2014, 2015; Raby, 2017; Warren, 2011).

For educators to engage with reflexivity and anti-racist pedagogy, they need to begin with a critically reflexive stance that examines everyday experiences that socially construct knowledge as well as what and whose voices have been silenced (Cunliffe, 2016; Kubota, 2014; Raby, 2017; Warren, 2011). This action is inherently dialogical so that educators can critically engage with each other to better understand their privilege and blind spots to the outcomes of their privilege. However, current prescribed and self-reflective professional development relies on individualistic and antidialogical learning focused on classroom practice, not the social structures or systemic racism infiltrating that space. Teachers occupy positions of power; do they want a dismantling of a system that calls their power, privilege into question (Dei, 2014; Kubota, 2015; Lynch et al., 2017)? However, there is a moral and ethical obligation to do so in order for schooling to truly be a place of inclusion and equity.

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