

## Book Review

Decolonizing Educational Knowledge.  
International Perspectives and Contestations.

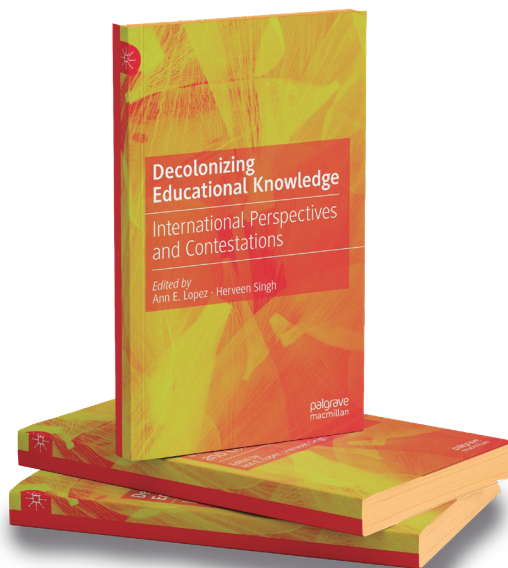
**Ann E. López and Herveen Singh (Eds.).**

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**D***ecolonizing Educational Knowledge. International Perspectives and Contestations*, edited by Ann E. López and Herveen Singh (2024), is an ambitious anthology that brings together voices from five continents to interrogate and reimagine educational systems through explicitly decolonial lenses. The editors frame the volume around three interwoven strands: methodological and epistemological contestations, regional case studies of decolonial practice, and critical reflections on leadership, curriculum, and identity.

From the outset, López and Singh insist that education remains a contested terrain where colonial legacies persist—even within institutions that profess equity. They argue persuasively in their foreword that decolonial efforts cannot be reduced to swapping one knowledge canon for another; rather, such efforts demand a fundamental transformation in how knowledge itself is defined and produced. By situating the work of Black and Indigenous scholars alongside critical interventions that expose the inseparability of ‘scientific’ scholarship from histories of dispossession and exploitation, the editors set a tone of urgent reckoning. This approach resonates with Battiste’s *Decolonizing Education: Nourishing the Learning Spirit* (2013), which documents the devastating impact of Eurocentric education on Indigenous knowledge and asserts that the preservation and revitalization of such knowledge is not only a pedagogical imperative but a fundamental right.

Early chapters in the volume enact what might be called ‘methodological unsettling’. The second chapter entitled *Decolonial Research Methods* was written as a *plática* (dialogue) between Khalid H. Arar, Ira Bogotch, Yvonne M. De La Rosa, Carlton J. Fong, Miguel Guajardo, and Denise Mifsud. In this chapter, Miguel Guajardo and Yvonne De La Rosa, in their section entitled *Our Own Methods: With or Without Cut-Ups*, employ a collaborative, dialogic mode of composition—akin to William Burroughs’s literary cut-up technique—to rupture chronological narrative and emphasize relationality. By deliberately fracturing linear academic prose, they foreground community, place, and ancestral memory as valid sites of knowledge production, thereby questioning conventional authorship parameters.

Similarly, the section *Presenting as Decolonial Research: A Warrior Passed to the Spiritual World in Our Community*, which honors Victoria ‘Vickie’ Betancourt De La Rosa, privileges collective storytelling and autoethnographic reflection. Here, the authors insist that research conducted in Indigenous contexts must be accountable to community obligations rather than to detached notions of ‘objectivity’. A recurring thread in these initial essays is the collapse of the researcher-researched binary; positionality is integral to epistemic authority. Scholars such as Khalid H. Arar and Carlton J. Fong draw on QuantCrit—quantitative critical race theory—to demonstrate how statistical methods can be recast to expose racialized power structures instead of obscuring them.

The commitment of these authors to methodological unsettling and the critique of Western epistemologies could be further enriched by engaging with Latin American decolonial theorists. Mignolo's notion of 'epistemic disobedience' and his analysis of the 'coloniality of knowledge' offer a powerful framework for understanding decolonial research as both a refusal of imposed Eurocentric paradigms and an affirmation of alternative ways of knowing. As Mignolo argues in *The Darker Side of Western Modernity* (2011), decoloniality in Latin America is not simply about the recovery of Indigenous knowledge but about resisting the universalizing claims of Western epistemology and asserting the legitimacy of pluriversal, situated knowledges.

Chapter 3, *Reimagining Education Futurities Through Decolonial Lens*, calls for a transformative reimagining of education in the face of ongoing colonial legacies, racism, and global unrest. López argues that education must move beyond Eurocentric and settler-colonial frameworks to enable alternative, relational ways of learning and being. She urges educators to embrace decolonizing praxis through collective dreaming, resistance to dominant paradigms, and the forging of solidarities across diverse boundaries. Decolonization, as framed by López, is not a one-time act but a sustained process of cultural, bureaucratic, linguistic, and psychological divestment. Her vision resonates with Latin American decolonial thought, particularly Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which advocates for dialogical, emancipatory education grounded in critical consciousness and community-centered praxis.

The heart of the book lies in its regionally grounded case studies, each of which configures decolonial critique within specific socio-political contexts. In chapter four, *Avoiding the Housekeeping Trap: Challenges and Opportunities in a Decolonizing Project at the University of East Anglia, UK*, a Reflexive Teaching Toolkit grounded in decolonial research principles and sustained reflexivity is introduced. Drawing on data gathered from students and staff—and bolstered by funding of the Vice Chancellor's (VC) Taskforce on Tackling Racism—the toolkit demonstrates how a bottom-up, collaboratively authored intervention can disrupt the neoliberal sidelining of decolonial labor, legitimize marginalized voices, and weave equitable, community-driven praxis into the very fabric of university structures.

In chapter five, *Decolonizing Teacher Education Through Creation of an Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Indigenization (EDI&I) Coalition*, Eizadirad and Straub chronicle how scholar-activist faculty and students at a Canadian university countered colonial logic and anti-woke rhetoric by forming a student-led EDI&I coalition. Drawing on Critical Race Theory and duo-ethnographic reflections, the coalition co-constructed an open-access resource bank, revised lesson-plan templates with EDI&I prompts, and hosted outreach events to redistribute power and cultivate brave spaces for equity-deserving voices. By combining grassroots student leadership with institutionally backed funding and reflexive praxis, this chapter models how teacher education programs can embed decolonial principles in curriculum, pedagogy, and community engagement.

In Nepal, chapter six, *Decolonising Educational Leadership in Nepal: An Advocacy for Revisiting Eurocentric Legacy and Promoting Epistemic Indigeneity*, calls for an ‘ecological-emergent’ leadership framework rooted in relational ethics. Rejecting Western managerial models, the authors advocate for embodied, wisdom-based leadership that draws on local cosmologies, oral traditions, and ancestral knowledge, centered around the notion of ‘mana’ (emotion, cognition, behavior).

From Zambia, chapter seven, *Decolonizing the Selection Criteria of Literature Novels in Secondary Schools and Universities in Zambia*, deconstructs national syllabi to reveal a persistent bias toward West African and European texts at the expense of Zambian voices. The chapter argues that privileging foreign literary works alienates Zambian learners from their heritage and undermines indigenous identity formation. *Unsettling Colonial Roots of School Leadership in Canada: Decolonizing School Leadership* (chapter eight) examines the persistence of whiteness in Canadian policies and leadership practices, particularly as they affect Black and Indigenous students. By contrasting managerial styles and ‘teacher-pleaser’ approaches, the authors promote a decolonial leadership model that foregrounds critical consciousness, cultural competence, and what they call ‘courageous accountability’.

Chapter nine, *Reimagining Higher Education in Tanzania: A De-Colonial Approach to Knowledge Production*, critiques how African universities continue to reproduce Western paradigms under the guise of serving Indigenous needs. The authors call for reclaiming agency through self-determined research agendas, resisting the tendency to cast Africa primarily as an ‘object of study’. Chapter ten, *Decolonial by Design: An Expatriate’s Experience of Teaching Indigenous Emirati Students in the United Arab Emirates*, underscores the disjunction between ostensibly ‘world-class’ curricula and Emirati students’ identities. Drawing on Said’s concept of Orientalism (1980), this autoethnographic account demonstrates how even progressive programs can relegate Indigenous learners to passive receivers of foreign knowledge. Returning to Zambia in chapter eleven, *Interrogating Decolonization of Education in Zambia: Chronicles of Voices from the Higher Education Landscape*, the authors chart the nascency of decolonial initiatives in public universities, revealing that most efforts remain rhetorical rather than structural.

In Morocco, chapter twelve, *Education for Emancipation and Disrupting Colonial Legacies in Morocco*, argues that French colonial legacies continue to shape language policy and curricular design decades after independence. The chapter recommends a ‘glocal’ approach that integrates Amazigh language rights and disrupts both Eurocentric and Arab-centric paradigms. In chapter thirteen, *Alternative Aesthetics: An Engaged Path to Decolonial Education*, Garlow and McConnell propose a decolonial framework rooted in Indigenous onto-epistemologies and artistic disruption.

Drawing on their own experiences—one as an Indigenous educator committed to land-based resurgence and the other as a Taiwanese-diasporic scholar informed

by nondualist interconnectedness—they employ alterNative aesthetics to unsettle colonial legacies and antiblackness. Rejecting a pedagogy of maintenance, they advocate for a “pedagogy of possibility” (Kumaravadivelu, 2001) that centers grounded normativity—Leanne Simpson’s *biskaabiyaang* (2017), understood as returning to ourselves,— and reciprocity with the land, inviting educators to cultivate ethical, community-led practices. Through reflexive prompts and coalition-building questions, they guide teacher-practitioners and leaders to create inclusive openings for Indigenous knowledge, thereby weaving creative praxis into the heart of educational transformation.

In Canada, chapter fourteen, *I Had the Mindset to Carry On!: Positive Black Racial Identity (PBRI) Socialization and Post-Secondary Success Among Black Males*, advocates a PBRI framework that centers both the internal construction and external affirmation of racial identity as vital to student persistence. Rejecting deficit-based narratives, the authors employ Critical Race Theory and duo-ethnographic reflections to show how grounding identity in African history and providing racially affirming supports fosters self-esteem, counters systemic barriers, and cultivates the sense of belonging necessary for post-secondary success.

Chapter fifteen, *Examining Leadership Practices of Secondary School Principals in Kenya through a Decolonizing Framework*, finds that many Kenyan principals operate without formal training in culturally responsive or decolonial leadership, advocating instead for grassroots, narrative-based coaching that privileges local knowledge over imported ‘best practices’. Finally, chapter sixteen, *Language as a Resource in India’s Decolonized Cultural Curriculum: A Case Study of the Santali Language*, documents the revival of the Ol-Chiki script as a form of resistance to English- and Hindi-centered schooling, emphasizing that language functions as a technology of power.

One of the primary strengths of this volume is its truly global scope and rich local detail. Each chapter immerses readers in on-the-ground realities—be it interview excerpts, policy histories, or autoethnographic vignettes—demonstrating that there is no single ‘universal roadmap’ for decolonial practice. Methodological innovation also shines through, particularly in essays that blur genre boundaries. Mbembe (2021) conceptualizes decolonization as both an act of refusal and a project of refoundation, insisting that genuine transformation requires the radical rejection of entrenched colonial ideologies and the creative construction of new worlds. As in this volume, he argues that decolonial education must go beyond critiquing historical injustices to actively enable self-assertion and collective imagination, empowering learners to envision futures unbound by Eurocentric norms. By positioning pedagogy as a site of both resistance and renewal, Mbembe invites educators to foster environments where marginalized voices can co-create knowledge and chart alternative pathways to liberation.

By foregrounding duo-ethnography, ‘cut-up’ writing, and QuantCrit, the collection illustrates that decoloniality concerns not only content but also form: knowledge-making must itself be liberatory. Moreover, the volume maintains a consistently dialogic and reflexive tone, insisting that researchers’ positionalities—shaped by gender, race, caste, and institutional affiliations—cannot be bracketed out of the inquiry. That said, readers seeking uniform empirical grounding may be unsettled by the uneven depth across chapters, as some offer extensive primary data while others remain more speculative.

Globally, the implications of this volume for education are profound. It calls for a radical rethinking of leadership training, urging programs to move beyond imported managerial templates toward relational, context-sensitive approaches exemplified by Nepali and Kenyan models. Curricular inclusion demands urgent reconsideration of language policies and literary canons: Moroccan and Indian case studies reveal how colonial languages continue to dominate formal education, and they model strategies for reclaiming Indigenous languages and knowledge. QuantCrit interventions from Zambia and Canada demonstrate that statistical methods are never neutral, prompting researchers and policymakers to scrutinize metrics that perpetuate inequities. Above all, the collection champions pluriversal epistemologies—showing that academic legitimacy need not rest on monolithic Western norms and that arts-based, oral, and autoethnographic research forms are essential to dismantling colonial knowledge hierarchies.

Despite its truly global scope, the volume omits case studies from Latin America, leaving a gap in the representation of decolonial initiatives in this region. This absence underscores an opportunity for future scholarship to explore how Afro-Latinx, Indigenous, and rural-community perspectives are being integrated—or could be integrated—into teacher education, curricular reform, and institutional governance across Latin American contexts. By attending to these missing cases, researchers can further enrich the pluriversal dialogue on decolonial praxis and ensure that Latin American experiences inform global discussions on equitable and culturally responsive education.

The chapters on language policy and curricular inclusion, such as the Moroccan and Indian case studies, invite comparison with Latin American experiences of intercultural bilingual education. Walsh’s (2010) work on ‘critical interculturality’ in the Andes, especially in Ecuador and Bolivia, offers a compelling model for integrating Indigenous languages and epistemologies into formal education. She demonstrates how intercultural education can challenge colonial language hierarchies, foster dialogue between knowledge systems, and promote curricular justice. Similarly, the critique of statistical methods that perpetuate inequity resonates with the work of Colombian scholar Viveros Vigoya (2024), who interrogates how official statistics in Colombia often render Afro-descendant and Indigenous students invisible, calling for intersectional, participatory methodologies that challenge the presumed neutrality of educational metrics.

For the Colombian, the book resonates with ongoing debates around post-peace curriculum reform, Afro-Colombian and Indigenous epistemologies, and challenges to Eurocentric paradigms. The Zambian critique of literary selection mirrors local efforts to incorporate Palenquero literature and Wayuunaiki curricula. The QuantCrit critiques suggest the need to reconceptualize how standardized exams and ranking metrics shape teacher education and student assessment. Post-conflict school leadership in regions such as Meta, Cauca, and Arauca could also benefit from 'ecological-emergent' and narrative-based frameworks that emphasize healing and community reconciliation. Finally, MA-level research methods courses in institutions across the country could draw on this volume to expand notions of valid thesis work, encouraging duo-ethnography, creative arts-based inquiry, and other forms that align with calls for pluriversal knowledge.

In sum, *Decolonizing Educational Knowledge* stands as a landmark compilation that not only critiques colonial legacies but also offers tangible pathways toward epistemic justice. By juxtaposing detailed case studies with methodological manifestos, López and Singh create a volume that challenges readers to move beyond critique toward experimentation. Although focused on diverse global contexts, its insights are applicable to education in Colombia and other contexts, serving as a beacon for post-peace reconstruction, curricular innovation, and transformative leadership. As education continues to be shaped by enduring colonial logics, this collection reminds us that decoloniality is not a destination but a sustained practice of 'being and becoming'—an ongoing commitment to center community, relationality, and ancestral wisdom.

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