

Propaganda or reportage? The New York Times and education reform

December 12, 2009

The New York Times provides a steady diet of glowing PR about the neoliberal policies implemented throughout the world to defund, privatize, and fragment public control of education. Two key projects are charter schools (designed to dismantle public school systems and replace them with individual schools or privately-owned and controlled networks) and “fast track” programs to eliminate traditional teacher education (deskilling teaching and allowing standardized tests to dictate what is taught.) Each country tweaks the neoliberal policies, but the project has been implemented in every country in the world (except for Finland and North Vietnam, I’m told by one researcher). Here in the US, “fast track” teacher certification is exemplified by Teach for America (TFA). Here’s how the NYT “covers” TFA:

<http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/t/teac...> As for charter schools, here’s the NYT’s “reportage”:

http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/subjects/c/charter_s... The NYT's coverage of education accepts, uncritically, the premise that these programs are grand because they allow richer, better educated people (like hedge fund managers) to help poor folks improve themselves. A short but powerful piece by Lars Dahlström, a Scandinavian educational researcher and activist who has worked in Namibia for many years, explains the “newspeak” of using the rhetoric of eliminating poverty to implement more of the same educational and economic policies that impoverish millions throughout the world. <http://www.pedag.umu.se/forskning/projekt/globalouthnetwork/bulletin/Th...> Why don't we see this critique in the New York Times? Ever? This is something to consider amidst the hand-wringing about the decline of the daily newspaper. But that's another blog.