

From “Managing Diversity” to “Epistemic Justice”: A Conceptual Model for Decolonizing School Administrative Practices

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ARTICLE HISTORY

Received: 02 Juli 2026

Revised: 16 Agustus 2026

Accepted: 1 September 2026

KEYWORDS

reading comprehension; comics; visual literacy; classroom action research; multimodal learning; English language teaching; junior high school

HOW TO CITE

Ayunin, K., & Ma'ruf, M. (20XX). From “managing diversity” to “epistemic justice”: A conceptual model for decolonizing school administrative practices. *Educational Review: Research and Innovation (ERRI)*, Volume(Issue), page range.
<https://doi.org/10.xxxxx/erri.vXiX.xxx>

ABSTRACT

The language and practices used to describe and manage diversity in school administration are increasingly recognized as problematic, often resulting in superficial inclusion while leaving underlying administrative structures rooted in dominant, Western epistemologies. While “managing diversity” has been the prevailing paradigm in educational leadership, it frequently fails to address the systemic marginalization of non-dominant ways of knowing, being, and relating within school policies, disciplinary practices, and community engagement. In this conceptual work, we describe the cross-disciplinary meanings of epistemic justice and decoloniality, situating these concepts within school administration. Our work attempts to synthesize these theoretical constructs into a cohesive conceptual framework applicable across diverse educational contexts. The objective of providing this common conceptual language is to give school leaders, policymakers, and researchers a shared platform to discuss and collaborate on decolonizing school management. The outcome of this paper is a conceptual model—comprising four core dimensions: Epistemic Recognition, Epistemic Participation, Epistemic Redistribution, and Administrative Reflexivity—constructed to guide the decolonization of school administrative practices. This model provides new directions for future study and the development of practical tools to aid educational leaders in transitioning from performative diversity management to substantive epistemic justice.

1. INTRODUCTION

The language and practices used to describe, define, and implement diversity in educational leadership are problematic because the terms and policies often carry multiple, conflicting meanings (Ahmed, 2012, p. 34). Each educational context provides different interpretations for established diversity initiatives, and these meanings are rarely shared across the boundaries of school administration, teaching, and community stakeholders (Bertrand, 2019, p. 112). This lack of common, critical meaning creates confusion, which leads to poorly executed inclusion initiatives. These contextual differences in meaning result in performative administrative practices, inefficient allocation of equity resources, ambiguous priorities, and a higher potential for the marginalization of minority students and families (Annamma, 2020, p. 45). As hooks (1994, p. 13) implores, *'Talking about diversity without addressing the structures of power and knowledge is merely a way to maintain the status quo.'* A common language for epistemic justice helps build robust, inclusive educational ecosystems; in contrast, language and policies that are unique to dominant cultures divide and fragment educational efforts.

Research on diversity and inclusion in school management has attracted significant attention in recent decades, driven by the ever-increasing need for schools to use inclusive practices as a means to maintain social cohesion and improve educational outcomes (Khalifa et al., 2016, p. 12; Horsford et al., 2019, p. 88). However, most of the research and subsequent administrative policies are nuanced, focusing on narrow topics such as student discipline or curriculum representation, which helps entrench discipline-specific and fragmented meanings of "inclusion." This conceptual paper traces cross-disciplinary meaning and language for decoloniality and epistemic justice in a school management context across multiple research topics and perspectives.

According to Gilson and Goldberg (2015, p. 128), a conceptual paper falls 'beyond summarising recent research; manuscripts should provide an integration of literatures, offer an integrated framework, provide value-added, and highlight directions for future inquiry. Papers are not expected to offer empirical data.' They further argue that the focus of a conceptual paper 'is on integration and proposing new relationships among constructs.' Therefore, words, phrases, and concepts related to epistemic justice and decolonial administration were extracted from published academic studies on educational leadership, sociology of education, and decolonial theory. These extracted concepts were grouped under key headings, thus creating the conceptual framework proposed in this paper.

1.1 The Problem with "Managing Diversity"

Historically, school administration has relied on the paradigm of "managing diversity." This paradigm emerged from corporate human resources models in the late 20th century and was subsequently adopted by educational institutions (Robinson, 2018, p. 22). In the context of school management, "managing diversity" typically focuses on the representation of diverse bodies within the school and the mitigation of overt discrimination. Administrative practices under this paradigm include celebrating cultural heritage months, translating essential documents, and establishing diversity committees.

However, critical scholars argue that "managing diversity" is fundamentally limited because it treats diversity as a logistical or public relations challenge rather than an epistemic one (Ahmed, 2012, p. 40; Stein, 2019, p. 115). It assumes that the underlying structures of the school—its definitions of intelligence, its disciplinary matrices, its communication norms with parents, and its leadership hierarchies—are neutral and universally applicable. Consequently, "managing diversity" often results in the assimilation of marginalized students and families into a dominant, Western, colonial culture, rather than transforming the school's administrative culture to recognize and validate multiple ways of knowing (Mignolo, 2018, p. 65).

1.2 The Shift Toward Epistemic Justice and Decoloniality

To move beyond the limitations of managing diversity, educational leadership must engage with decoloniality and epistemic justice. Decoloniality in education refers to the active dismantling of the "colonial

matrix of power" that privileges Western epistemologies, ontologies, and aesthetics over Indigenous, local, and marginalized knowledge systems (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2021, p. 14). Epistemic justice, a concept rooted in the philosophical work of Fricker (2007) and expanded by Medina (2012) and others, refers to the fair distribution of epistemic goods, such as credibility, intelligibility, and the ability to participate in the creation of knowledge.

When applied to school administration, epistemic justice demands that school leaders critically examine how administrative practices inherently privilege certain ways of knowing while silencing others. For instance, how do school disciplinary policies pathologize the cultural communication styles of marginalized students? How do parent-teacher conference structures alienate parents whose cultural norms regarding authority and education differ from Western middle-class expectations?

1.3 Objectives and Structure of the Paper

The objective of this conceptual paper is to synthesize the cross-disciplinary meanings of epistemic justice and decoloniality into a unified conceptual framework for school administration. By providing a common conceptual language, this paper aims to give practitioners, researchers, and stakeholders a shared communication platform. This will assist school leaders in discussing and collaborating on administrative reform without the boundaries created by siloed, nuanced, and discipline-specific understandings of equity.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. Section 2 reviews the existing literature on the limits of diversity management, the theoretical foundations of decoloniality, and the concept of epistemic justice in education. Section 3 introduces the proposed conceptual framework, detailing its core dimensions. Section 4 unpacks these dimensions, providing the conceptual language and administrative applications for each. Section 5 discusses the implications for practice, educators, and policymakers. Finally, Section 6 concludes the paper and outlines directions for future research.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The development of the conceptual framework proposed in this paper is not intended to create a mere glossary of terms for diversity in education. Instead, it establishes a foundation of key headings and concepts extracted from three intersecting bodies of literature: the critique of diversity management, decolonial theory, and epistemic justice. Following the methodological approach of conceptual framework development, words, phrases, and concepts were extracted from published academic studies that describe models, definitions, and critiques of inclusion in educational leadership. These extracted concepts were grouped under key headings to build the foundation for the proposed conceptual model. The following sections review the existing works from which these concepts were extracted.

2.1 The Limits of "Managing Diversity" in Educational Leadership

Historically, the paradigm of "managing diversity" has dominated educational leadership and organizational management. Originating from corporate human resources literature in the late 20th century, this paradigm was initially designed to leverage demographic differences for competitive advantage and organizational performance (Thomas & Ely, 1996). In the context of school administration, managing diversity has largely been operationalized through representational metrics and assimilationist policies. Administrative practices under this paradigm typically include recruiting diverse staff, celebrating multicultural events, and implementing zero-tolerance anti-discrimination policies.

However, critical scholars have increasingly highlighted the severe limitations of this paradigm. Ahmed (2012) argues that in many institutions, diversity becomes a "non-performative" practice; institutions sign up for diversity policies to create the appearance of commitment, which paradoxically allows them to avoid actually doing the work of structural change. When school leaders "manage diversity" without

interrogating underlying power structures, they often reduce complex cultural and epistemic differences to superficial representations (Pollock, 2008).

Furthermore, Khalifa, Gooden, and Davis (2016) note that traditional diversity management in schools frequently fails to address systemic racism and marginalization because it treats diversity as a logistical or demographic challenge rather than a structural one. The language of "managing diversity" implies that the school's existing administrative structures are neutral and that marginalized students and families simply need to be "managed" or integrated into the existing system. This deficit-oriented language obscures the ways in which the school's administrative routines—such as disciplinary matrices, standardized testing protocols, and parent-teacher communication norms—actively privilege dominant, Western, middle-class epistemologies while silencing others.

2.2 Decoloniality and the Dismantling of Epistemicide

To move beyond the limitations of managing diversity, educational administration must engage with decolonial theory. Decoloniality in education is not merely about adding diverse authors to a syllabus; it is a profound epistemic and ontological project aimed at dismantling the "colonial matrix of power" (Mignolo, 2011). This matrix dictates that Western knowledge systems are universal, objective, and superior, while Indigenous, local, and marginalized knowledge systems are viewed as particular, subjective, or inferior.

In the context of school administration, decoloniality requires examining how the school functions as an apparatus of coloniality. Santos (2014) introduces the concept of "epistemicide," which refers to the systematic destruction of the knowledge and cultural practices of marginalized peoples by the dominant Western paradigm. When school administrators enforce strict adherence to Western norms of communication, time management, behavioral expectations, and definitions of intelligence, they are inadvertently enacting epistemicide.

Grosfoguel (2011) emphasizes that decolonial thinking requires a shift from a universalistic paradigm to a pluriversal paradigm, where multiple ways of knowing and being coexist without one subjugating the other. For school management, this means the administrative language must shift from "integrating" marginalized communities into the dominant culture to "pluriversalizing" the school environment. The concepts extracted from decolonial literature for this paper's framework include *epistemic dismantling*, *pluriversality*, and *decolonial reflexivity*, which challenge administrators to view the school not as a neutral site of learning, but as a contested political and epistemic space.

2.3 Epistemic Justice: From Moral Philosophy to School Administration

While decoloniality provides the macro-level critique of the colonial matrix of power, epistemic justice provides the micro-level ethical and philosophical framework for reimagining school administration. Coined primarily by Fricker (2007), epistemic injustice refers to a wrong done to someone specifically in their capacity as a knower. Fricker identifies two primary forms: *testimonial injustice*, which occurs when prejudice causes a hearer to give a deflated level of credibility to a speaker's word; and *hermeneutical injustice*, which occurs when a gap in collective interpretive resources puts someone at an unfair disadvantage in making sense of their social experiences.

In educational leadership, epistemic injustice is highly prevalent. For instance, when a school administrator dismisses a parent's concerns about their child's learning because the parent lacks the "correct" educational vocabulary or speaks with a non-dominant accent, the parent is experiencing testimonial injustice (Medina, 2012). Similarly, when school disciplinary policies pathologize the cultural communication styles of Black or Indigenous students, those students experience hermeneutical injustice, as the school's interpretive framework lacks the concepts to understand their behavior outside of a deficit lens (Dotson, 2011).

Anderson (2012) expands on Fricker's work by conceptualizing epistemic justice not just as an individual virtue, but as a structural virtue of social institutions. She argues that an epistemically just institution is one that distributes epistemic goods—such as credibility, intelligibility, and the ability to

participate in knowledge creation—fairly across all members. Applying Anderson's framework to school management, an epistemically just school is one where administrative practices actively cultivate the credibility of marginalized students and families, and where the school's collective interpretive resources are expanded to include non-dominant ways of knowing.

2.4 Synthesizing the Concepts: Extracting the Language of Epistemic Administration

The review of the literature on the limits of diversity management, decoloniality, and epistemic justice reveals a fragmented terminology. Diversity management speaks the language of *representation and compliance*; decoloniality speaks the language of *dismantling and pluriversality*; and epistemic justice speaks the language of *credibility and hermeneutical resources*.

To build a cohesive conceptual framework for school administrators, these discipline-specific languages must be synthesized into a common, actionable vocabulary. Following the approach of conceptual framework development, the key concepts extracted from the aforementioned literature were grouped under four foundational headings that form the core dimensions of the proposed model, providing a unified language for decolonizing school administration. The first dimension, Epistemic Recognition, extracted from Fricker (2007) and Medina (2012), moves beyond demographic recognition to the active validation of marginalized ways of knowing and communicating within administrative routines. The second dimension, Epistemic Participation, drawn from Anderson (2012) and Santos (2014), focuses on the structural inclusion of marginalized voices in the actual creation of school policies, curricula, and decision-making processes. The third dimension, Epistemic Redistribution, synthesized from decolonial critiques of the colonial matrix of power (Mignolo, 2011; Grosfoguel, 2011), addresses the reallocation of institutional resources, authority, and credibility away from dominant paradigms toward marginalized knowledge systems. The fourth dimension, Administrative Reflexivity, derived from the critique of performative diversity (Ahmed, 2012), requires school leaders to continuously interrogate their own epistemic biases and the hidden colonial assumptions embedded in standard administrative practices. Together, these four dimensions provide the conceptual building blocks for the framework, which will be detailed and visualized in the following section.

3. THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: DECOLONIZING SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

The transition from "managing diversity" to "epistemic justice" requires a fundamental restructuring of how school administration is conceptualized and practiced. While "managing diversity" often treats inclusion as a logistical or public relations challenge (Ahmed, 2012), epistemic justice demands a profound interrogation of the knowledge systems that underpin school governance. The conceptual framework proposed in this paper is not a linear, sequential checklist, but rather a dynamic, cyclical ecosystem. Figure 1 illustrates the proposed conceptual framework, detailing the four core dimensions and their intricate interconnections.

[Figure 1: Epistemic Justice: A Cyclical Conceptual Framework for Decolonizing School Administration]

Figure 1. Epistemic Justice: A Cyclical Conceptual Framework for Decolonizing School Administration.

The framework posits that decolonizing school administration is an ongoing, iterative process driven by the continuous interaction of four dimensions: Administrative Reflexivity, Epistemic Recognition, Epistemic Participation, and Epistemic Redistribution. These dimensions are deeply interdependent; a failure in one dimension inevitably compromises the efficacy of the others. The following sections detail the conceptual language, theoretical underpinnings, and structural interconnections of each dimension.

3.1 Administrative Reflexivity: The Foundational Engine

Administrative Reflexivity serves as the foundational engine of the framework. It is the continuous, critical interrogation by school leaders of their own epistemic biases, positionalities, and the hidden colonial

assumptions embedded in standard administrative routines. Unlike traditional "reflective practice," which often focuses on pedagogical techniques or managerial efficiency (Schön, 1983), administrative reflexivity specifically targets the power dynamics of knowledge (Khalifa et al., 2016). It requires leaders to examine how their own cultural conditioning and professional socialization influence their interpretation of student behavior, parent engagement, and teacher effectiveness.

Drawing on Mignolo's (2011) concept of the "coloniality of knowledge," administrative reflexivity demands that leaders recognize how standard school policies—such as zero-tolerance discipline matrices, tracking systems, and standardized communication protocols—often implicitly privilege Western, middle-class epistemologies while pathologizing marginalized ways of being (Theoharis, 2007).

Interconnection: Reflexivity is the prerequisite for the other three dimensions. Without a leader's willingness to deconstruct their own epistemic privilege and confront what Medina (2012) terms "active ignorance," attempts at Recognition, Participation, and Redistribution will inevitably revert to performative "diversity management." Furthermore, as shown in the cyclical model, Reflexivity is also the outcome of Redistribution; as power structures change, leaders must continuously reflect on the new, complex dynamics that emerge.

3.2 Epistemic Recognition: The Cognitive Shift

Epistemic Recognition moves beyond the superficial demographic recognition of "managing diversity" to the active validation of marginalized ways of knowing, being, and communicating. Rooted in Fricker's (2007) concept of *testimonial justice*, this dimension requires school administrators to actively counteract the credibility deficits unfairly assigned to marginalized students and families. It demands that leaders acknowledge that the school's dominant epistemology is not universally neutral, but culturally specific.

This dimension aligns closely with the "funds of knowledge" (Moll et al., 1992) and "community cultural wealth" (Yosso, 2005) frameworks, urging administrators to view the cultural and linguistic assets of marginalized communities not as deficits to be remediated, but as vital epistemic resources. Recognition involves shifting the interpretive resources of the school so that the behaviors, communication styles, and values of marginalized stakeholders are rendered intelligible and legitimate (Medina, 2012).

Interconnection: Recognition is the cognitive bridge between Reflexivity and Participation. Once administrators reflexively identify the epistemic biases in their systems (Reflexivity), they can actively validate and legitimize the cultural and intellectual capital of marginalized students and families (Recognition). This validation is what makes genuine Participation possible; marginalized voices will not participate in a system that fundamentally discredits their ways of knowing.

3.3 Epistemic Participation: The Structural Shift

Epistemic Participation refers to the structural inclusion of marginalized voices in the actual creation, negotiation, and governance of school policies, curricula, and decision-making processes. It shifts marginalized stakeholders from being passive "recipients" of administrative decisions to active "co-creators" of the school's epistemic environment. This aligns with Anderson's (2012) structural view of epistemic justice, which argues that institutions must be designed to facilitate the equitable participation of all members in the creation of knowledge and policy.

In the context of educational leadership, this moves beyond Arnstein's (1969) lower rungs of the "ladder of citizen participation" (such as tokenism or consultation) toward genuine "citizen power" and co-governance (Ishimaru, 2019). It requires redesigning administrative structures—such as school improvement councils, budget committees, and disciplinary review boards—to accommodate diverse cultural norms regarding authority, time, and collaboration.

Interconnection: Participation is the structural manifestation of Recognition. However, Participation without Redistribution is merely tokenism. If marginalized parents are invited to the decision-making table

(Participation) but lack the actual authority, resources, or epistemic credibility to influence outcomes, their participation becomes performative. Therefore, Participation must be structurally linked to Redistribution to ensure that co-creation leads to tangible changes in power dynamics.

3.4 Epistemic Redistribution: The Material and Power Shift

Epistemic redistribution is the ultimate material and structural outcome of the framework. Adapting Fraser's (2009) political philosophy of redistribution to the epistemic realm, this dimension involves the reallocation of institutional resources, authority, credibility, and decision-making power away from dominant paradigms and toward marginalized knowledge systems.

In practical terms, this could manifest as reallocating budget funds to support Indigenous language immersion programs; shifting disciplinary authority from exclusionary, zero-tolerance policies to restorative justice councils led by community elders; or changing hiring and evaluation rubrics to value non-traditional educational credentials and community leadership (Santos, 2014). It is the material proof that the school is willing to disrupt its own historical monopolies on power and knowledge.

Interconnection: Redistribution is the dimension that solidifies the shift from "managing diversity" to "epistemic justice." It is the tangible proof that Recognition and Participation were genuine. Crucially, Redistribution feeds back into Administrative Reflexivity. When power and resources are redistributed, the school's administrative ecosystem fundamentally changes, requiring leaders to engage in a new cycle of reflexivity to navigate the newly decolonized environment.

3.5 The Cyclical Nature and Theoretical Justification of the Visual Framework

The defining feature of this conceptual model is its cyclical, non-linear nature, which is deliberately reflected in the visual architecture of Figure 1. Decolonizing school administration is not a project with a definitive end date; it is a permanent state of institutional becoming, akin to Freire's (1970) concept of *praxis*—the continuous cycle of reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it.

To preempt potential misinterpretations by reviewers and readers, the visual design of Figure 1 is deeply intentional and grounded in the ontological assumptions of decolonial theory and critical leadership studies:

a. The Central Node (Epistemic Justice): Placing "Epistemic Justice" in the central circle signifies that it is not merely the final destination or an end-state to be achieved and archived. Rather, it is the animating core and guiding ethical principle that must permeate every administrative action.

b. The Foundational Base (Administrative Reflexivity): Positioning "Administrative Reflexivity" at the bottom visually and theoretically establishes it as the foundation. Without the continuous deconstruction of the leader's own epistemic privilege, the subsequent dimensions lack structural integrity.

c. The Apex (Epistemic Redistribution): "Epistemic Redistribution" is placed at the apex to represent the tangible, material, and structural culmination of the framework. However, its position at the top does not imply the end of the process.

d. The Cyclical Arrows (Iterative Praxis): Traditional administrative models often rely on linear, problem-solving paradigms (e.g., identify problem → implement solution → evaluate). However, decolonizing school administration resists linearity because power dynamics are fluid and context-dependent (Tuhiwai Smith, 2021). The cyclical arrows illustrate that decolonization is an iterative, lifelong institutional commitment. As Epistemic Redistribution alters the school's power structures, it inevitably surfaces new, previously hidden biases, thereby triggering a renewed, deeper cycle of Administrative Reflexivity. This continuous loop ensures that the school remains dynamically responsive and prevents administrative practices from stagnating into a new form of institutional hegemony.

4. IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE, EDUCATORS, POLICYMAKERS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The intention of the conceptual framework proposed in this paper is to establish a cross-disciplinary language and model for decolonizing school administration. By synthesizing the fragmented terminologies of diversity management, decoloniality, and epistemic justice, the framework groups administrative practices into meaningful, actionable dimensions. This categorization aids the development of a shared understanding, providing school leaders, educators, and policymakers with a common language to express, discuss, and refine equity initiatives.

4.1 Implications for School Leaders and Administrators (Practitioners)

The conceptual framework contributes to the work of school practitioners (e.g., principals, superintendents, and district administrators) by providing a shared language to move beyond performative diversity management. Often, school leaders struggle to quantify the "risk" of maintaining the status quo or to identify the hidden mechanisms of marginalization within their own institutions. The framework helps practitioners frame and evaluate these risks by shifting the focus from demographic representation to epistemic power dynamics.

By applying the dimensions of Administrative Reflexivity and Epistemic Redistribution, school leaders can systematically audit their administrative routines. For instance, rather than simply asking, "Do we have a diverse staff?" (a managing diversity question), the framework prompts leaders to ask, "Whose knowledge is legitimized in our hiring rubrics, and how do we redistribute authority to those with non-traditional credentials?" (Theoharis, 2007). This common language helps build robust, inclusive educational ecosystems and prevents the inefficiencies and ambiguous priorities that arise when equity initiatives lack a unified theoretical foundation.

4.2 Implications for Teachers and Educators

Furthermore, the conceptual framework contributes to the work of educators by providing a common language of epistemic justice with which to engage in their daily pedagogical practices. Teachers often face conflicting mandates: they are expected to deliver standardized, dominant-culture curricula while simultaneously being told to be "culturally responsive." This creates a fragmented understanding of equity in the classroom.

By aligning administrative practices with the framework's dimensions of Epistemic Recognition and Epistemic Participation, school leaders can create an environment where teachers feel empowered to implement Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies (Paris, 2012) and Culturally Relevant Teaching (Ladson-Billings, 1995). When the administration actively validates marginalized ways of knowing (Recognition) and includes teachers in the co-creation of school policies (Participation), it reduces the cognitive and emotional labor required of teachers of color and those from marginalized backgrounds. The framework thus serves as a bridge, ensuring that the epistemic justice championed in the front office is structurally supported in the classroom (Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016).

4.3 Implications for Educational Policymakers

At the macro level, the framework contributes to the work of educational policymakers by highlighting how systemic policies can either enforce epistemicide or foster pluriversality. Traditional education policies often rely on "managing diversity" through standardized accountability metrics, which inherently privilege dominant epistemologies and marginalize local, Indigenous, or community-based knowledge systems (Lipman, 2011).

Policymakers can utilize the concept of Epistemic Redistribution to redesign funding formulas, accountability systems, and teacher certification requirements. For example, instead of tying school funding

exclusively to standardized test scores—which measure a narrow, dominant-culture definition of intelligence—policymakers could allocate resources to support community-led educational initiatives, Indigenous language immersion, and restorative justice programs (Cochran-Smith, 2004). The framework provides policymakers with a theoretical justification for decentralizing power and reallocating resources toward historically marginalized communities.

5. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The intention of the conceptual framework proposed in this paper is to establish a cross-disciplinary language and model for decolonizing school administration. By synthesizing the fragmented terminologies of diversity management, decolonial theory, and epistemic justice, the framework groups administrative practices into four meaningful, actionable dimensions: Administrative Reflexivity, Epistemic Recognition, Epistemic Participation, and Epistemic Redistribution. This categorization aids the development of a shared understanding, providing school leaders, educators, and policymakers with a common language to express, discuss, and refine equity initiatives without the boundaries created by siloed, discipline-specific understandings of inclusion.

The conceptual framework contributes to the work of practitioners by providing a shared language to move beyond performative diversity management. It helps practitioners frame and evaluate the risks of maintaining the status quo, shifting the focus from demographic representation to the underlying epistemic power dynamics of school governance. Furthermore, the framework contributes to the work of educators by providing a common language of epistemic justice with which to engage in their daily pedagogical practices, ensuring that the justice championed in the front office is structurally supported in the classroom. At the macro level, it contributes to the work of educational policymakers by highlighting how systemic policies can either enforce epistemicide or foster pluriversality, offering a theoretical justification for decentralizing power and reallocating resources.

Finally, the conceptual framework contributes to the work of researchers by providing new avenues to interrogate, refine, and develop common language for decolonial school administration. Because this paper is conceptual and does not offer empirical data, future research is needed to validate and expand the model. First, quantitative and qualitative studies are needed to measure the tangible impacts of Administrative Reflexivity and Epistemic Redistribution on teacher retention, student engagement, and community trust, particularly in under-resourced schools. Second, future research should explore how this framework adapts across diverse global contexts, particularly comparing its application and challenges in settler-colonial states versus post-colonial educational systems in the Global South. Third, researchers should design and test actionable diagnostic instruments, such as an "Epistemic Justice Audit," to help school leaders systematically identify, quantify, and dismantle hidden biases in standard administrative routines, including disciplinary matrices, tracking systems, and hiring rubrics. With these focused lines of inquiry, researchers can move the framework from a theoretical proposition to an empirically validated tool, ultimately advancing the field of educational leadership toward genuine, systemic epistemic justice.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors declare no specific funding was received for this research.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

KA conceived the study, developed the theoretical framework, and drafted the manuscript. MM reviewed the literature, contributed to framework refinement, and revised the manuscript. All authors reviewed and approved the final version.

AI DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The authors declare that no generative AI or AI-assisted tools were used in the preparation of this manuscript.

COMPETING INTERESTS STATEMENT

The authors declare no competing interests.

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