

The CARE Model: Reimagining Education through an Emancipatory Framework that Disrupts Coloniality in School Systems

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Abstract: The rise in neoliberalism, alongside globalization, has created a power imbalance in all aspects of society, including education. For instance, Ontario schools' participation in the EQAO, fundraising practices, academic streaming, and carrying out of disciplinary measures, pits schools against each other, placing some schools in a cycle of prosperity, while others in a vicious cycle of oppression. These oppressive practices espoused by neoliberalism are intricately tied to colonialism and have far-reaching implications on how educators and leaders think, teach, and implement policies concerning poor, and racialized students. The purpose of this report, therefore, is to present a workable model for educational leaders to decolonize school systems and disrupt coloniality from school systems. Drawing on the insights from fifty-eight sources, which include both scholarly and alternative bodies of work, the author conceptualizes and proposes the implementation of the Challenge, Align, Revive, Embrace (CARE) model to reimagine education that is void of colonial remnants. The strategies and concerns around the implementation of the CARE model for education leaders are also discussed, followed by a call to action for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers to empirically validate the model across diverse contexts.

Keywords: Neoliberalism, Post-Neoliberalism, Colonialism, Decolonization, Anti-Oppressive, EQAO, Deficit Thinking, Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy, Policy-to-Practice Continuum, Authentic Partnerships

Introduction

While the rise in globalization has fostered the exchange of political, economic, and cultural ideas across geographical lines (Wagner, 2017; Zajda, 2020), it has also intensified competition between nations. This increase in competition between nations has led to an arms race toward producing a “well-educated, effective, hard-working, and productive workforce and citizenry” (Starr, 2019, p. 12). The invisible hand guiding this global phenomenon is the complex, multi-faceted socio-political-economic (SPE) ideology known as neoliberalism, a form of “free market capitalism [...] promot[es] market practices to aid consumption, production, improvement, innovation, and investment” (Starr, 2019, pp. 17-18). These goals are achieved through increased competition, choice, individualism, deregulation, and privatization (Tucker & Fushell, 2021). This ideology, or logic, has created a power imbalance in all aspects of society, including education.

Ontario, recognized as Canada's most ethnically diverse education jurisdiction (Tuters & Portelli, 2017), is deeply influenced by neoliberalism. Ontario's commitment to using mid-stakes tests, such as the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO), to assess students' math and literacy skills to inform decision making about funds and resources has not only failed to paint the complete picture of student achievement but has also created a power imbalance among students and schools. Eizadirad (2019) reported the following:

[M]any racialized children [...] expressed that writing EQAO standardized tests was nerve-wrecking for them and in some cases traumatizing by the amount of pressure they felt coupled with their fear of failure. Many racialized identities explained how taking EQAO tests had a long-term lasting negative impact of making them feel “stupid” or “incompetent” and created fear in them associated with test-taking anxiety lasting a lifetime. (p. 12)

Schools that score low on the EQAO are disadvantaged because they become less desirable for parents to enroll their kids. This, inadvertently, decreases the school's funding since “school funding is tied to school enrolment and if enrolment falls, then the money allocated to the schools under the per-pupil funding formula also falls” (Morgan, 2006, p. 134).

To supplement public funding, Ontario schools resort to fundraising and collecting fees to offset the cost of certain school programming (Winton & Milani, 2017). In 2018, People for Education (PFE, 2018) reported that 99% of elementary schools and 87% of secondary schools in Ontario engaged in fundraising activities. Schools in wealthier neighbourhoods fundraise better than those in poorer areas, perpetuating power

imbalances between the advantaged and the disadvantaged in terms of access to educational opportunities, from sports to field trips (Rizza, 2019). By having schools compete for funds, neoliberalism has placed some schools in a cycle of prosperity, while others in a vicious cycle of oppression.

These oppressive SPE practices espoused by neoliberalism have far-reaching implications on how educators and leaders think, teach, and implement policies concerning poor and racialized students. For example, based on an internal review of Ontario's Peel District School Board, PFE (2023) revealed the following:

[T]he far-reaching impacts of racism on Black students: high rates of receiving disciplinary measures, high rates of being streamed into low academic pathways, lack of representation in the curriculum and school community, as well as a significant lack of community engagement. (p. 2)

This finding is consistent with Lopez's (2020) observation of some Ontario schools where she noted "the harsh tone in which some parents were spoken to and the 'policing' of primarily Black students" (p. 2). Furthermore, through their analysis of reports from Statistics Canada, Alkholy et al. (2017) explained that First Nations, Metis, and Inuit (FNMI) communities are underrepresented in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM). This is because FNMI students struggle to self-identify as scientists, for Western Science (WS)—which emphasizes objectivity—conflicts with their traditional knowledges (Alkholy et al., 2017). This evidence of disenfranchisement of minoritized communities in how educators and leaders think, teach, and carry out a/the policy can be attributed to deficit thinking.

Deficit thinking, while perpetuated by neoliberalism, is not a novel concept. It is intricately tied to colonialism, and the historical injustices committed by Europeans on enslaved Africans and the Indigenous population of North America and other settler nations (Cunneen, 2005; Valencia, 2020). While physical colonization has been abolished, scholars such as Lopez (2020) argue that the long-lasting impact of colonialism (i.e., coloniality) is alive today in the way we think, learn, interact with each other, and the privileges we maintain, which are deeply rooted in the SPE fabric of our societies. To emancipate schools from coloniality, and its negative impact on minoritized students, this paper urges school leaders to view pedagogical and administrative practices through a decolonizing and anti-oppressive lens, enabling them to reimagine and transform education to benefit all students.

The purpose of this report, therefore, is to propose the implementation of a workable model for educational leaders to decolonize school systems and erase any remnants of colonialism. This report will first review existing literature, from both scholarly and alternative sources, to shed light on the pervasiveness of coloniality in the way we think, learn, and interact with each other, before outlining some of the prevailing decolonizing strategies. Building on the work of many critical scholars, the author then conceptualizes and proposes the CARE model to reimagine education that is void of colonial remnants. Following this, the paper discusses strategies and concerns around the implementation of the CARE model for education leaders. The report concludes with recommendations and areas for future research.

Author's Positionality

As a settler-Canadian, I enjoy many privileges—most importantly, freedom of speech and freedom of religion. These two privileges are personal to me as someone whose family escaped religious persecution from South Asia to find safe haven in Canada. As an emerging critical scholar, I am fortunate to be able to engage in dialogue and dissent, a privilege that is not guaranteed in many parts of the world, especially for minority communities. While I enjoy such privileges now, I recognize that these rights were not always extended to all individuals in Canada. The dark past of cultural genocide of FNMI people through unfair treaties and residential schools is well-documented. Through reflective practices, I empathize with the FNMI people of Canada and with the people of African descent who were brought here against their will and stripped of their cultural identities.

This paper draws from some of the philosophical and pedagogical orientations of the African and FNMI community of writers, artists, and scholars. It is my hope that by incorporating FNMI and African

philosophical and pedagogical approaches into the Ontario curriculum, students who were historically marginalized can better identify with the curriculum. This way, we can narrow the academic gap.

This report is written from a place of love and care, with the intent to ensure that all Canadians can access similar privileges, so that this land continues to be a beacon of hope for persecuted people everywhere.

Methodology

Data Collection

To propose the implementation of a workable model for leaders to decolonize education systems, the author reviewed a total of fifty-eight sources, including fifty scholarly and eight alternative bodies of work, belonging to a wide range of disciplines including Indigenous art and storytelling, African philosophy, decentralization of education, neoliberalism, post-neoliberalism, leadership, and authentic partnerships. The scholarly resources included research studies, literature reviews, books, and book chapters, while the alternative sources consisted of lecture videos, online articles, professional artwork, newspaper articles, and reports published by charitable organizations. While significantly more scholarly sources were selected compared to alternative sources, equal importance was placed on both to ensure that the voices and knowledge of people who were historically excluded from academic publications were represented in this paper. In other words, lived experiences were given equal priority to scholarly publication.

All sources were obtained from English databases including the University of Toronto libraries, Google Scholar, Google, and YouTube. The keywords for the search included “EQAO”, “social and racial inequities in Ontario schools”, “Ontario schools and fundraising”, “decentralization of schools”, “FNMI students and STEM programs”, “scientific racism”, “decolonizing education”, “decolonizing curriculum”, “alternative pedagogies”, “Indigenous philosophy and pedagogy”, “Indigenous knowledges and Western science”, “use of language in Western science”, “holistic science”, “African philosophy and pedagogy”, “Indigenous artists and symbols”, “African artists and symbols”, “Kent Monkman”, “Tyson Yunkaporta”, “Ubuntu philosophy”, “culturally sustaining pedagogy”, “Smith’s 25-projects”, “storytelling”, “colonial mindset”, “decolonizing the mind”, “deficit thinking in schools”, “authentic partnerships in schools”, “community building with minoritized parents”, “co-teaching Indigenous experts”, “neoliberalism”, “post-neoliberalism”, and “decolonizing neoliberalism”.

The scholarly articles were chosen based on relevance by first reading the title, abstract, and keywords. Priority was given to articles authored by individuals whose positionality aligned with the aims of the present paper. In situations where authors’ positionalities were not explicitly stated, their orientation or stance was inferred by the purpose statement, research questions, theoretical framework, or the context in which they studied. For instance, special consideration was given to articles addressing racial hierarchies, coloniality, achievement gaps, deficit thinking, among other critical concepts. Preference was given to articles written within the context of settler-nations or post-colonial nations.

The alternative sources were also chosen based on relevance by first reading the title of the source, and any other descriptions available. Priority was given to artists, writers, and scholars who not only identified as Black, Indigenous, People of Colour (BIPOC), but their work aligned with the aims of the present study. For lecture videos, the scholars usually stated their positionality early in the presentation, facilitating the selection process. In sources where scholar positionality was not explicitly stated, the selection process was facilitated by locating their biographies through a Google search.

All the sources were then placed into two categories: sources directly related to coloniality and decolonization; and those that contribute to concept building around culturally sustaining pedagogy, leadership, race, neoliberalism, post-neoliberalism, policy-to-practice, etc. Table 1.1 illustrates the breakdown of the total sources into the two categories.

Data Analysis

Once the scholarly sources were selected, a close reading was conducted to determine the recurring ideas, issues, and tensions being explored. Similarly, while listening, viewing, or reading the alternative sources, keywords, images, and issues were noted. Based on similarities, these terms and phrases were then combined into four large categories that call for the decolonization of one’s mind, how one learns, how one interacts with others, and with the larger socio-economic system. The following section will outline these findings.

Table 1.1: A Breakdown of the Type, Number and Topic of the Sources Informing this Study (n = 58)

<i>Topics</i>	<i>Types of Sources</i>	
	<i>Scholarly</i>	<i>Alternative</i>
<i>Coloniality decolonization</i>	<i>and/or</i> 22 from research papers, literature reviews, books, and book chapters	3 lecture videos 1 online article 1 visual artist’s website
<i>Concept building: related to pedagogy, leadership, race, neoliberalism, globalization, decentralization, policy-to-practice, etc.</i>	28 from research papers, literature reviews, books, and book chapters	2 reports from a charitable organization 1 newspaper article

Source: Dey 2024.

Findings

From the review of literature, four key needs emerged: the need to decolonize the mind, knowledge systems, partnership with community, and the SPE system. This section will highlight the need and the prevailing strategies pertaining to decolonizing how we think, learn, and interact with each other.

Decolonizing the Mind

The first step to decolonizing education systems is to decolonize the mind. This shift in focus to one’s mind can be attributed to the fact that, while many nations have officially gained independence, they remain colonial subjects in their minds—i.e., a second colonization—where feelings of their ethnicity and cultural heritage are considered inferior to that of their colonizers (David & Okazaki, 2006), a “wasteland [...] that they need to distance themselves from” (Lopez, 2020, p. 46). These feelings of inferiority towards their heritage, such as belonging to a wasteland, tend to be internalized, and can negatively impact one’s psychological well-being (Lopez, 2020). Internalized oppression not only prevents previously colonized people from revolting against the oppressor (Lopez, 2020), but also restricts their ability to heal from colonial psychological wounds (Fanon, 1963, as cited in Lopez, 2020).

One of the ways to heal from colonial wounds is through self-reflexivity (Cunliffe, 2016), a process that involves the deconstruction of external and internal oppressive structures (Lopez, 2020). The deconstruction process calls for individuals to unlearn, relearn, reread, and reframe (Klein, 2008), which is characteristic of the West African Sankofa bird. The mythical bird symbolizes the importance of looking backward to better understand where one is going (Kwartang, 2016). Through this process, Lopez (2020) argues that one can engage in “deep learning that can create shift[s] in practice and consciousness” (p. 37). This shift in consciousness is the key to healing, where the individuals reclaim and reconnect with their Indigenous culture and identity (Carter-Ényì & Carter-Ényì, 2009), and hence regain one’s “self-worth, histories, language, rituals, art, philosophies, and social power” (Lopez, 2020, p. 45).

Shifting one’s consciousness can be achieved through mindful consumption of media and critically examining the words and images portrayed in literature, art, music, etc. African writers like Chinua Achebe

are “committed to [using children’s literature to] convey a positive image of characters who have strength, pride and dignity to shatter the negative self-image that some African children might have” (Youssef, 2023, p. 211). These stories serve to dismantle images in textbooks that portray Africans as primitive beings. In Canada, FNMI visual artists like Kent Monkman produces thought-provoking paintings to address colonization and resilience (which can be found at <https://www.kentmonkman.com/>). The decolonization of one’s mind can also be achieved through appreciating African Ubuntu philosophy, a spiritual engagement that fosters resilience in people in the face of dehumanization (Campbell-Stephens, 2021). The Ubuntu tenet “I am because we are” (Campbell-Stephens, 2021, p. 78), is diametrically opposite to “I think therefore I am,” as theorized by the Western polymath, Rene Descartes. Framing “from the ‘We’ orientation as opposed to the ‘I’ [...]” (Ibid., p. 78), Ubuntu seeks to achieve harmony and connectedness.

Decolonizing Knowledge Systems

Coloniality remains pervasive through the control of knowledge (Lopez, 2020). The colonizers knew that “knowledge gives power, and the exercise of power requires more knowledge” (Regmi, 2022, p. 11). The Europeans acquired knowledge by studying their colonial “subjects”, followed by a synthesis and interpretation of said knowledge using European epistemological lenses, only to redistribute it back to their “subjects” through mass education (Regmi, 2022). Through this practice, stereotypes of the Global South were perpetuated—for example in Kantian literature, Africans were described as “utterly deficient in matter of intelligence” (Mignolo, 2021, p. 333). This helped colonizers in perpetuating racial hierarchies and in “maintaining hegemony and controlling resistance for the last 500 years” (Regmi, 2022, p. 12), and in justifying epistemic violence (African Psychologies, 2017).

Scholars such as Shose Kessi (see African Psychologies, 2017), Linda Tuhiwai Smith (see The Graduate Centre, CUNY, 2013), Eve Tuck (see The Graduate Centre, CUNY, 2013), and George Sefa Dei (see University of Windsor, 2021) are concerned with how knowledge is constructed and legitimized. Kessi (in African Psychologies, 2017) discussed that while the current society considers science to be the most legitimate form of knowledge, it has contributed to the legitimization of discriminatory power structures. For example, Intelligent Quotient (IQ) studies were a form of “scientific racism” that reinforced the hierarchy of races, and validated historical injustices (i.e., “epistemic violence”) carried out against them (African Psychologies, 2017). This hierarchy of races was used to legitimize the Atlantic slave trade, for instance. Smith and Tuck (in The Graduate Centre, CUNY, 2013) echo the sentiments of Kessi (in African Psychologies, 2017) in their critique of positivism: that scientific research is deeply rooted in colonialism, for it serves the interest of the privileged. To solve this credibility problem that research carries, Smith and Tuck (in The Graduate Centre, CUNY, 2013) posed the question: how can we re-frame knowledge? Dei (in University of Windsor, 2021) posed a very similar question: how can we unravel certain knowledge masquerading as universal? The answer is through culturally sustaining pedagogies (CSPs).

CSPs, as outlined by Paris (2012), build upon culturally relevant pedagogies (Ladson-Billings, 1995) and culturally responsive pedagogies (Gay, 2002). Paris (2012) argues that the previously used terms “relevant” and “responsive” fail to capture the need for minoritized students’ cultural, historical, and linguistic identities are “sustained” as they go through schooling. CSPs encourage educators to centre students’ languages and cultural ways in a meaningful way instead of as “add-ons”, while providing access to the dominant culture. Smith (2012) outlined 25 projects that can indigenize education using storytelling, writing and theory making, remembering, among others that could be incorporated into a CSP framework. A CSP framework can also be informed by the 8-Aboriginal Ways of Learning model developed by Tyson Yunkaporta, an Australian Indigenous scholar (8 Aboriginal Ways of Learning: Aboriginal pedagogy [8 Ways], n.d.). The 8-ways include Story Sharing, Learning Maps, Non-verbal, Symbols and Images, Land Links, Non-linear, Deconstruct/Reconstruct, and Community Links (see Figure 1). Another strategy that can inform a CSP framework is the use of hip-hop music to teach poetry, as suggested by Sanchez et al. (2021), for its ability to support positive identity development among BIPOC students.

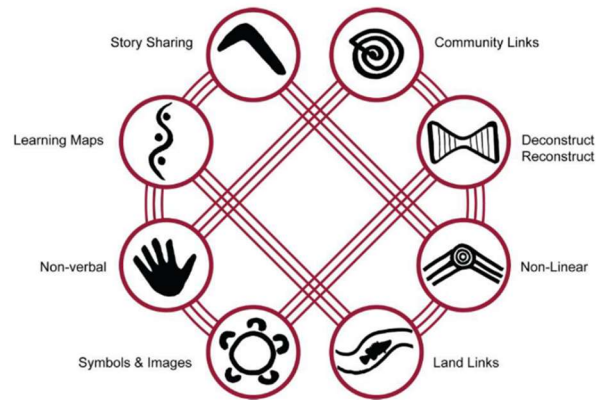


Figure 1: Yunkaporta's 8-Aboriginal Ways of Learning model (8 Ways, n.d.)
Source: Retrieved from <https://www.8ways.online/>

Decolonizing School-Community Relationships

Traditionally, partnerships between schools and parents often reflected deficit thinking, targeting minoritized parents and families' skills, knowledge, and values, and were "often seen as part of the problem not as resources for change efforts" (Ishimaru, 2014, p. 189). These partnerships resulted in the widening of the trust gap between mainstream schools and certain communities. For instance, Toler Williams' (2001) findings suggest that there is a distrust of the mainstream establishment among the African American community, owing to the historical injustices that were committed against them (Cunneen, 2005). Ishimaru (2014) advocates for marginalized parents and families to re-write the rules of engagement through authentic partnerships.

Building authentic partnerships is not an event, but an ongoing process, which Hands (2015) conceptualizes as a 7-step process that involves a "two-way communication [between all stakeholders] with the intent of identifying shared goals" (p. 7), which is a form of power sharing. To address the power imbalance between families and schools, Auerbach (2010) proposes a school-family relationship to be along a continuum where "[p]oints on the continuum progress from positioning administrators with maximum control and parents with the least voice to positioning administrators as collaborative leaders with less control and parents with the greatest voice" (p. 734). This need for power sharing was echoed by Ishimaru (2014) in their rules of engagement model to disrupt the traditional partnerships between schools and parents that are often situated on deficit conceptions of marginalized parents and families. Ishimaru (2014) worked within civic capacity and community organizing frameworks to narrow the achievement gap of the newly arrived English Language Learning (ELL) students from Latin America into Salem, Oregon, USA. Civic capacity is "the mobilization of varied stakeholders in support of a community-wide cause" (Stone, 2001, p. 15), which is also echoed by Hands' (2015) call for civic mindedness. Community organizing "emphasizes the development of individual capacity and relationship to enable collective action" (Ishimaru, 2014, p. 192). An example points to the Parent Organizing Project (POP) cited in Ishimaru's (2014) case study, where "Latino parents provided training programs in Spanish to help parents build their individual capacities and relationships" (p. 198). This group of parent leaders began to "advocate at school board meetings, district hearings, and key decision-making meetings, particularly for supports for resources for ELLs students" (Ishimaru, 2014, p. 198). These actions "played a key role in addressing power imbalances" (Ibid., p. 199) that kept parents away from the decision-making table in the past.

Authentic partnership must also promote authentic parental voice. In their research of preschools with a majority population of minoritized students (54.8% Hispanic/Latin; 36.5% African American; 20.3% White) in California, USA, Black (2014) demonstrated that parents' wish is to be "seen, heard, understood and appreciated by teachers and program administrators, with respect, sincerity, humility and intention" (p. 109). Like Ishimaru (2014), parents in Black's (2014) report expressed a desire to share leadership and take

initiative “in areas such as helping organize school activities, including cultural celebrations, holiday events [et cetera]” (p. 110).

Decolonizing the SPE system

The rise of neoliberal economics has led to the commodification of education, bringing into question whether education is a private good or a public good. This commodification has contributed to the standardization of the curriculum and has inspired increasing attacks on teachers’ unions and blaming immigrant students, who are perceived as being lazy (Apple, 2006). Neoliberalism’s emphasis on commodification, individualism, and deregulation has forced major budget cuts from the public sector.

Such austerity measures have resulted in the centralization of education across Canada, leading to either the “elimination or substantial consolidation of existing boards” (Galway & Wiens, 2013, p. 22). This has resulted in the widening of the power gap between government officials and school boards. With their greater autonomy, coupled with neoliberal economic goals, government policymakers made budgetary decisions that did not prioritize the best interest of stakeholders on the ground, including teachers, students, and parents, particularly those from minoritized communities. For instance, Carpenter et al. (2012) reported how the lack of funding replaced department heads (one for each subject) with positions of responsibilities (PORs) (one stretched across several subjects). Carpenter et al. (2012) argue that this was the result of neoliberal economics that under-values the “extras”, resulting in everyone having more responsibilities with fewer resources.

To decolonize and disrupt neoliberalism, societies must embrace post-neoliberalism, an economic system that refocuses the direction of spending towards social welfare and reduces the exploitation of land that Indigenous people hold sacred (Grugel & Ruggirozzi, 2012). This notion of giving power back to the people and democratizing school systems is championed by programs such as Citizen School in Porto Alegre, Brazil (Apple, 2006). Democracy as both an ideological and economic framework improves teacher salaries and facilitates power-sharing, thus improving the collective capacity of the people (Apple, 2006).

Conceptualization of the CARE Model

Based on the previous discussion, it is evident that disrupting coloniality manifested in the form of power imbalances and inequitable access to educational opportunities requires an emancipatory model that unsettles how we think, learn, interact with each other and with the wider society. The acronym CARE has four letters, representing the four pillars to guide our practice (see Figure 2). The first letter, C, calls leaders—through self-reflexivity—to “Challenge” their assumptions, biases, and stereotypes while acknowledging their privileges. The next letter, A, outlines a CSP for leaders to “Align” their pedagogical practices with alternative epistemologies that better reflect their students. The third letter, R, invites schools to “Revive” relationships with minoritized parents and community members by forming authentic partnerships. Lastly, E cautions against neoliberalism and calls education leaders to “Embrace” post-neoliberal economic policies that are more democratic, and less market-driven. Table 1.2 summarizes the features of the CARE model. While the CARE model has yet to be empirically validated, I conceptualize it to be cyclical in nature. It starts from the micro level (mind/self), extends to the macro level (system), and then returns to the micro level (mind/self). This means that how we think impacts how we teach and learn, which influences how we interact with each other and the larger society, and this experience, in turn, informs our thinking, and so forth (Figure 2). To elaborate, by checking our biases and assumptions through self-reflexivity, educators can better align our pedagogical practices with those of all students, particularly those from marginalized communities. An important resource available to educators is the parents of students, with whom they need to proactively revive communications and establish authentic partnerships to help students from marginalized communities succeed. Through this process, teachers are likely to identify larger systemic issues that contribute to the widening achievement gap of marginalized students. This can encourage educators and education leaders to form a coalition with different stakeholders to decentralize the education system. These experiences can further raise critical awareness among educators and education leaders.

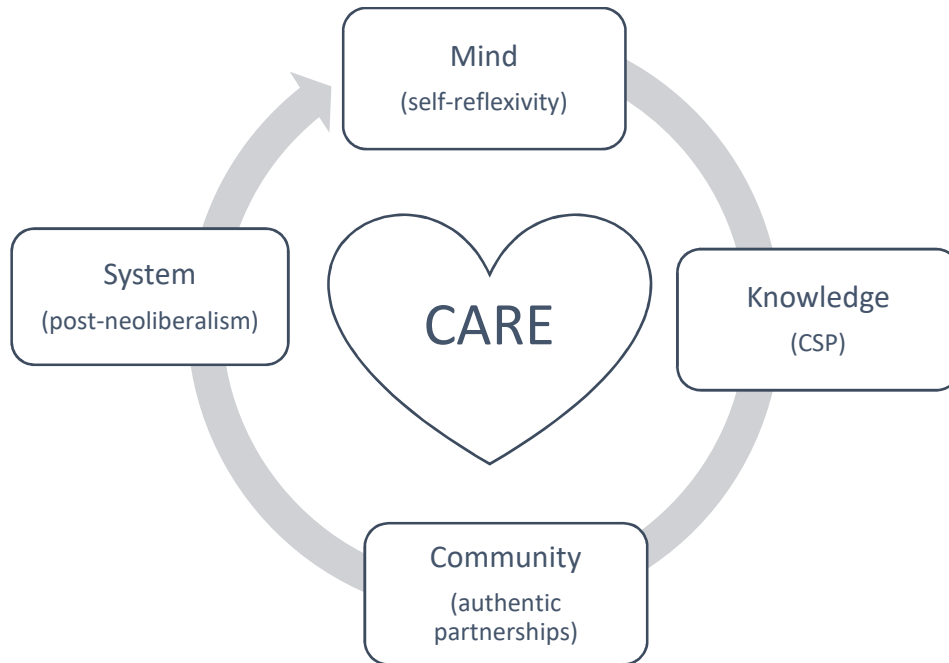


Figure 2: The Conceptualization of the CARE Model
 Source: Dey 2024.

Table 1.2: The Attributes of the CARE Model

<i>The CARE Model</i>	<i>Attributes</i>
Challenge mindsets	Through self-reflexivity and mindful consumption of media, challenge your assumptions, biases, and stereotypes.
Align knowledge systems	Apply CSP to align teaching and learning with alternative epistemologies.
Revive community relations	Build authentic partnerships to rejuvenate school-community relationships.
Embrace post-neoliberalism	Embrace post-neoliberalism to create a SPE system that is democratic and informed by social justice rather than market values.

Source: Dey 2024.

Proposed Implementation of the CARE Model

Challenge Mindsets

Challenging one’s assumptions, biases and stereotypes must be an ongoing process that starts during the summer, prior to the start of the academic year. All stakeholders, including principals, teachers, students, and parents, would benefit from taking the Implicit Association Test (IAT) from Harvard University, which is a self-assessment tool that reveals individuals’ implicit associations about race, gender, sexual orientation, and other topics (see, <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>). This tool should be employed for the purposes of collaboration, not to serve as an evaluative or punitive tool. All stakeholders, individually, should also be encouraged to read Chinua Achebe’s work, *The Flute* and *The Drum*. These children’s novels not only depict African children in a positive light but also illustrate the “importance of music [and musical instruments] in the African culture and [...] the disastrous outcome of greed” (Youssef, 2023, p. 218). The concept of greed is also portrayed in Monkman’s (2023) piece *Protecting the Medicines* (see,

<https://www.kentmonkman.com/painting/protecting-the-medicines>). As individuals interact with the work of Chinua Achebe and Kent Monkman, they should be invited to reflect and engage with the following questions:

- Whose voices are included?
- Whose voices are absent?
- How do the use of language and imagery reflect and challenge dominant narratives?
- How has your perspective shifted?

By carefully selecting text and inviting students to first reflect individually and then respond in a group discussion setting creates a culture of talk and raises collective consciousness (Laman et al., 2012). A shift in perspective and consciousness has implications for how we approach teaching and administer policy. Decolonizing the mind through self-reflexivity can reduce the application of harsher punishment and lower academic streaming for minoritized students.

Align Knowledge Systems

The focus of this discussion will centre around indigenizing the science curriculum and assessment standards, so that minoritized students can better identify themselves as scientists and are inspired to pursue STEM in post-secondary. I am inspired by Hohepa's (2013) "different in the sameness" (p. 624) riddle, exemplifying the importance of learning the tools of today's world while ensuring the survival of one's traditional culture. The following section aims to integrate WS with Indigenous Knowledges (IK) using a CSP framework guided by Yunkaporta's 8-Aboriginal Ways of Learning model (8-Ways, n.d.)

Mindful Language. The language in WS is objective, where the observer is removed from the observation. Therefore, we learn about the nature of the world in the third person from the scientists (our knowledge keepers). In contrast, FNMI communities learn about their environment through storytelling by their Elders (their knowledge keepers). Bechtel (2017) demonstrated that unlike scientists, Elders spoke subjectively about nature where the observer is not removed from the observation, but rather is intimately and spiritually connected to it. Educators, therefore, must reconsider the use of third-person language and strive to present scientific facts and figures through stories, promoting an inclusive learning environment for all students. This emphasis on storytelling is guided by the first way in Yunkaporta's 8-Ways framework (8-Ways, n.d.).

Land Connection. Smith et al. (2014) argue that students will pursue STEM if they feel it would benefit their community. Hence, it is recommended that lesson plans incorporate topics with which Indigenous communities can personalize and relate, for example, the decrease of the caribou population (Bechtel, 2016), the governance for water (von der Porten, 2016), and medicinal plants (Craft et al., 2015). These issues would not only engage and promote science to FNMI communities but also widen the worldview of non-FNMI students. By linking curricular content to local land and culture, this strategy aligns with Yunkaporta's fifth way of learning (8-Ways, n.d.).

Holistic Approaches. Examining the Ontario science curriculum, it is not difficult to recognize the compartmentalization of science into biology, chemistry, and physics. While ostensible differences exist among the three sciences, the theme surfacing from each discipline is that change is constant. Similarly, "Indigenous science holds that all world and life is in constant flux" (Battiste, 2013, p. 122). This commonality of "change" and "flux" is the key to bridging WS with IK and can be achieved through co-teaching. Alkholy et al. (2017) demonstrated that in courses co-taught by Indigenous Elders and Western scientists, BIPOC students had an improved sense of identity as a scientist and their interest in STEM significantly increased, equalling that of their White counterparts. The teaching of "big ideas" of change and flux through a lateral approach is consistent with Yunkaporta's sixth and seventh way of learning (8-Ways, n.d.).

A CSP framework must also be attuned to the multiple modes of expression and align assessment standards and practices accordingly. In other words, students should be encouraged to demonstrate their understanding through storytelling and hip-hop music (for inspiration, see

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vM-Eszm9PE4>). This shift away from traditional, test-based measurements of achievement helps broaden the curriculum, creating more space for the meaningful incorporation of African and Indigenous epistemologies.

Revive Community Relationships

Building authentic partnerships with parents and community should emphasize parental voice, creating opportunities for co-creation of not only school events, but also Professional Development and policies. Employing Ubuntu philosophy of “I am because we are” (Campbell-Stephens, 2021, p. 78) allows collective capacity between the school and community to be achievable. While parents of minoritized communities may inherently distrust mainstream education, this lack of engagement should not be conflated with a lack of care for their children (Sianturi et al., 2022). To narrow the trust gap, school officials are encouraged to work within Sellars and Imig’s (2021) radical empathy framework that encourages people across social identities to form deep connections with each other. This is another step towards dismantling deficit thinking and power imbalances resulting from colonialism.

Co-creating and co-organizing activities like book clubs (Davis, 2012; Lopez, 2015), field trips (Hands, 2015), and experiential learning involving drumming (Battiste, 2013), trapping, and fishing (Bechtel, 2016), not only opens doors for new modes of learning benefitting all students, but also gives power to parents and community members. Co-creation, however, requires tremendous planning and foresight. Regular in-person meetings between school officials, parents, and community members are strongly encouraged. There should also be the option of communicating virtually. During these meetings, it would be beneficial to have translators, allowing minoritized parents and community members of non-English speaking backgrounds to confidently express their ideas (Dey, 2022). Apart from meetings, schools are encouraged to communicate updates and announcements with parents through monthly newsletters. The monthly newsletters should be translated based on the families’ backgrounds, facilitating not only communication but also demonstrating a strong sense of care and understanding (Dey, 2022).

Embrace Post-Neoliberalism

Through the process of challenging mindsets, aligning knowledge systems, and reviving community engagement, one comes to realize the larger systemic beast that needs to be transformed through social activism. Lopez (2020) asserts that since “[s]chooling and education [was] used as a vehicle to perpetuate colonialism” (p. 2) schools offer the ideal “sites [for] change and resistance” (p. 3). While disrupting neoliberalism’s global reach may not be attainable in the immediate future, actions can be taken locally to democratize school systems. This paper calls for the decentralization of education, by restructuring the power arrangement from a top-down paradigm to a horizontal continuum, as outlined by Hall and Hord (2020). Increased centralization of education has promoted a top-down policy-to-practice paradigm that fostered a lack of respect and trust between teachers (who are on the frontlines of education—i.e., at the “bottom” of the system) and policymakers (who do not spend a lot of time in classrooms—i.e., at the “top” of the system). Transforming to a horizontal policy-to-practice continuum (Figure 3), disrupts hierarchical power arrangements and promotes a more holistic and democratic approach. In this paradigm, the entire education system becomes interdependent, with each part respecting and trusting the others (Hall & Hord, 2020). Decentralizing education through this horizontal policy-to-practice continuum has the potential to eliminate the need for schools in Ontario to engage with EQAO and inequitable fundraising practices.

Overall, the CARE model aims to empower all students by re-visiting policy documents, re-centring curricula, re-engaging with communities, and re-structuring economic systems, known as the 4-Rs Perspective (Figure 4).

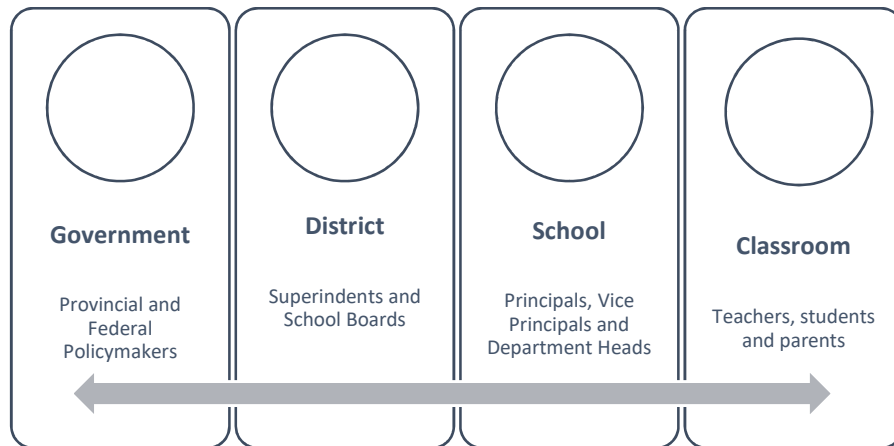


Figure 3: Policy-to-Practice Continuum
Source: Dey 2024, adapted from Hall and Hord (2020).
Note. The double headed arrow denotes a horizontal viewing lens.

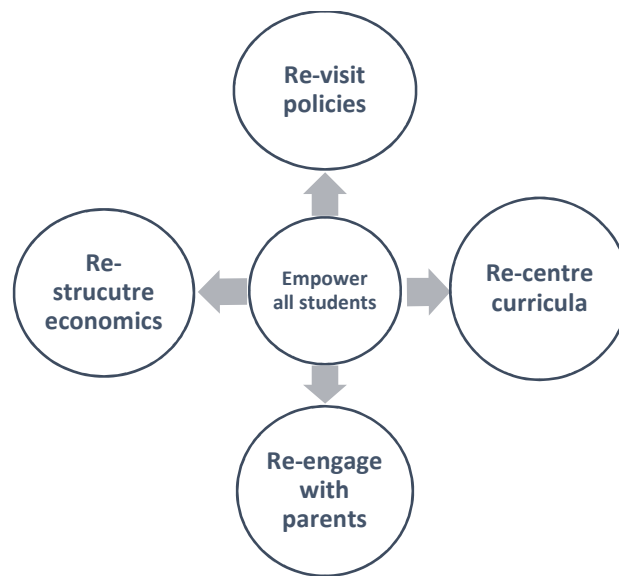


Figure 4: The 4-Rs Perspective Depicting the Benefits of the CARE Model
Source: Dey 2024.

Constraints in Implementing the CARE Model

The successful implementation and sustainability of the CARE model will largely depend on how it is perceived by the various stakeholders, and whether their emotional response espouses resistance (Hargreaves, 2005). According to Hall and Hord (2020), resisting change is quite natural for humans—it is an expression of grief over the loss of what was their comfort zone, invoking skepticism as to whether the change will, indeed, be for the better. Joram et al.’s (2020) findings suggest that teachers prefer “having a voice in decision making” (p. 9) and are discouraged by “decisions [that] were made behind the scenes” (p. 9). The CARE model was designed to not remain static, allowing for modifications based on local contexts and feedback from various stakeholders. To facilitate input from teachers, for instance, school leaders will benefit from

creating a professional learning community (PLC), where teachers from all disciplines can participate in the direction of the CARE model.

Another constraint to implementing the CARE model revolves around the potential lack of availability of Indigenous experts who can co-teach with Western scientists, and be involved with experiential learning like drumming, fishing, et cetera, particularly in rural areas. In such circumstances, critical autobiographies representing visible and nonvisible minoritized groups can be included as alternatives (Bechtel, 2016; Battiste, 2013).

Time is another major concern. Co-creating with community members, translating information, and employing a horizontal policy-to-practice continuum are all extremely time-consuming endeavours. However, I argue that while these initiatives may be time-consuming in the short term, they will pay off dramatically in the longer term.

Lastly, emancipatory, and decolonizing work is not immune to physical, mental, emotional, and financial risks. Diem and Welton (2020) warn that activism is “a risk that could jeopardize [one’s] job security and sever friendships and relational ties, which could all then lead to burnout and fatigue” (p. 149). Therefore, the responsibility for social movements and disrupting the status quo cannot solely rest on the less-privileged, who have the most to lose from potential fallout, even though they are the intended beneficiaries. It must be a collective effort between the more-privileged and the less-privileged communities.

Concluding Thoughts

Neoliberalism has perpetuated the effects of colonialism in all aspects of life, including education. The CARE model calls for education systems to critically reflect on the legacy of colonialism on how we think, learn, interact with each other, and the wider society. Through self-reflexivity, CSP, authentic partnerships, and post-neoliberalism we can collectively reimagine education that empowers and instills a positive identity in all students.

Next Steps

While the CARE model was thoughtfully conceptualized to explore the multi-faceted nature of colonialism and its impact on school systems, it lacks empirical validity. I call on policymakers, researchers, and practitioners to test this model across rural, urban, elementary, secondary, and post-secondary contexts. Future studies are also encouraged to examine any ethical issues that may arise during the implementation process and iterate the model accordingly. While this anti-oppressive lens focused primarily on race, ethnicity, and culture, I recognize that marginalization based on religion, class, and sexual orientation is equally divisive and could be the scope of future research. Moreover, the incorporation of a feedback mechanism could assist in continuously monitoring and refining the change initiative. To this end, future studies are encouraged to incorporate open- and/or closed-ended surveys as feedback tools and iterate the model accordingly. Lastly, the CARE model did not address the demographic diversity of teachers and administrators—the key players in the implementation process. In Ontario, Policy/Program Memorandum (PPM) 119 asserts that the board’s workforce should reflect the diversity of the community, so they are able to see themselves represented (Jack, 2016). While principals in Ontario are eager to hire candidates from diverse backgrounds, they are at the “mercy of pre-determined hiring procedures and other circumstances beyond their control” (Jack, 2016, p. 87), referring to the lack of diverse teachers available within the hiring pool. To this end, I call all stakeholders to reimagine education through a multitude of decolonizing and anti-oppressive models, ensuring that students from minoritized communities do not fall through the cracks so that one day they can serve as inspirational leaders and mentors for generations to come.

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